

## Clemens Busch

Given the high humidity and near-interminable rain that prevailed until midsummer in 2016, I wasn't surprised to learn that Clemens Busch, Germany's pioneer in biodynamic Riesling viticulture, experienced an arduous several months during which he and his crew were almost continuously applying treatments – which on these steep slopes must to a great extent be carried on the back and sprayed by hand. On top of that, Busch's vineyards were hit by spring frost. "It can be depressing," he added, rather obviously, "when you work so hard while watching yields drop in front of your eyes, but in the end we were pleasantly surprised with how little of the crop we lost." And more good news – which won't shock anybody who knows Busch and has followed his wines – is that the quality is excellent. Picking commenced in early October and lasted for nearly six weeks, with both acid levels and must weights remaining stable, and the finished dry wines ranging from 10.5% to (in the case of the Grosse Gewächse) 12% alcohol. There was so little botrytis that no Auslesen were attempted. Somewhat more than half of this year's dry wines underwent malolactic transformation, and it is evidence of high ratios of tartaric to malic acidity that total acidity did not drop very far in the process. All of these wines display a lively, bright, citric cast, even as the best of them offer alluringly rich, lees-inflected textures that are a hallmark of Busch Riesling. Similarly, the fact that 2016s are analytically relatively low in extract (a legacy of the dry, hot phase precisely when berries were developing) has not resulted in wines that lack a sense of stuffing. On the contrary, even the lowest-alcohol examples convey a positive impression of density.

As usual, alongside the majority of wines from his most recent harvest, Busch presented selected Grosse Gewächse from the preceding vintage that had been left longer in cask – in the case of the 2015s reviewed below, 15-16 months. Bush also essayed both a sulfur-free bottling and an extended-*élevage*, late-bottled orange wine from vintage 2015, on which I hope to report at a later date. And this year, for the first time, he unveiled a pair of wines (namely, the 2014s reviewed below) that had spent two full years on their lees before bottling. In addition to those 2016s that are earmarked for extended *élevage*, I have also not yet tasted this year's 2016 Riesling Trocken Vom Blauen Schiefer. I usually taste that wine at 11 months even though it has not yet been bottled, but this year the final assemblage was still pending when I visited to taste in mid-September 2017. (For further background on this estate and its individual vineyards, consult the introduction to my report on their 2014s and my tasting notes on those wines.)

From Mosel Riesling 2016 Part 1: From Extremes, Equilibrium (Jan 2018) by David Schildknecht

		(Hover for Commentary)		Tasting Notes	Score	Author	Drinking Window	Release Price	Review Date
	Vintage	Producer	Name						
2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling trocken</u>	The nose here is so bright in its evocation of lemon and grapefruit that you almost need sunglasses – and such prominent, brisk acidity as this displays in the mouth is also unusual in a Busch collection, where a share of malolactic transformation is frequently present, including here. The feel is silken. An undertone of wet stone, along with piquant citrus peel and walnut accents, pulls in a slightly austere direction. But tangy, satisfyingly persistent juiciness on the long finish renders this impressively concentrated and well-stuffed yet alcoholically lightweight (at 10.5%) bottling fun to drink already. (This is sourced largely from Pünderich sites other than the Marienburg, which obviously hasn't compromised quality.)  -- David Schildknecht	90	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2021	\$22.00	Jan 2018	
2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling trocken Vom Grauen Schiefer</u>	Dusty suggestions of crushed stone, pungent lavender and prickly lemon peel greet the nose, and on a palpably dense palate the zest and sense of stone suffusion crowd out any primary juiciness such as helped render this year's basic Riesling <i>trocken</i> so appealing. The finish also lacks that ostensibly lesser bottling's levity, but partly makes up for those deficiencies with sheer grip.  -- David Schildknecht	89	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2021	\$32.00	Jan 2018	
2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling trocken Vom Roten Schiefer</u>	Grapefruit and lemon oils, hickory and walnut combine for a performance whose pungency, piquancy and pith are flatteringly tempered by subtle textural creaminess and complemented by	90	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2021	\$32.00	Jan 2018	

alcoholic levity as well as a generous finishing influx of citric, peachy juiciness. At eight grams, this is a bit higher in residual sugar than the typical dry Busch Riesling, and that has had a nicely supportive effect on its impression of generous, ripe fruit.

