



THE  
ATHENÆUM  
PALL MALL LONDON

# AUSTRIAN WINE DINNER

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at 7pm



Speaker: Gloria Eichinger  
of Weingut Birgit Eichinger, Austria

Introduced by: Professor Kathleen Burk  
Chairman: Professor James Crabbe

## MENU AND DINNER WINES

Schloss Gobelsburg Brut Reserve Sekt NV, Niederösterreich  
(Lower Austria), 12%



Riesling Ried Zöbinger Gaisberg 2020, Erste Lage,  
Kamptal, 13%

White fish terrine with dill, crayfish tails and keta caviar



Grüner Veltliner Ried Strasser Gaisberg 2020, Erste Lage,  
Kamptal, 13.5%

Grüner Veltliner Ried Kammerner Lamm 2020, Erste Lage,  
Kamptal, 13.5%

Wiener schnitzel served with buttered new potatoes and  
green beans with speck and shallot



Kracher Beerenauslese Cuvée 2018,  
Burgenland, 10.5%

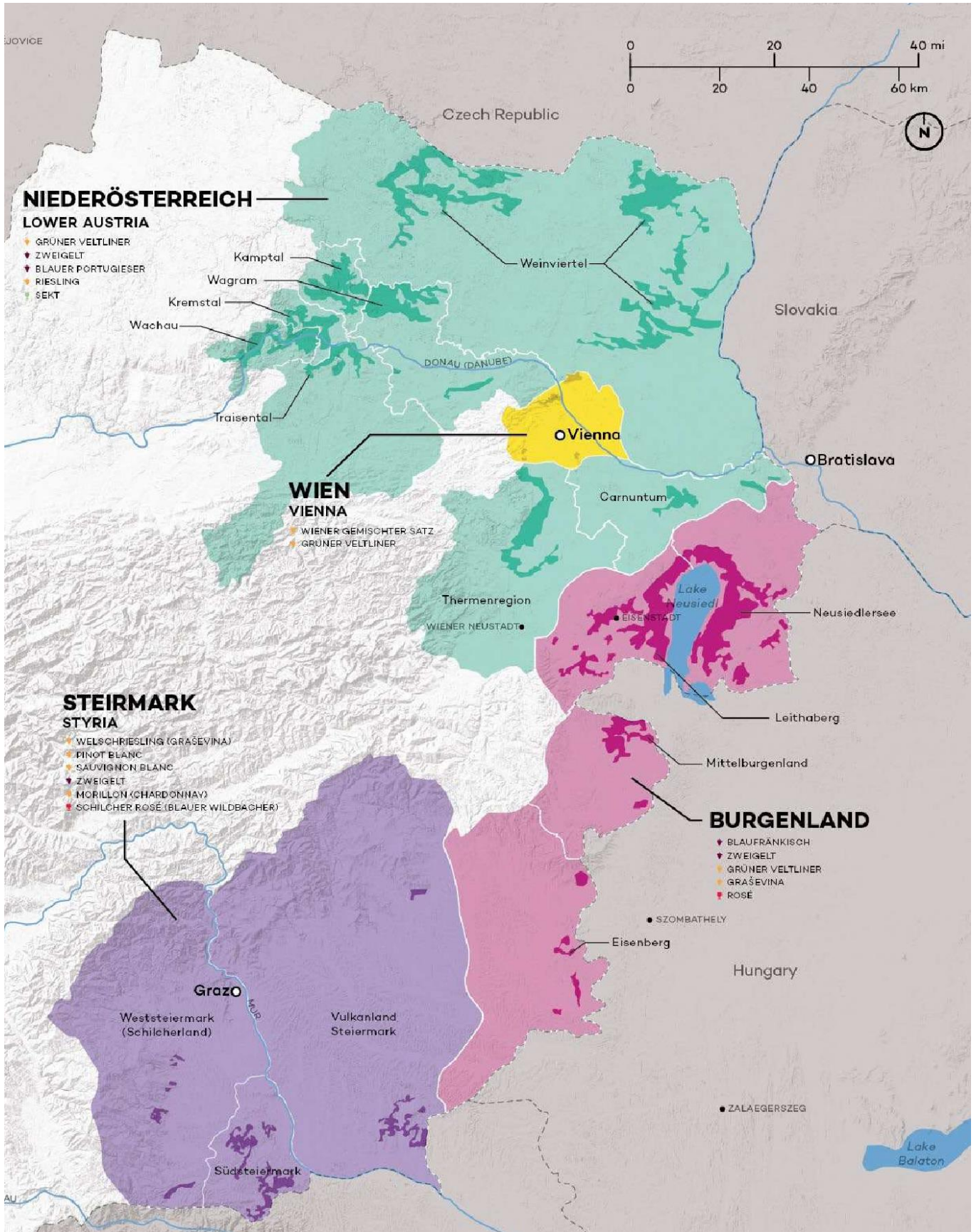
Warm apple strudel with vanilla ice cream



