

Ep 82: The oldest wineries in the world, the grape variety Müller-Thurgau, Mosel V Rheingau wine regions, German labelling terms, and Chianti Classico Gran Selezione



Janina Doyle 00:00:07 Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just can not get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier. So, stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving, wonderful world of wine and wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you!

Hello and happy Monday to, well, those of you listening on release day. Hopefully I can brighten up your Monday evening and in fact, brighten up your day whenever you are listening to this. So today's episode due to popular demand, well, uh, four of you, I think came back to me and said, you like the idea of an episode looking at the oldest wineries. So for the four of you, here it is. You're gonna learn about the 10 oldest wineries in the world. But of course, I don't want it just to be about wineries. So I've tried to throw in some other wine facts and information, so we're gonna focus on Müller-Thurgau, the grape variety. So if you don't already know about that, you will do by the end of this episode. And also I'm going to attempt to break down a little bit more the labeling laws for German wines and also with Chianti, what you may see on the labels. Now, obviously I am going to start with the oldest winery in the world.

Janina Doyle 00:01:45 We are off to Mosel, in Germany, and we are talking about a date of 862 AD. So this is 1160 years of wine history right here. The winery is called Staffelter Hof and they have certainly come a long way. From early beginnings when the winery was donated to the Monastery of Stavelot, which is where the name Staffelter has come from, to being in the hands of the government and then finally being bought by Peter Schneiders in 1805. And since then it's been handed down generation by generation. Jan Matthias Klien is the current winemaker and took over in 2005. So he began building on all the amazing Rieslings they were doing. And then from about 2010 started his focused towards all things natural. Now these wines are grown organically with minimal intervention, and he has a line of wines with zero sulfur. For a winery with such history the labels are totally funky and rather modern. In fact, you'll see a drawing on the front of one of them that has a Wolf. Now there's a fun story behind this. As you may know, in Mosel, they are known for very steep slopes. It's no different in this property with some vineyards at 60 to 70 degrees incline. So the story or the legend that I've heard is that they used to have a donkey, good old donkey, helping with these steep slopes until one day a Wolf, obviously a very bad Wolf, came along and ate it. Tough times, for the donkey. Well, anyway, the monks working there made the Wolf work the slopes as a punishment. So today they still see the Wolf

as their mascot and his name by the way is Magnus. There's a Riesling, a Magnus Riesling, look out for that. And as with natural wines that are good, these are wines of energy, light and vibrant, tangy and textural. He still has some more traditional wines for those of you that are not in the, the glou glou club. Uh, certainly in London, when you talk with the Sommelier's over here, you sense that these wines have got a bit of a cult like status, and of course that's cause these wines are great, but also because Jan Klein is so forward the, with this incredible focus towards supporting other winemakers and the local community. In fact, he's part of a group, oh, can I pronounce it correctly? It's the der Klitzekleine ring project, which translates to steep slope riesling rescue team. This is a project that's very much about sustainability and it's about saving many of the steepest plots of abandoned riesling vineyards. He personally has purchased many of these plots for experimentation and to be able to hand them down to up and coming winemakers. So the idea is leaving something good for the future generations. Now the winery has an incredibly long and interesting history as you've obviously, uh, already heard. And it seems with Jan at the helm equally, it has this very same interesting and long future. For that reason, they are my winery of the week. I'm happy to say that you can get your hands on quite a nice array of these wines if you are here in the UK. And I hope it's the same for you guys listening around the world. So today I have with me, one of his very creations, it's the Müller Time Sandersstruck 2020, which you can get from Modal wines for £27. Right, I need to tell you about the label here first, okay. This is really colorful, intense, bright colors. There's a guitarist on the front and then a lightning strike and loads of stars. Once you see this label you're certainly not going to forget it. Now, I could have gone for one of his more conventional wines. I also could have picked a riesling, but I wanted to try the Müller-Thurgau as this is a grape variety that I've never mentioned before on any podcast. So wine education time, wanna pause on the wine for a second to talk about the grape.

