

Bouquets of melon, mango and peach

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Winemaker Sybille Kuntz, from the Mosel region, creates excellent-quality wines from almost 100-year-old vines.

It's dusty and dark in the Kuntz family's ancient wine cellar. A train of tiny gas bubbles rises continuously from the winding glass tubes stuck tightly in countless wine barrels. Sybille Kuntz smiles contentedly: as long as the bubbles keep rising, the grape juice is happily fermenting and maturing in wooden casks and stainless steel tanks, safely on its way to becoming the unmatched Mosel Riesling. Sybille Kuntz, only daughter of a long-established Mosel winemaking family, founded her own wine estate in 1984 in her home village Bernkastel-Lieser. At the age of 27, well equipped with a degree in economics, and with the support of husband Markus – oenologist from South Baden, incidentally from a family that also looks back on a long history of wine-making – Sybille Kuntz made up her mind to pursue her own very special wine philosophy.

The couple sees itself as wine-makers, not vintners; good wine must be wanted.

And they both put a great deal of time and effort into it. Sybille Kuntz firmly believes in her up-to 100-year-old Riesling vines, nestled into the steep hillsides, surrounding the wine-growing villages of Lieser, Bernkastel-Kues and Wehlen. They thrive especially well in conditions of intensive sunshine, and even in dry summers their elaborate root system is still capable of drawing sufficient humidity out of the slate soil, which also delivers vital minerals and lends Mosel wines their characteristic flavour.

To Sybille Kuntz, grapes are a sensitive natural product. All the estate's grapes are carefully harvested by hand. The precious fruit must on no account be crushed before it reaches the cellar, otherwise it grows mouldy.

Quality wines, not mass production: the winemakers' concept has turned out to be a complete success. Their powerful "heavy" wines are admired for their extraordinary flavour and independent profile, and need to be explored and enjoyed at leisure.



Establishing a new estate headed by a woman in the traditional German wine industry has been a challenge.

Connoisseurs go into raptures about their typical aromas; melon or a hint of mango. But native bouquets like stone fruit or red vineyard peach can also be discovered in Kuntz wines.

In the meantime, the little wine estate in Lieser has started to export its excellent wines all over the world. And the "Queen of Riesling" – as a Dutch wine periodical recently referred to Sybille Kuntz – is particularly proud of one thing: her *Trockenbeerenauslese* wines. Using hand-picked, sun-dried raisins Sybille Kuntz creates high-quality sweet wines. A very special treasure, the *Trockenbeerenauslese* vintage of the extraordinary summer of 2003, is still slowly maturing deep in the dusky wine cellar: Five litres of grape juice, as thick and dark as honey, with a record sugar content of 319 Oechsle degrees. Inside a thick bulbous bottle the liquid gold is slowly fermenting and this could even become the *Trockenbeerenauslese* of the century – after all, the really good stuff just has to ferment for a while.)