

I Love German Wine and Food - A Rheingau Pinot Noir

If you are looking for fine German wine and food, consider the Rheingau region of central Germany. You may find a bargain, and I hope that you'll have fun on this fact-filled wine education tour in which we review a local Pinot Noir. The Rheingau region is the most central wine-growing region in Germany. This area is particularly known for Riesling which represents more than 80% of its total wine production and secondarily for Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) which accounts for slightly under 10% of the area's total wine production. The best Pinot Noir in the region is said to come from Assmannshausen but I was unable to find a bottle. The Rheingau is eighth in vineyard area among Germany's thirteen wine regions, comprising about 3% of German vineyards. It is also eighth in the volume of wine produced. Less than 20% of its wine production is QbA wine, the remainder is the higher quality QmP wine. Kloster Eberbach, near where our reviewed wine was produced, is a former Cistercian monastery. Its Gothic and Romanesque buildings date from the Twelfth to Fourteenth Centuries and formed the backdrop for a medieval murder mystery, *The Name of the Rose*, starring Sean Connery. The city of Eltville was known as Alta Villa in Roman times. It contains the majestic Kurfürstliche Burg (Elector's Castle) which was built in the 14th and 15th Centuries. If you go make sure to visit the exhibition of their most famous elector, Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of movable type. The castle's surroundings include more than 300 varieties of roses. You may also want to visit the Church of Sts Peter and Paul and the half-timbered houses near the river. Before reviewing the Rheingau wine and imported cheeses that we were lucky enough to purchase at a local wine store and a local Italian food store, here are a few suggestions of what to eat with indigenous wines when touring this beautiful region. Start with geräucherte Forelle (Smoked Trout). Continue with Saurbraten (Beef Marinated in Wine, Vinegar, and Spices) and Reibekuchen (Small Potato Pancakes with Blueberry or Apple Sauce). For dessert indulge yourself with brandy-filled Pralinen (Pralines). OUR WINE REVIEW POLICY All wines that we taste and review are purchased at the full retail price. Wine Reviewed Kloster Eberbach Spätburgunder Trocken 2004 12.6% alcohol about \$16 Let's start by quoting the marketing materials. Light ruby color with classic Pinot Noir aromas of beetroot, cherry, and earth. Dry, supple, well-balanced and structured, this light-bodied, medium long finishing wine would match well with grilled rock Cornish hen or salmon. My first meal consisted of a cheeseless meat lasagna. The wine was definitely a Pinot Noir. It was earthy and tasted of tobacco and the underbrush. It cut the meat's grease and showed itself definitely to be a food-friendly wine. To the best of my memory this is my first German Pinot Noir and in fact the first German red wine that I have tasted. I'll be coming back for more. My next meal included baked filo dough pastry covered with sesame seeds stuffed with ground chicken and peas. I topped the mixture with a moderately spicy Middle Eastern salsa that included tomatoes, red peppers, green peppers, and onions. This pairing worked fairly well; the meat brought out the tobacco in the Pinot Noir. While the wine was not as full as some other Pinot Noirs in its price range, it was moderately long. My final meal was a slow-cooked beef stew with potatoes. The Pinot Noir was mouth-filling; once again it tasted of tobacco and earth. Just so you know, I'm not a smoker or an ex-smoker. But I do like a bit of tobacco in my Pinot Noirs. I had enough wine left to accompany two cheeses; unfortunately neither pairing was particularly successful. First was a Bel Paese soft cow's milk cheese from the Lombardy region of northern Italy. This mild cheese made the wine a bit flat. I finished the bottle with a German Limberger cheese, famous or perhaps infamous for its strong smell. Luckily enough my cheese had almost no odor. But it did manage to kill the wine's fruit. Final verdict. I liked this wine but won't decide whether to buy it again until I try several other German Pinot Noirs. But it is definitely worth considering.

About the Author

Food and wine features at Forbes.com. Core topics include fine and rare wines, bordeaux, pinot noir, burgundy, supertuscans, single.

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