Janina Doyle 00:06:15 So Müller-Thurgau, it's actually a crossing between Riesling and Madeline Royale. So this happened back in 1882 by a Dr Müller and he was from a town called Thurgau in Switzerland. Although the grape is also known as Rivaner and then that's actually caused some arguments. So for quite a long time people thought it was a crossing between Riesling and Silvaner, hence the name Rivaner, but that's not true. So to confirm Riesling crossed with Madeline Royale. Now it's a grape that ripens early, much earlier than riesling, and it doesn't need as much sun. So you can imagine that it's a great place to be planted in cooler climate, such as Germany. If it's not grown with care, it can suffer with lack of acidity and it can be quite bland. And for that reason, it was very much used as the main grape variety in the very famous, pretty sweet tasting German wine of the eighties: Liebfraumilch. But with lots of hard work, if a winemaker is dedicated you can produce a wine with some nice citrus aromas and touch of florals and stone fruits. Good versions can have aromas like muscat even.

Janina Doyle 00:07:35 So to get to this wine, which I have very high expectations of, in terms of how it's made, 30% of the grapes are de-stemmed. And it probably comes as no surprise to many of you as he enjoys making a more natural wine, that there is some skin fermentation for around 17 days and doing that adds texture and of course, more intensity, you're able to get more flavor, aromas, color everything from the skin. But there is also wines fermented in stainless steel tanks as well to keep a more fresh, crisp style too. Okay. I'm gonna taste it for you.

Janina Doyle 00:08:14 Uh, now actually I was thinking it might be a little bit more orange in the glass, but it's not. You've got this kind of medium to deep lemon color still. Uh, but it's very cloudy. You can see the haziness because it is unfiltered, almost looks as well, there's a little bit of spritziness, like I can

almost see a little bit of bubbles, so let's have a try. Oh. And by the way, with this wine, I've left it out the fridge for a little while. It's not, I can imagine this is not the kind of wine that you want at five degrees. You're gonna want it a little bit warmer because this is not an overly aromatic wine and definitely gonna be about texture. So therefore a little bit warmer is better. So, okay. This is actually more vibrant than I expected. You've got this mix between floral and herbal even. I get lovely violets, and even kind of a slight candied note or, or slightly soapy. It's more aromatic than I expected. There's a, a hint of mint with like bergamot oil. And actually if you like Earl Grey tea, there's a bit of that going on in there. And in terms of fruit, it's definitely citrusy. So lemon peel again, not lemon juice or anything like that. It's got a little bit more of an intensity, maybe a bit more of that kind of grippiness, um, on the nose. And there's a bit of like a peach melba vibe going on. So it's got the stone fruits, but maybe some raspberry, something, a little red in there as well. Okay. Now for those of you, either into natural wine or not into natural wine, it certainly has a little bit of a funk, like a tart sour, even a sour cherry note, even though this is a white wine and that apples cider zing, it is there, but it's surprisingly lively. Now, acidity wise, it's not that high. Um, it could probably get to medium acidity, but there's like a spiciness to it. A little bit of aniseed or white pepper going on. I have to say this wine is round, it's soft. It has that lovely texture. And actually it still feels very light though, because there is a spritz to it. So although the acidity is not so high, there's still a bit of a raciness, like an explosion of fruit and zest. Do you know, this is the kind of wine that is going to evolve in the glass. It is going to evolve as the temperature changes. So I would highly recommend playing around with that. And this is kind of a serious wine. This is a wine that I think you can, you can really take your time over and think about and enjoy. Now, although I, I rather enjoy this by itself, in terms of a food pairing. I want to think about the components. So it's quite soft, it's textural, but it's not overly heavy or rich. It's got lots of that citrus vibe and herbs and aromatics. So I'd want to keep things like fresh and lean. So maybe sushi would be phenomenal with it or actually going for some vegetables with some mint in. So like maybe like a spaghetti with mint and courgette or peas and mint perhaps. I mean, you could have it with lovely light fish. You could have it with chicken. I think more about what you would accompany it with. So as long as you're squeezing a load of lemon and perhaps you're adding in some oregano, basil, ginger, garlic, all these kind of herbs and spices, it would be absolutely beautiful. Or in fact, alongside a fish or chicken, you did lovely, like a lemon roasted fennel with some olives. Hopefully you'll get the vibe I'm going with here, Right, oh, wait, one more sip. Delicious. Let's go on to winery number two.

