

University of Gastronomic Sciences



Undergraduate Degree Program in Gastronomic Sciences

RÄUSCHLING A LOCAL GRAPE VARIETY FROM ZURICH

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Riesling

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1 Introduction

1.1 Preface

During my three-year undergraduate studies at the University of Gastronomic Sciences, I learnt a lot about viticulture and oenology. Mainly I learnt about wines from Italy and France. However, we hardly ever talked about the wine production in Switzerland or my place of origin, which is the canton of Zurich. During the three years at this University I developed a great interest in the world of wine and the stories and people who are behind the wine bottles.

By writing this thesis, on one hand I will finalize my undergraduate studies and on the other hand I want to learn more about the wine production in the canton of Zurich. I would like to find out how the production of wine was in the past and how it is today. In particular I want to find out more about the production of the autochthonous grapevine Räuschling and its wine.

In May 2013 I visited various wine producers in the region of Zurich. During these visits I discovered the grapevine Räuschling and that it is one of the only autochthonous grape varieties from this region. I could have written my thesis on a more common grape variety like Pinot Noir or Müller-Thurgau, which are largely grown in this region as well as in many other parts of the world. However, I wanted to concentrate on a grapevine, which is hardly known outside the borders of the canton of Zurich but which may have a very promising future. Räuschling is an ancient, local white grape variety, which is only produced on a small scale in Switzerland and that is why I thought it is so interesting. Its wine is mainly sold in the region where it is produced and there is hardly any advertising done for its sale.

1.2 Aim of the research

The principal aim of this research is to find out what the grape variety Räuschling and its wine are today and what they were in the past. Where are its origins and what happened with it during the great viticulturist crisis in the early 20th century? Moreover I want to find out what the production methods were in the past and how they have changed over time. What are the methods and strategies of the wine producers today in order to get high quality wine?

I especially want to concentrate on the people who produce this wine today. Who are they and why do they produce this problematic grapevine? Which are the difficulties the wine growers from the region of Zurich have to encounter in general and what are the difficulties connected with the grape vine Räuschling? In the last part of my thesis I want to concentrate on the definition of the terroir of the region of Zurich. What influence does terroir have on the quality of the wines produced in it? At last I want to concentrate on the dynamics of the Swiss wine production. What is happening right now? Who are today's Swiss wine producers?

1.3 Methodology of the research

This thesis may be divided into four parts. In the first part I want to assess the history of wine of the country of Switzerland in general and the region of Zurich in particular. Furthermore I am going to look at the laws established by the government, concerning the production of wine in Switzerland. In the second part I will point out the origins of the grape variety Räuschling, its characteristics and its production methods today and in the past. These two parts will be based mainly on literature found in the central library of the University of Zurich, which is exclusively in German. In the third part of my thesis I am going to present three different case studies of wine producers from the region of Zurich, which all produce Räuschling. The interviews will be attached in the appendix in German. The interviews were all open, where the interviewee talked most of the time freely about their companies. For the fourth part I will assess the characteristics of the Zurich wine terroir and the dynamics of the Swiss wine production in general with the help of a wine expert.

2 History and legislation

2.1 The history of wine in Switzerland

We cannot know for sure where the first wine was produced, or who was the first person to make wine and consume it. However, scientists found evidence of grapes and wine production that dates back to 7000-5000 BC in Georgia¹.

It is not sure when wine production started in Switzerland, but most probably it was not before roman times. Before 100 BC, when the Romans arrived in Switzerland, Swiss people were already in possession of the knowledge about wild grapevines and about wine itself, imported from other places, in particular from Marseille. Though they did not produce any wine. Wine production in Switzerland did not start until the Roman domination.

The next evidence of wine culture in Switzerland dates back about 1600 years to the region of Basel, where scientists found remains of grapevines. Another sign is the temple for Dionysus, the god of wine, located in the Ticino region and a sickle-shaped knife used in the grapevine.

The first literal mentioning of wine and its production in Switzerland, can be found in the centuries 700 and 800. In the early 9th century there are many evidences of wine production in eastern Switzerland, especially from religious centres, that strove to plant grapevines in suitable locations and produce wine for their rituals.

In the 13th century the wine production in Switzerland was already well established and the production capacity was almost exhausted. However, the demand for wine was still greater than it's offer. That's when the wine import started to grow. Wine was imported especially from Alsace, the Markgräflerland and the Neckar region in Germany, Tirol and France.

