

## THE 2017 VINTAGE

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

This was the smallest harvest in the modern history of our estate, and yet the young wines currently sleeping in our cellar are also among the finest we've seen in years. Fine as the 2015s and 2016s were, these wines will hardly play second fiddle to them.

### HOW DID WE GET TO THIS POINT?

The early months of the year were very dry, and after chilly January temperatures started climbing more than normal throughout February and March. April also got off to a warm start, with bud break beginning roughly two weeks earlier than normal.

Too early, unfortunately, as a cold snap hit us on April 20. Those frosty nights from April 20–24 were a critical time for the young growth in the vineyards. We made our stand with smudge pots on 2 hectares of vines. While the nighttime fire in the vineyards made for a beautiful spectacle, it was tough and tiring work. When frost is knocking at the door, those concerns don't matter, though.

May warmed up quickly and growth moved ahead speedily. From late May right into July, temperatures above 30° C were a common occurrence. Lovely summer weather gave both the vineyard teams and the vines something to enjoy.

Flowering was observed roughly 1 week ahead of the norm and progressed well in our key vineyards, as the soil's natural water retention properties had stocked up during stormy June and July.

August left us worried about violent storms and hail, although weekly rain kept the vineyards well watered, while the summery weather promoted very early ripening.

And then came another setback on August 25. A hailstorm damaged many of the vineyards on the Westhofener Berg heading towards Gundersheim.

It could have been worse; autumn was warm and dry, allowing the damaged sections to dry out completely. A tremendous amount of selection work in the vineyards was up next to separate damaged fruit from the ripe and the healthy.

It was an immense effort and produced unprecedented small volumes, but oh, the quality of those grapes. That is what kept us going day after day, sorting meticulously through each and every berry.

The AULERDE and KIRCHSPIEL sites produced perfectly healthy fruit, as the hail didn't strike there. On the BRUNNENHÄUSCHEN and MORSTEIN we successfully dueled with nature, with our fine selection ultimately delivering ripe, golden berries.

Many thanks to our hardworking team, who dedicated time, sweat and tears to the hard manual labor needed to bring this difficult harvest to a shockingly high-quality result.