Janina Doyle 00:12:29 So in second place, we are heading west and we off to France to a winery established in the year 1000. Château de Goulaine is situated in the Loire valley and impressively still today owned by the Marquis Goulaine family. They're in Nantes which is the closest subregion to the coast. And for those of you, you who love architecture, their castle was the first built in the Loire valley. And for those of you who love their history, especially British history, the Marquis can trace his family directly back to Mary Queen of Scots. So we are 30 plus generations down the line now. And if you want to try any of their wines, they make a Muscadet which is a fresh light white wine made around the Nantes area. And the grape variety is Melon de Bourgogne, often just called Melon. So it's a sharp and tangy kind of style and it definitely reminds you of the sea, probably why go so well with oysters and for the best examples, look for a Muscadet Sèvre et Maine, which is the region's best offering. Equally for more texture to the wine, look for the words 'Sur lie' on the label and what that means is on the lees. So this is when the wine is aged on the lees. So they're naturally occurring dead yeast cells that are left in contact with the wine. And you can get this exact wine from Château de Goulaine in the UK for less than a 10 at drinkfinder. Now, although waited in the west by the coast, they make wines from regions

further inland along the Loire. So Vouvray is a region in the middle Loire within Touraine, and it's this place for Chenin Blanc. In fact, Jancis Robinson said: "Vouvray is Chenin Blanc and to a certain extent, Chenin Blanc is Vouvray." To give you an idea, to give you some context here. You're gonna find the best and the most expensive Chenin Blancs made here. And you can get still versions, sweet or sparkling. Now, if you want to know more about the grape variety of Chenin Blanc, go back to Episode 51 on Cap Classique as South Africa has taken on Chenin Blanc as the white grape variety of their country. So I go into a little bit more detail there. Now, going back to wines made by Château de Goulaine, they make Sauvignon Blanc, although I'm not sure which region specifically they make theirs, but Sauvignon Blancs tend to start in Touraine, which is where you get some great value Sauvignon Blanc, and actually very much like Marlborough New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc style, so more of that tropical, exotic fruits. And then going all the way to the far east, where the most prestigious versions of Sauvignon Blanc can be found in Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé. Right now, do you know where we're heading for number three? Well, we're going right back to Germany again.

Janina Doyle 00:15:45 So spoiler alert, Germany features pretty heavily on this list. They've got a good ton of wine history. So let's talk about Schloss Johannisberg, whose history dates back to 1100. Now to give them an introduction, famous wine critic Robert Parker has stated: "One of the greatest Riesling Terroirs on the planet wine." They planted their whole vineyards to just Riesling back in 1720, making them officially the first Riesling winery in the world. Now you can find them in Rheingau. So to give a little context between those German regions, so between these guys and Staffelter Hof who are in the Mosel. So that's the first winery I mentioned. Firstly the majority of all wine regions are found in the Southwest, so close to France. Mosel is the furthest west touching both Luxemburg and France. It also includes the tributaries Saar and Ruwer. And this is the place with the steepest slopes in the world, they also have slate soils. Now the wines tend to be more mineral and slatey, steely with lots of purity. They are typically lighter and they have this lovely kind of citrus note alongside a bit of blossom that floral edge. This is also the region where you are most likely to find the sweetest versions of Rieslings, but that doesn't matter. Don't let that put you off because it has racy acidity. So these Rieslings are always in balance, no matter the sweetness. Mosel then meets the Rhine river and as it stops traveling south, it actually runs east to west. That's where you're going to find Rheingau, which is typically on more gentle slopes. And it has protection from the Taunus mountains. Is that the way you pronounce it? Taunus in the north. Now Rheingau produces Riesling that is richer and riper. So with lots of stone fruits and it does still have a very stoney minerality compared to say slatey of Mosel. They are definitely the leaders here in drier styles of Riesling.