In the 17th century after the Thirty Years' War the southern German wine producers were in great difficulties because a lot of their vineyards were destroyed during the long period of war. Swiss wine producers took advantage of the German situation and exported their wines to the regions of southern Germany.

In the early 19th century, wine producers in eastern Switzerland dealt with problems exporting their wine to south Germany and Austria, which made them realize they could not afford to produce quantity wine anymore. Before that, Swiss producers

¹ Johnson H. (2005), *The Story of Wine*, London, Octopus Publishing Group Ltd

would export their low quality wines to southern Germany, where the German producers would blend the Swiss wines with their wines, in order to increase their quantity. As the export for the Swiss wine producers became impossible, they were forced to improve their wines, in order to be able to sell them in their own country. That was when some ancient grape varieties that produced large amounts of wine with low quality, were substituted by Pinot Noir. This grape variety, imported from France, was very suitable for this region and the results of it were of higher quality than the wine from the local grapevines.

With the appearance of the Phylloxera, a grape destroying insect imported from America, in France and in Switzerland in the 19th century, the viticulture crisis started. From the 1880's until after the Second World War the wine production in Switzerland decreased more and more. Not only because of the Phylloxera which destroyed a great amount of vineyards, but also because of the high production costs of agricultural products. It was the time of the industrialization and most people went to the cities to work in factories. That was the reason why the agricultural labour costs increased and the farmers were not able to pay their workers anymore. Wine production was not lucrative anymore and many unfavourable vine locations were replanted with other crops, which needed less human labour. Apart from the Phylloxera, other vine diseases appeared, like downy mildew and powdery mildew, which destroyed the leaves of the vines.

Bad weather, which led to bad harvests where another reason for the viticulture crisis to occur. From the maximum of 34'380 hectares of grapevines in Switzerland in 1877, it went down to the minimum of 11'849 hectares in the 1960's. However, the Phylloxera and the viticulture crisis in general, did something good for viticulture, as it destroyed the grapevines in unfavourable locations. After the crisis only the good locations were replanted with, European vines, grafted on American varieties. This was the only way to fight the Phylloxera in an efficient way, as the American vines were immune against the Phylloxera. In the end the quality of wine increased after the crisis. At this point in time many autochthonous grape varieties started to disappear. The viticulturists preferred to plant varieties that were more resistant to the Phylloxera and other vine diseases. The government even financially supported

the planting of resistant varieties.² That was when local varieties, like Räuschling and Elbling, were replaced by Pinot Noir and Müller-Thurgau.³

In 1953 the aim to produce quality wine and not bulk wine was enforced by the national wine laws, which are valid until today.⁴

2.2 Introduction to the history of Swiss wine law

With the viticulture crisis at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the Swiss government started to play a role in the production of wine. Until the First World War there was a liberalist ideology in Switzerland, because of which the government would not intervene in wine production and in agriculture in general. However, having experienced the harm of the viticulture crisis, the government needed to intervene in order to overcome the problem of the Phylloxera and to help the wine growers and the vineyards. Viticulture research centres were established in Wädenswil, in the canton of Zurich and in Lausanne. The government supported the fight against the Phylloxera and thus slowly entered and changed the wine production in Switzerland. In 1929 the agricultural law was revised and it was established that the cultivation of Phylloxera resistant grape varieties would be financially supported by the state. With this revision the government took over the decisions which grape varieties to cultivate and where to cultivate them. This caused many traditional, local varieties to be substituted by less sensitive, Phylloxera resistant and at that time more prestigious varieties.

During both World Wars Swiss wine producers had no problems to sell their wines in their own county, as the borders were closed for the import of foreign wine. Soon after the two wars however, the problems of selling local wine in Switzerland started all over again. In 1951 the agricultural law was revised again. Even though for other agricultural practices the imports were restrained, the wine market was made more liberal in order to give Swiss farmers an advantage on the internal market, the wine market was more liberal. The main object, of the new articles about viticulture and wine in the Swiss law from 1953, was to increase the quality of the wine produced in

² Flüeler N. (1980), *Schweizer Rebbau Schweizer Wein*, Zürich, Ex Libris Verlag

³ Bättig H. et al. (1997), *Reben und Wein im Kanton Zürich*, Dielsdorf, Weinbaukommission des Zürcher Bauernverbandes

⁴ Flüeler N. (1980), *Schweizer Rebbau Schweizer Wein*, Zürich, Ex Libris Verlag

Switzerland. The wine articles from 1953 were the basis for the wine and viticulture laws, which are valid until today.⁵

2.3 Swiss wine legislation today

Swiss viticulture and wine production of today are regulated in the “Verordnung über den Rebbau und die Einfuhr von Wein” (Regulation on viticulture and the import of wine) established on the 14. November 2007 and in the “Verordnung über den Rebbau” (Regulation on viticulture) established on the 19. November 1980. The following information is entirely based on those two documents.