Coffee  
Petits fours



# MAP OF AUSTRIAN WINE REGIONS



# WEINGUT BIRGIT EICHINGER



# THE GAISBERG



## AUSTRIA AND ITS WINES

Austrian wines are much less well-known than they ought to be. Indeed, Jancis Robinson once remarked that Austria was the best-kept secret in the wine world. It has seven different wine regions, all of which produce different types of wine. This evening, we have four wines from Kamptal in Niederösterreich (Lower Austria), which specialises in white wines, and one from Neusiedlersee in Burgenland, which is the home of wonderful sweet wines.

Austria suffered badly from 1985 until this century because of a wine scandal. Some of you will recall that a few indifferent wines had had diethylene glycol added to sweeten them (they were under pressure from German supermarkets to increase production), and when this was discovered in 1985, there was a terrible uproar. Journalists referred to it as antifreeze; this was wrong – antifreeze is ethylene glycol – but this claim, of course, substantially increased the perception of scandal. In Austria, the result was to increase and tighten wine-making regulations, so that today they are probably the strictest in the wine world.

Two of our wines this evening are made from the Grüner Veltliner grape, which Austria considers its signature white grape. Twenty years ago it was an obscure grape, whose wines very few outside of Austria had tasted. Rather like the 1976 Judgement of Paris, in which Californian Cabernet Sauvignons significantly bested clarets and became very well known, the so-called London Tasting 2002 made clear the quality of Austrian Grüner Veltliners in comparison with Chardonnays from around the world. These included white burgundies from Montrachet and Corton Charlemagne made by Domaines Leflaive and Rasmonet, and Louis Latour. Grüner Veltliner had come out top in competitive tastings in Singapore and Vienna earlier in 2002. Jancis Robinson and Tim Atkin did not really believe these results, and organised a similar tasting in London which took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2002. There were seventeen judges, including Steven Spurrier, Tim Atkin and Robinson herself. Of the thirty-five wines tasted, only eleven were Grüner Veltliners, yet of the

top ten wines, five were Grüners; the top two (from Knoll and Bründlmayer) were Grüner Veltliners. The top white burgundy, Louis Latour's Corton Charlemagne, came 18<sup>th</sup>, whilst the Gaja Chardonnay Rey from Italy came 13<sup>th</sup>. Sadly, the result did not make the same splash as had the Judgement of Paris.

Nevertheless, those of us who are keen on Austrian wines are pleased to see their increasing popularity, particularly in the US; Germany and other northern European countries have always liked them. I hope that members here this evening will be encouraged to try more examples - there are already several on the Coffee Room wine list. A Grüner Veltliner is considered one of the best possible food wines, able to partner a wide range of foods.

A word about two terms used might be useful. A 'ried' means that a wine is from a single vineyard parcel. Erste Lage or first position refers to single vineyards that, after extensive consideration, have been deemed to be the top vineyards in Niederösterreich.