Janina Doyle 00:18:09 Now back to this very historic winery, they also claim to be the first winery to produce a Spätlese Riesling. Okay, ready? This is going to be the complicated part. We're gonna talk about must levels and the labeling terms on German wine. So actually this is probably the part where you should download the transcript, so you can see the spellings here. To find it, just go to my show notes and there'll be a link right at the top. So as with France and Italy, to put this into perspective, they have PDOs and PGIs, you know, they stand for Protected Designations of Origins or Protected Geographical Indications. So these are basically quality schemes where producers must follow certain rules. Well, here in Germany, they have the same kind of simple table wines at the bottom. Then they have Qualitätswein. So it's also known on a label, you might just see QbA, the B is in lowercase. And then the quality level that we are gonna talk about now is Prädikats system. So known as Qualitätswein mit Prädikat, which basically translates to quality wine with special attributes. Okay is everyone with

me? We're dealing with the Prädikats scheme right now? To be honest, I sweat even just thinking about talking about German wines. Okay so within the Prädikats system, a winemaker has a choice as to when he harvests his grapes and depending on the ripeness, it will qualify for a specific ripeness level. So Kabinett, if you see this on the label, it has to have, when it's measured, between 67 to 82 Oechsle. Now Oechsle is a hydrometer scale, which measures the density of a grape must. So that's Oechsle. Or if it's easy for you to understand when they weigh it, it could have 148 to 188 grams per liter of sugar, but at harvest time. So this is before they turn the sugar into alcohol. So before fermentation. So that's Kabinett, okay? And they can be dry wines. They could be fermented down to dryness or they could be off-dry. Spätlese, now this is what started this whole terrible conversation. Spätlese means late harvest and grapes have to have a sweetness level of 76 to 90 Oechsle or 172 to 209 grams per liter of sugar at harvest time, just to reiterate. Now with the extra sweetness level in the grapes, when picked Spätlese wines tend to be richer, rounder, more full bodied, and they are generally sweeter than Kabinett wines. Now they can be dry. To look out for on a label, if you see Trocken, that would mean dry and Halbtrocken means off-dry. So that can be quite useful. Now, when you see Auslese on the label, this means: Select harvest. So these are going to be sweeter still. So in terms of Oechsle they have to weigh in at 83 to 110, or if we're talking grams per liter of sugar, 191 to 260. So at this point they will have noble rot, which is basically a, a good fungus, which we want, which, um, pierces the grapes and allows them to shrivel. And that concentrate the flavors even more. And of course the sugar level is therefore gonna go up. You can still have a Trocken. You can still have a dry wine. This is the last wine in the category that could be dry. But of course, if it is dry, it's going to be the fullest. It's going to be the richest. It's going to be the roundest. Now going on from there, you can find sweet wines of Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese, and Eiswein. But I think that you'll be happy to know we're gonna leave that for another day.

Janina Doyle 00:22:23 So basically, um, Schloss Johannisberg accidentally fell on this style of Spätlese in harvest time. So what they were doing, they were waiting for official authorization to tell them that they could start the harvest. And for some reason, this authorization came a few weeks late, which meant by this point, the grapes were super, super ripe and even starting to shrivel up, but they picked them anyway. They pressed the grapes and realized that they had created something of superior quality. And so the style Spätlese was born. But to summarize, Schloss Johannisberg, they are a symbol of Riesling history, and today they are making delicious wines. In fact, anyone who is after a Magnum, I've just had a look Slurp and they're selling their Gelblack Riesling for just £35. And they're a pretty good site to get some wines from. You can get a normal 75 cl bottle there Bronzelack Riesling, which is dry. It says Trocken. That's £23.95. But don't be fooled, you can also go crazy and get a stunning bottle for £134. And that's the Goldlack Riesling Trocken. And that's 2017. So it's all about site there, the Goldlack Riesling. So while we all plan on getting some bottles of Schloss Johannisberg, let's go on to the fourth oldest winery on the list.