The execution of the laws on viticulture and wine production is done by four entities: the government, the construction authority (*Baudirektion*), the single municipalities, which produce wine and the viticulture commission (*Rebbaukommissariat*), which controls viticulture in every canton.

The municipality controls the health and cultivation of the vineyards as well as the mandatory precautions against diseases and harmful insects, which are pre established by the government. Moreover it informs the *Rebbaukommissariat* about infestations of pests and it controls the newly cultivated locations.

The *Rebbaukommissariat* is also a helping entity for the wine growers; they may get consulting for their particular vine cultivations. The commission is also responsible to do scientific research in the field of viticulture and wine production in general. Another important function of it is the controlling of the import and production of new plant material for viticulture. It controls the purity of the grape varieties and their health. The system for the execution of the law and the control of the viticulture in Switzerland is well defined and not centralized on one single entity. It is distributed on four different entities of control, which control each other. This way it is more likely, that everyone involved follows the rules.⁶

The economic situation in Switzerland is quite difficult for farmers. That is partly, because of the much higher labour costs, when compared to those costs in foreign countries. This leads to lower prices for imported agricultural products than for local ones. That is one of the reasons why in Switzerland farmers get financial support from the state. The taxes, which the citizens pay to the state, are partly used to support the farmers. The subsidies, for all producers of agricultural products, are

⁵ Flüeler N. (1980), *Schweizer Rebbau Schweizer Wein*, Zürich, Ex Libris Verlag

⁶ *Verordnung über den Rebbau*, (19.11.1980), SR 916.51

defined in the “Direktzahlungsverordnung” established on the 7th December 1998. There are three main categories of reasons why a producer has the right to receive subsidies from the state. The general subsidies are defined by the size of the land and its inclination; the ecological subsidies are defined by whether the farmer follows organic production methods or not; the third category is called the ethical subsidies and is based on animal welfare. For viticulture only the first two categories are relevant.⁷

Compared with other farmers, viticulturists do not receive a lot of subsidies. Maybe that is, because they produce something much more valuable than the products of other farmers.

There are two different kinds of subsidies for wine growers. The first one is obtained if the farmer decides to cultivate a new parcel of land or if he decides to replant an already existent vineyard. This subsidy is obtained only once. They are based on the size of the land and on the inclination of it. If the inclination is less than 30% the subsidy will be one CHF per square meter, if the inclination is between 31 and 50% the subsidy will be two CHF per square meter and if the inclination is over 50% and if there is terracing the subsidy will be three CHF per square meter.

The second subsidy the wine growers obtain are defined by the inclination of their existent vineyards, these are obtained once every year. For vineyards with an inclination of 30-50% the subsidies are 1'500 CHF per hectare, over 50% they obtain 3'000 CHF for each hectare and for vineyards with terracing and over 30% inclination they obtain 5'000 CHF per hectare.⁸

Considering the fact that working with machines on a vineyard with an inclination of over 30% is almost impossible, the subsidy of 1'500 Swiss francs per hectare a year seems rather low. On a vineyard with this inclination all the work needs to be done manually, which costs a lot of time and labour.

The wine growers therefore may not at all rely on the subsidies. Instead they have to sell their wines at a price, which makes it possible for them to make a living with the production of wine. The prices of Swiss wines compared with the ones of foreign, imported wines, are usually the same or even higher. This works for the inland wine market, but it makes the export of Swiss wine almost impossible.

⁷ *Direktzahlungsverordnung*, (7.12.1998), SR 910.13

⁸ *Verordnung über den Rebbau*, (19.11.1980), SR 916.51

2.4 Swiss denominations of origin for wines

In Switzerland the quality of wines and their originality are controlled and protected by the “Weinverordnung” (*wine regulation*). One part of this regulation is about the denominations of origin in different parts of the country. The denominations are called AOC (in French *Appellations d’origine contrôlée*). There are three types of AOC. The *AOC cantonale*, referring to one canton, the *AOC régionale*, referring to one region inside a canton, and the *AOC locales*, referring to a very small area of the canton. All of the AOC are listed in the “Schweizerisches Verzeichnis der kontrollierten Ursprungsbezeichnungen” (*Swiss register of controlled denomination of origins*), which can be found at the end of the “Weinverordnung”. In total there are 78 AOC in the whole country. In the canton of Zurich there are only two, which are *AOC cantonale Zurich* and *AOC régionale Lake Zurich*.