Grüner Veltliner Vineyards

## Schloss Gobelsburg Brut Reserve Sekt NV, Niederösterreich, 12%

In 1171 the monks of the Cistercian Zwettl Abbey in Austria received their first vineyards. Wine has been made there since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century quality slumped. In 1996 the monastery came to an agreement with Michael Moosbrugger and Willi Bründlmayer in which it granted them a long-term lease to manage the property. Moosbrugger is the hands-on partner. The vineyards are farmed organically. They have a wide variety of old vines, and, interestingly, when re-planting is needed, they use massal selection, i.e., grafting cuttings from the old vines onto rootstocks. About half of the vines are Grüner Veltliner, a quarter are Riesling, and the remaining quarter are red varieties. One of these is Pinot Noir, brought over from a brother abbey in Burgundy, and the first to be planted in Austria. In fact, Pinot Noir is one of the three grapes used in the Sekt, the other two being Grüner Veltliner and Riesling.

‘Reserve’ with regard to sekt has a legal meaning under Austrian wine law: the sekt must be made by the *méthode champenoise* and it must be aged for at least eighteen months. Schloss Gobelsburg of course uses the *méthode champenoise*, and then gives it six months’ cask storage before bottling it. The wine remains on the lees for two to three years before it is riddled by hand and then disgorged.

The wine is pale yellow with masses of tiny bubbles and is bready on the nose. When drinking it, there are hints of lemon and a nice yeasty taste, the acidity remains until the end, and it is a bit rich with something of a round palate.

## Riesling Ried Zöbinger Gaisberg 2020, Erste Lage, Eichinger, Kamptal, 13%

Birgit Eichinger comes from a winemaking family. Her father, however, believed that it was not possible for a woman to run a winery alone; with fewer machines available then, there was too much work without a man being involved. Her sister had married a winemaker, and they took over the winery. Birgit left for wine school, followed by an internship at Castel Giocondo Frescobaldi in Montalcino. She then returned to Austria and set up her own winery, beginning with 3.5 hectares; they now have fifteen. 1992 was her first vintage. Her reputation has continued to grow, with critics referring to her as a 'star'; the wines have an international reputation, with 50% exported. For some years her daughter Gloria has taken an increasing part in the winemaking, until it is now fully shared.

She was one of the founding members of '11 Frauen und ihre Weine' (11 Female Winemakers and their Wine), a group of well-known female winemakers in Austria who make up a close network to support each other in a traditionally male-dominated industry, exchanging expertise and developing new practices in the vineyard and cellar.

Gaisberg is one of the very top vineyards in Kamptal, and Zöbing is the village near their parcel. It is on crystalline rocks near the top, ideal for Riesling. This wine was macerated, fermented and matured in a stainless steel tank, resting on its lees until it was bottled last July.

The wine is pale yellow, with white peach and flowers on the nose. On the palate it is dry, with slowly emerging and then lively acidity. It is dominated by minerals rather than fruit, but it also has a touch of roundness. It is complex, with a long finish.



## **Grüner Veltliner Ried Strasser Gaisberg 2020, Erste Lage, Eichinger, Kamptal, 13.5%**

Although both the Riesling and this Grüner Veltliner come from the same vineyard, they are planted on very different parcels, in this case near the village of Strass. They have different types of soil. Riesling prefers a stony soil where it has to work to thrive. Grüner Veltliner, on the contrary, thrives in fertile loess soil, which is composed of up to 20% clay and with roughly equal parts of sand and silt. This means that it provides good drainage for the vines, and it is easy for their roots to penetrate the soil. Grüner Veltliner makes a rounder and usually a bit less acidic wine than does Riesling. This wine was macerated, fermented and matured in a large oak barrel and a stainless steel tank and then blended. It rested for six months on the lees and was then bottled in August.

The wine is pale yellow with restrained fruit and a hint of honey on the nose. On the palate there is lovely acidity which slowly grows in the mouth; it is certainly a full mouthful, quite juicy and with a touch of spice and salinity. It has a long finish.

## **Grüner Veltliner Ried Kammerner Lamm 2020, Erste Lage, Eichinger, Kamptal, 13.5%**

This is arguably their top wine. They have a 1.5 hectare parcel on Lamm, another of the very top vineyards in the Kamptal. The soil has a base of volcanic rock and sandstone with a lot of silt, which is covered by loam and loess. This is a very good soil for Grüner Veltliner vines and, combined with its south-facing position, enables wines of exceptional quality to be made. This wine was macerated in and also enjoyed spontaneous fermentation in oak; it was then left to mature for six months on the lees in large and small oak barrels. It was bottled in August. The wine was awarded a 'Best in Show' with 97 points at the 2022 Decanter World Wide Competition.