-- David Schildknecht

2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling</u> <u>Pündericher</u> <u>Marienburg</u> <u>Grosses</u> <u>Gewächs</u>	A prickly evocation of lime and grapefruit peels is paired with hints of vanilla and coconut on a fascinating nose, while the silken-textured palate suggests a satisfying if surprising marriage of coconut milk and juicy fresh citrus. Fruit seed piquancy and a resinous hint of pine needle add to the invigoration of an impressively sustained finish. At 11.8% alcohol, the 2016 is significantly lighter than this bottling – or, indeed, most other previous Busch Grosses Gewächs bottlings – has been, resulting in flattering buoyancy that enhances a sense of sheer refreshment too often missing from the wines of a genre determined to take itself so seriously.	91	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2024	\$55.00	Jan 2018
------	---------------	--	--	----	--------------------	-------------	---------	----------

-- David Schildknecht

2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling</u> <u>Pündericher</u> <u>Marienburg</u> <u>Grosses</u> <u>Gewächs</u> <u>Rothenpfad</u>	Zesty, seed-inflected lime, grapefruit and orange are suffused with crushed stone on an aromatic and palate display typical of the Rothenpfad. Musky, peony-like perfume wafts through this entire performance. A formidable sense of stuffing is allied to modest alcohol and a flatteringly silken feel, without the long smoke- and stone-inflected finish coming off as at all austere.	91	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2024	\$58.00	Jan 2018
------	---------------	---	---	----	--------------------	-------------	---------	----------

-- David Schildknecht

2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling</u> <u>Pündericher</u> <u>Marienburg</u> <u>Grosses</u> <u>Gewächs</u> <u>Fahrlay</u>	Ripe apple and pear are tinged with anise and grapefruit peel on the forward nose and the creamy yet animatingly juicy palate. There is an underlying stoniness that contributes to this bottling's formidable sense of density, yet it finishes with buoyancy and consummate refreshment.	91	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2024	\$68.00	Jan 2018
------	---------------	--	--	----	--------------------	-------------	---------	----------

-- David Schildknecht

2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling</u> <u>Pündericher</u> <u>Marienburg</u> <u>Grosses</u> <u>Gewächs</u> <u>Falkenlay</u>	Seed-inflected lime, grapefruit, apple and pear mingle both on the nose and on a silken palate with subtly stony and bracingly saline, crystalline mineral impingements. This displays a striking sense of density allied to alcoholic levity and transparency, finishing with vibrant, shimmering interaction of fruit and mineral elements. Conceivably it's just more developed (in an entirely positive way) than are this collection's other Grosse Gewächse (whereas Falkenlay was notably recalcitrant in 2015), but my suspicion is that this will retain an edge over its siblings in clarity and animation.	93	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2028	\$68.00	Jan 2018
------	---------------	--	---	----	--------------------	-------------	---------	----------

-- David Schildknecht

2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling</u> <u>Pündericher</u> <u>Kabinett</u>	Sourced from lesser portions of the Marienburg, this is a bit cheesy and yeasty on the nose, but will hopefully clear up after some additional time in	87	David Schildknecht	2018 - 2022	Not Available	Jan 2018
------	---------------	--	--	----	--------------------	-------------	---------------	----------

bottle. It comes to the palate with juicy lemon, grapefruit and white peach nicely supported by sweetness, then finishes with a slightly awkward tartness but still invigorating and refreshing. Clearly, in another 6-12 months we could be looking at a very different and much-improved performance. Not that this is Busch's worry: he observed that there is an uptick in demand among his countrymen for Kabinett and that this village-level bottling (which had no 2015 counterpart) had already sold out before the end of August 2017. "The Norwegians and the Aussies are the ones who insisted on screwcap, but they don't have to take delivery until 2018," joked Busch. (While I understand the practical advantages of screwcap closure, not to mention the frustrations of TCA taint, I think this wine is one of many examples of how screwcapping can generate or exacerbate awkward reduction, particularly in residually sweet Mosel Rieslings born of arrested fermentation.)

-- David Schildknecht

2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling Pündericher Marienburg Kabinett</u>	Fresh apricot and Persian melon are laced with zesty grapefruit on the nose and subsequently displayed on a palate that combines seductive creaminess and wafting buoyancy with infectious sheer juiciness. Tingling stone and citrus zest impingements, along with mouthwatering mineral salts, make for a delectably sustained finish. While some Busch Kabinetts have struck me as overly sweet, here more than 10 grams of acidity completely tames the residual sugar.	92	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2030	\$32.00	Jan 2018	
			-- David Schildknecht						
2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling Pündericher Marienburg Spätlese</u>	Scents and luscious palate presence of grapefruit, apple and honeydew melon dominate this subtly creamy yet tinglingly bright bottling. It finishes exuberantly, with prominent sweetness, while still allowing for an undertone of wet stone. What I miss is the invigorating, scintillating interchange of fruit and mineral elements found in the corresponding Kabinett.	89	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2028	\$35.00	Jan 2018	
			-- David Schildknecht						
2016	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling Pündericher Marienburg Spätlese Goldkapsel</u>	A heady nose mingles almost overripe white peach with decadent lily and peony perfume. Creamy and succulent, it manages to muster an unexpected measure of sheer juiciness, leading to a hauntingly sustained, buoyant, engagingly sweet finish. What little fruit was sufficiently botrytized to have had Auslese potential ended up being incorporated into this Spätlese.	91	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2032	\$52.00	Jan 2018	
			-- David Schildknecht						
2015	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling Pündericher Nonnengarten Fass 29</u>	Bottled in November 2016, this new entry into Busch's lineup originates in an iron-rich slate site immediately downstream from the Marienburg. Scents and juicy palate profusion of lime and white	92	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2026	Not Available	Jan 2018	