Every canton defines the rules for their AOC, which the winegrowers inside of these regions need to follow, in order to call their wines AOC. The grapes must at least be grown in the defined area of the AOC. The rules include among others a list of grape varieties that are allowed to cultivate in that region. The minimum sugar content of the grapes is also specified and must be contained at the time of the harvest.⁹

Räuschling is produced in an AOC protected area, the *AOC régionale Lake Zurich*. However, the wines with the AOC label in Switzerland are not necessarily better than the ones without the denomination, but almost 90% of all wines in Switzerland are part of an AOC.¹⁰ This fact shows that the rules of the AOC are not very strict. However, there is no other quality label for Swiss wines.



Figure 1: Map of Switzerland with illustration of the cantons

⁹ Verordnung über den Rebbau und die Einfuhr von Wein, (14.11.2007), SR 916.140

¹⁰ Schweiz Natürlich AOP IGP, www.aop-igp.ch, Schweizerische Vereinigung der AOP IGP (2003)

3 Räuschling

3.1 The origins of Räuschling

The exact origins of the grape variety Räuschling are not known. In fact the ancestors of this grape have not been identified by any DNA analysis. Nevertheless we can make a vague classification of the grape variety. A published scientific research, states that it probably originates from the crossing of Gouais blanc and Savagnin.¹¹ Most likely Räuschling is one of the oldest grape varieties in the region of Lake Zurich. Unfortunately though, there are no indications as to where it came from and how it spread in the region, where it is cultivated these days. However, we can say for sure that at the beginning of the 20th century Räuschling was widely spread in the German speaking part of Switzerland. But because of the viticulture crisis it was replaced by other varieties that were easier to cultivate and to work with.¹² Räuschling was considered a variety of low quality until its small revival in the late 20th century. At that point some wine growers started to replant this old but traditional grapevine. Soon they discovered that it makes a very good white wine, if treated in the right way.

The name Räuschling may derive from the German verb *rauschen*, which means to whoosh and refers to the sound the leaves make when wind goes through them. Räuschling has very dense foliage, which is quite loud in the wind. Its name may also come from Russling, referring to the reddish coloured wood of its stems. As Räuschling has many synonyms it is often confused with other grape varieties like for example Dretsch, Drutsch, Klöpfer, grosser Räuschling, Offenburger, Züribebe, Züriwiss and many more.¹³

¹¹ Robinson J. et al. (2012), *Wine Grapes*, UK, Allen Lane

¹² Welte H. (1976), *Reben und Wein am Zürichsee*, Stäfa, Th. Gut + Co. Verlag

¹³ Robinson J. et al. (2012), *Wine Grapes*, UK, Allen Lane

3.2 The Räuschling producing region

The Räuschling of today is cultivated on a total of only 23 hectares, of which 18 are located in the canton of Zurich. The other four hectares are in the cantons nearby. The canton of Zurich consists of 172'900 hectares land in total of which in 2012, 661 hectares were cultivated with grapevines.¹⁴ There are several wine areas in the canton of Zurich. The most prestigious locations are probably the ones along the eastern shore of Lake Zurich, which is also called the *golden coast*, because this side of the lake gets more sun than the other one. This is also where many Räuschling producers are located. This area may have the best reputation among the people, but whether it has the best vine locations in the canton cannot be said for sure.



Figure 2: Map of the canton of Zurich

Before the viticulture crisis Räuschling was more common in Switzerland. Since after the crisis, it is only cultivated along Lake Zurich, along the river Limmat, which is the outlet of Lake Zurich, and in the small region around Uhwiesen, in the northern part of the canton of Zurich.¹⁵

This can also be seen by the amount of wine produced nowadays. The 18 hectares of Räuschling in the region of Zurich produced a little over 1'000 hectolitres of wine in 2012.