The wine is pale yellow with sustained tiny bubbles and an aroma of sweet fruit and flowers. On the palate there is a lovely persistent and integrated acidity which grows in the mouth without being overwhelming. With a touch of spice and a long finish, it is a complex wine.

**Kracher Beerenauslese Cuvée 2018, Neusiedlersee, Burgenland,  
10.5%**

Kracher wines were referred to by a distinguished critic as being a 'Dazzling array of super complex, deliriously sweet wines', and it is difficult to know what to say after that. Kracher is on the east side of the Neusiedlersee, and when near the vines, you can see the lake close by. It is a humid area with morning mists. Consequentially, there are endless bunches of botrytised grapes from the wide variety of vines planted - seventeen, both white and red - from which they vinify many different sweet wines. This wine is made from 60% Welschriesling and 40% Chardonnay. It is aged for twelve months, 85% in stainless steel tanks and 15% in large oak casks. For those interested, the residual sugar is 145.7 grams per litre.

The colour of the wine is a mixture of orange and gold. When drunk, it is somewhat peachy with a lovely balance between acidity and sweetness and layers of complexity.

# MEMBERS AND GUESTS

Dr John Ballard	Professor Peter Lantos	Paul Tumim
Patrick Newton	Hazellanne Lewis	Louisa Tumim
Colin Barrow	Dr Paul Lewis	Professor Tim Unwin
Sir David Bean	Dr Meredith Lloyd-Evans	Dr Ettie Unwin
Brian Laners	Cian McAuliffe	Christiane Valansot
David Blow	Ray Long	Marguerite Van Reenen
Philippa Vaughan	Yvette Long	Angela Dean
Jeremy Bolton	Gus Machado	Simon Wethered
Nicholas Goddard	Jo Ormandy	The Revd Mark Woodruff
Jeff Branch	Richard Mair	Deborah Sweet
Dr Ross Breckenridge	David Mann	Dr Andrew Wright
Dr Sisira de Silva	Ranjit Mathrani	Guest of Dr Andrew Wright
Professor Kathleen Burk	Ravi Bulchandani	James Wright
Michael Hildesley	Patrick McGuinness	Philippa Wright
Dr Stephen Cannon-Brookes	Guest of Patrick	Brian Yates
Professor Paul Ciclitira	McGuinness	Janice Nisbet
Guest of Prof. Paul Ciclitira	Colin Menzies	Dominic Young
John Clark	Edward Kemp-Luck	Guest of Dominic Young
Alistair Cliff	Dr John Moore-Gillon	Graham Young
Juliet Joynson	Laura Morgan	
Dr Richard Collins	John Neilson	
Prof. Terhi Rantanen	Jon Hancock	
Dr Ian Cooper	Clare Pelham	
Dr Anne Egan	Dr Jonathan Punt	
Bruce Cope	Nina Punt	
Douglas Richardson	Professor Niall Quinn	
Raymond Cousins	Patricia Rothman	
Kit Farrow	James Rothman	
Professor James Crabbe	Charles Samek	
Margaret O'Rorke	Maria Samek	
Prof. John Deathridge	Nikki Fennell	
Dr Victoria Cooper	Simon Fennell	
Eamonn Doran	Michael Shaw	
Guest of Eamonn Doran	Gery Roberts	
Gloria Eichinger	Dr Kevin Shields	
Pallab Ghosh	John Murtagh	
Guest of Mr Pallab Ghosh	Martin Smedley	
Prof. Anthony Heagerty	Helen Smedley	
Beverly Heagerty	Nicholas Smedley	
HH Brendan Hegarty	Kate Jennings	
His Hon. Judge Mark Pelling	Prof. Sir Terence	
Stuart Hibberdine	Stephenson	
Dominic Knight	Lady (Alison) Stephenson	
Brian Landers	Prof. Susan Castillo Street	
Michael Langley	Liz Landers	
Patricia Langley	David R F Thomas	