Janina Doyle 00:23:58 So in fact, I'm gonna put together number four and number five in the list, as they're both in Italy. In fact, in Chianti, Tuscany. Now both have been instrumental to the development of Chianti. So firstly in 1140 or 1,140 however you want to say it, Barone Ricasoli was born. Now since the last Baron has taken over, that's the 32nd Baron, he has renamed the winery to Ricasoli 1140. Now located in Gaiole, which is in the Southern Eastern part of Chianti. This is the biggest estate in Chianti Classico with over 1,200 hectares of land surrounding it. And 240 of those have been planted to vine. And it has the most incredible castle, the Castillo di Brolio, and having been there personally myself, I

can tell you, the architecture is absolutely breathtaking as is the views from the top. You climb up through this forest, winding and weaving, and you go up to about 400 meters above sea level. You can watch the sunset and then you can head down to their Osteria di Brolio restaurant, and you can eat and drink their wines. However, I do remember eating outside, all beautiful, all but being bitten like crazy by mosquitoes. Now, I suppose that's not really Ricasoli's fault and the vistas and the wine totally make for it. Now, if you are in the UK Vinvm sells like a whole selection of their wines. Their Brolio Chianti Classico, it's £17. Their Casalferro, which is a hundred percent Merlot that's at £40. And then they also have the Colledila Chianti Classico Gran Selezione for £54, amongst many others.

Janina Doyle 00:26:00 Now just a touch on Gran Selezione for a second, so you understand what you're getting if you see it on a label. This is the most prestigious, the most premium level for Chianti Classico, DOCG wines. And it came about in 2014. So you'll be able to find wines with this labeling from the 2010 vintage. Now with Chianti Classico itself, it just has to age for a year. So, you know, expect the lighter juicier, fresher red fruit, floral notes. Then with Chianti Classico Reserva, it needs to be oak aged for two years and spent three months aging in bottle, of course, this is gonna be a richer wine. There's gonna be more structure. The tannin levels will be higher. And of course that vanilla and tobacco notes are gonna come in from the oak. And then Gran Selezione, which accounts for about 8% of the wines needs to age for two and a half years in oak, and then have three more bottle aging before release. So again, with this, imagine it's even bigger again, but a lot more elegant, a little more finesse. Now, all of those three in the categories they need to be made with 80% Sangiovese in the blend and the rest will be made up of either the local varieties Caniolo or Colorino or international varieties, which are becoming more and more popular like Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. But when it comes to the Gran Selezione, one, it has to be a estate fruit. You can't buy it in. And it has to pass a pretty strict tasting by the Italian tasting boards. So for this specific wine year on year out, it might not have that Gran Selezione title. So it is vintage variable.

Janina Doyle 00:27:55 Now, going back to Ricasoli, Bettino Ricasoli has been credited with creating the original Chianti Classico blend back in the 1800s. So this winery is created many important markers in their history.

Janina Doyle 00:28:12 Then looking at the fifth oldest, although that could be a little bit controversial because Antinori, their wine making dates back to 1180, just 39 years later than Ricasoli. So now the Antinori family themselves, they agree that the wine making story really began in 1385. However, their restaurant Rinuccio 1180, which is on the rooftop of their like, oh, incredibly modern and inspiring winery is named after their forefather Rinuccio degli Antinori. Now he was recorded to be making wine from 1180 at the Castello di Combiate, which was just north of Florence. But then the history gets a little bit blurry and it's in 1385 that Giovanni di Piero Antinori became part of, of the winemakers Guild. And so the family dates officially start there. Now do go to their tasting rooms and winery. My gosh, if you ever have a chance, it's one of the best that I've ever been to. So they are located in the Northwest. So in the Val de Pesa region, just north of Greve. And this winery has these iconic spiral staircases. They have these tasting rooms with like floor to ceiling glass, and it hovers over the barrel rooms. There's something really calming. Everything's very dark and it feels historic. And then there's this rooftop that's just covered in grass. And if I remember rightly there's even vines up there. They, for me are one of the most well known names in the world, let alone in Italy. And this was due to the creation of Tignanello, which is now their flagship wine. So this was first created in 1971. This was significant because back then the Chianti regulations did not allow for any international varieties. And they created this wine that was