Since the beginning of wine production in the region of Zurich, there had always been produced more red wines than white wines. Up to now 65% of the grapevines are red grapes and only 35% are white grapes. The most common varieties are Pinot Noir representing 53% of all grapevines and Müller-Thurgau (or Riesling-Silvaner as it is called in this region) with 20%. The third most common variety is Räuschling with only 2.9%.¹⁶ Other varieties are Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer and others.

¹⁴ *Statistik Schweiz*, www.bfs.admin.ch, Bundesamt für Statistik (2013)

¹⁵ Nägeli E. (1966), *Ostschweizer Reben Ostschweizer Wein*, Frauenfeld, Verlag Huber

¹⁶ Wirth A. (2012), *Rebjahr und Weinlese 2012 im Kanton Zürich*, Zürich, Strickhof

3.2.1 Climate

The most important weather aspects for the cultivation of vines are precipitation, the duration of sunshine and temperature. The colour and the intensity of the grape's aroma increase with higher temperatures during maturation. If the temperatures are relatively low during maturation as it is the case in the region of Zurich, the wines will be more delicate and can be conserved for a longer period of time. Anthocyanins are the pigments contained in red grape varieties and develop best in a temperature range of 17 to 26° Celsius. The optimal temperature for aroma synthesis in grapes is between 20 and 22° Celsius, provided there is enough sunlight and water available. There is a close relationship between aromatic compounds present in the grapes and the conditions of the cultivation region. Especially the climatic conditions in spring and those in between the time of the veraison (when the grapes change their colour) and the harvest, is crucial for the quality of the grapes.¹⁷

The climate charts of the national weather information centre MeteoSchweiz from the years 1981 until 2010 show that the medium temperature in the region of Zurich is 9 to 10° Celsius. The medium precipitation in this region is between 1100 and 1500 millimetres every year. The mean relative sunshine duration in one year is around 38%. In spring (April-June) the medium temperature is between 8 and 17° Celsius and the mean precipitation is between 83 and 128 millimetres. In summer, during the maturation of the grapes (July-September), the medium temperature is 14 to 19° Celsius and the medium precipitation is 99 to 124 millimetres.¹⁸

These climatic conditions are not ideal for vines. However, the low temperatures in summer cause a relatively high acidity in the grapes of the Räuschling, which helps the wine to be aged for a long period of time. In summary one can say, even if the region of Zurich does not have optimal conditions for vine cultivations, there are some locations (like the eastern shore of the lake), where some grape varieties thrive very well.

¹⁷ Marengi M. (2007), *Manuale di Viticoltura*, Bologna, Edagricole

¹⁸ *Meteo Schweiz*, www.meteoschweiz.admin.ch, Bundesamt für Meteorologie und Klimatologie (2012)

3.3 Characteristics of the grape variety Räuschling

Räuschling, sometimes called Zurich-vine (*Zürirebe*), is a white grape variety. It has relatively big berries, its leaves are rough on the lower side and its stems are reddish. The grapes as a whole are also quite big, compared to other varieties cultivated in the same region. Its berries are juicy and tasty which is why many families grow this vine along their houses and use the grapes as table grapes at home. Before new modern and famous grape varieties like Müller-Thurgau were created and planted in Switzerland, Räuschling was the most widely used white grape variety in the German speaking part of the country. However, there are some negative aspects of this vine, which caused it to nearly disappear completely from the vineyards. The negative characteristics of this plant are: it is late maturing, its blossom is extremely sensitive to rain and the weather in general and the grapes tend to burst during the maturation period.

In spring the weather at Lake Zurich can be quite rough including a lot of rain, which can influence the grape development. Räuschling is especially prone to coulure, which is a phenomenon of grapevines to not develop berries from the blossoms during periods of cloudy and rainy weather. When coulure occurs, the wine grower cannot do anything against it. The problem is that the blossoms don't fertilize themselves and therefore, no berry will be growing from those blossoms resulting in a low harvest in autumn.

Two other negative aspects of this vine result from the fact that its berries grow quite big and have a very thin skin. On the one hand, small grapes give more aroma to the wine, because the main aromatic compounds are situated in the skin of the berries and not in its pulp. The less juice there is, the stronger will the flavour of the wine be. On the other hand the big berries tend to burst in heavy rain or hail. In fact most of the winegrowers at Lake Zurich and all over the canton have hail insurance for their vineyards. If the berries burst the grapes



Figure 3: Räuschling grape destroyed by hail

become more prone to the attack of *Botrytis cinerea* or *Coniella diplodiella* (white rot). If that is the case, the entire grape can no longer be used for vinification anymore.¹⁹

Therefore the Räuschling yield is very inconstant. In one year there may be a sufficient yield to meet the demand of the market, in other years there is not enough. This is a great risk for the wine grower because he cannot know in advance what his income will be at the end of the season. This is one of the reasons, why many viticulturists substituted their Räuschling vines with other varieties that are less sensitive.