peach are alluringly garlanded in rowan, saturated with crushed stone, and infused with smoky black tea. A silken texture caresses even as zest and pit inflections join the mineral elements in delivering invigoration to a seriously sustained finish.

-- David Schildknecht

---

2015	Clemens Busch	<u>Pündericher Marienburg Fahrlay Terrassen</u>	Bottled in March 2017, this leads with fresh lemon, grapefruit and pineapple that go on to deliver juicy, zesty, tangy animation and refreshment on a subtly silken, palpably dense palate. Any thought that extended lees contact and late bottling might file down the teeth of this raw material's efficacious acids can be banished. Citrus oils and crunchy coriander seed offer stimulating piquancy, and an energetic, buoyant, infectiously juicy finish delivers a vibrantly sustained exchange of citrus and mineral notes.	93	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2028	\$85.00	Jan 2018
------	---------------	---	---	----	--------------------	-------------	---------	----------

-- David Schildknecht

---

2015	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling Pündericher Marienburg Grosses Gewächs Felsterrasse</u>	Bottled in early 2017, this delivers a brightly juicy and animating but also piquantly zesty amalgam of lime and grapefruit. Pit-inflected white peach adds to the piquant, fruity concentration on a silken palate. Here is one of those Busch wines to deftly combine textural richness with brightness, and density with buoyancy. Mustard and coriander seeds add an invigorating sense of crunch even before we get to the finish, which conveys an exuberant sense of releasing pent-up energy, leaving your tongue tingling and your tonsils (if you have them) humming like a tuning fork. "The lees were really creamy and lovely when I finally racked this wine off them," remarked Busch, an anecdote that seems apt for such a polished, pure performance.	94	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2030	\$96.00	Jan 2018
------	---------------	---	---	----	--------------------	-------------	---------	----------

-- David Schildknecht

---

2015	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling Pündericher Marienburg Grosses Gewächs Raffes</u>	Zesty lime, hickory nut, pine needle and fresh sweat offer an unusual, pungently penetrating aromatic display. Pungency, pith and energetic grip on the palate are allied to simultaneously silky texture. As has been the case with recent Busch collections, this also manages the trick of projecting density while remaining alcoholically modest (at barely 12%) and consequently buoyant. It finishes with equal persistence and nearly as much vibratory energy as the corresponding Felsterrasse while introducing a crystalline sense of stony impingement and a mouthwatering suffusion of mineral salts.	94	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2030	\$135.00	Jan 2018
------	---------------	---	---	----	--------------------	-------------	----------	----------

-- David Schildknecht

---

2014	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling Pündericher Marienburg trocken Fahrlay Reserve</u>	Here is the first Busch attempt to bottle Grosses Gewächs material only after two full years on the lees. A high-toned, exotic nose features coconut, lychee, grapefruit peel, and <i>mirabelle</i> distillate as well as mossy and alkaline notes. Creamy and dense, for an almost custardy palate impression, it finishes with stimulating counterpoint of stone and alkali against exotically ripe fruit. I can only guess	92	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2025	\$80.00	Jan 2018
------	---------------	--	---	----	--------------------	-------------	---------	----------

how this first-of-its-kind Busch bottling might age, but it's more fascinating and alluring than was the corresponding "regular" 2014 Fahrlay Grosses Gewächs on release. (What would be most interesting – although I didn't have time to make the request – would be to compare the two alongside one another.)

-- David Schildknecht

---

2014	Clemens Busch	<u>Riesling</u> <u>Pündericher</u> <u>Marienburg</u> <u>trocken</u> <u>Rothenpfad</u> <u>Reserve</u>	Along with the corresponding cask of Fahrlay, Busch gave this Rothenpfad two full years on the lees before bottling, something he had never attempted before. Piquantly nutty and zesty on the nose as well as on a formidably dense, subtly silken palate, this also reveals the mossy and wet stone notes found in the late-bottled Fahrlay. It finishes with pithy grip and energetic resonance, if little charm or sheer juiciness. It should fascinating (and, along with the corresponding Fahrlay, unprecedented) to follow.	91	David Schildknecht	2017 - 2022	\$80.00	Jan 2018
------	------------------	---	---	----	-----------------------	----------------	---------	----------

-- David Schildknecht