a blend of 80% Sangiovese 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Cabernet Franc. Also surprisingly white grape varieties were also expected to be part of a Chianti blend back then. So they completely ignored all the rules and they even aged their wine in new oak, which was another first as Sangiovese was only ever aged in old oak. So to do something like this was incredibly risky and it meant that they had to declassify their wine to just a simple table wine. But this new crazy blend became one of the first super Tuscans ever made (Sassicaia was actually the first one if you wanna go and look that one up) and together, they started the Super Tuscan revolution. So Tignanello now has become a cult wine. It is a real wine collector's wine. You can get a bottle of 2018 from Robertson Wine if you're looking for one for £135 a bottle, and actually I could go on and on about Antinori as you can have so many wine experiences with them if you go to visit. I stayed in oh, the most beautiful country, like a country house hotel. It had this swimming pool that overlooked the Tignanello vineyards. I hired a bike to do literally a five minute ride up to the Tenuta Tignanello to look around. And, oh my gosh, but I do warn you, cycling around Chianti is an experience. So hills upon bends upon hills, so get your practice in before you go or just hire a car. Yeah. Much simpler, but not as beautiful. Then you have, just going down south a little bit by a few kilometers they're Michelin star restaurant. They have Osteria di Passignano, and this is surrounded by vines. It's next to an old Abbey monastery that dates back to 395. And that's where they have these ancient wine cellars underground. And they are aging there Badia a Passignano wine. So this is a wine that gets the Gran Selezione recognition. And you can get a bottle of that from Vinvm.co.uk at a very reasonable £35 a bottle, or you can get from them the Pèppoli Chianti Classico. That's £16 a bottle. The amazing thing about Antinori, for their fame and the quality that they have, I actually that they producer really affordable wines. So go and check them out.

Janina Doyle 00:33:10 Okay. So I rambled on too much about the first five. So we are just gonna do a countdown for the last five. And then, you know, you can have a look and investigate yourself, or perhaps maybe I'll do a part two. Let me know. If more than four of you request a part two, I shall do so. But in sixth place for oldest winery, goes back to Germany and we are talking the Rheingau region. This is a winery called Schloss Vollrads in 1211 they were established. Back to Tuscany in Italy, in the year 1308 Frescobaldi started. Then we hop back over to Germany, but to the Mosel region. In 1335, you have the winery Karthäuserhof starting. Then we finish the last two on the list in Spain. Both of them are in the Penedès region, next to Barcelona. In 1548, the winery Can Bonastre was established. And then in 1551 Codorníu the famous Cava producer was established. So there you have it, the 10 oldest wineries in the world.

Janina Doyle 00:34:32 Opening up a bottle of wine, always has a story. And it's so exciting to get to know what's in that bottle, that vintage, what the winemaker was thinking. But even more exciting when you are pouring a glass of wine and thinking about how long their history dates back to, and especially if they've been so significant in changing what we drink today. So I hope that's got you motivated to maybe go out and discover some of these wines if you didn't know about them already. Now to finish off with, I leave you with a quote as always. And this one is by Clifton Fadiman, who was an American editor, writer and an anthropologist. And he says:

“To take wine into our mouths, is to savor a droplet of the river of human history.”

So there you have it. Next time you pour a glass, don't just sniff and sip, but actually stop and think about where it came from and where did it all start. Thank you as always for listening. If you have not shared this podcast with a wine loving friend, please do it now. Like the podcast, save, subscribe. If you

can leave a comment, that's even better. And especially if you're listening on apple podcasts. And next week, I have a fantastic chat with Natalie MacLean, who is an award winning writer of several books. So she's gonna be talking about those books, wine experiences, bringing you wine tips, amazing cheese and wine pairings. There's so much stuffed into that episode. So make sure you join us again next week. Until then, cheers to you.