Räuschling produces 500-900 grams of grapes per square meter every year, depending on the climatic conditions throughout the season. In 2012 Räuschling produced on average (from all Räuschling vineyards in Switzerland) 760 grams of grapes per square meter. All of the grape varieties produced between 400 and 850 grams per square meter, the minimum in 2012 were 380 grams per square meter for Gewürztraminer.²⁰ As you can see by these numbers the range of the yields is very large. Despite the big risks for the wine growers, the consumers are very into this wine, as it has decent scents of fruit and an elegant acidity.²¹

The wine produced by the grape variety Räuschling usually is called after the variety's name. The wine growers from Zurich are very proud of their autochthonous grapevine and its wine. It is great for an aperitif or combined in a dinner with fish from Lake Zurich, it may also go along with fondue or asparagus.

¹⁹ Interview with Rico Lüthi (see appendix 9.1)

²⁰ Wirth A. (2012), *Rebjahr und Weinlese 2012 im Kanton Zürich*, Zurich, Strickhof

²¹ Welti H. (1976), *Reben und Wein am Zürichsee*, Stäfa, Th. Gut + Co. Verlag

4 Räuschling cultivation and production

4.1 Cultivation methods in the past and in the present

Most Räuschling vines in the area of Zurich are about 20 to 30 years old; they were planted at the end of the 20th century, when Räuschling had its small comeback.

At the beginning of the cultivation process the wine grower had to decide which cultivation method to use. The most important thing to consider is the balance between sunlight and shade summer time. If the grapes get too little sun they will develop less aromas; if they get too much sun though, they will lose their acidity, which is very important not only for the taste of the wine but also for its ability to be aged.²²

As the vine is one of the oldest plants cultivated by men, many cultivation methods developed over time. Men quickly realised that if the vine does not grow along the ground, as it does in its wild form, its yield is a lot more satisfying. There is some evidence that in ancient times, people would let their vines grow up onto trees. Later the farmers discovered that the yield of the vine depends a lot on its cultivation method, so they started to give the plant more space. They would prepare stakes from trees, which they put into the ground and plant the vines right next to them. Like that the vines could hold onto those stakes and grow vertically. The only difference to the freestanding vines, which are common nowadays, is that they did not have any wires.²³

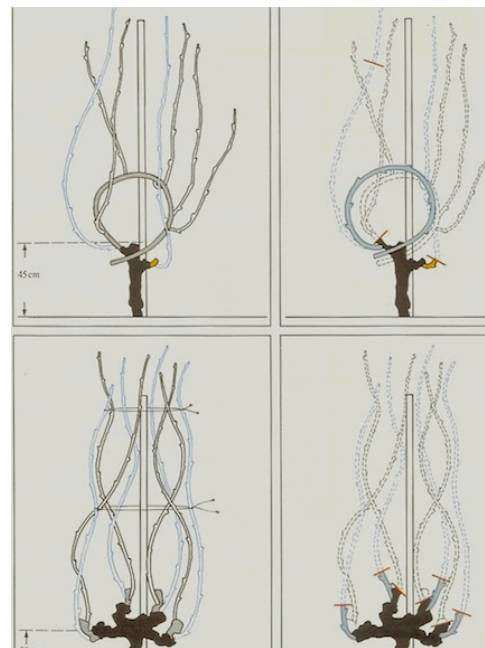


Figure 4: Illustration of the *Sticklebe*

Until almost one hundred years ago most of the vines in Switzerland were planted with the *Sticklebe* method. This traditional method consisted of a long wooden stake, stuck into the ground. The vine was planted right next to the post and grew along it, almost like in ancient times. Every plant had its own post and grew straight

²² Marengi M. (2007), *Manuale di Viticoltura*, Bologna, Edagricole

²³ Johnson H. (2005), *The Story of Wine*, London, Octopus Publishing Group Ltd

up around it. The plants were put in lines with a distance of about 50 centimetres. Each summer before the maturation period the viticulturist went into the vineyard to cut out some of the leaves, in order for the grapes to get more sunlight. This method of cultivation was good in times when no machines were available in the vineyards and when the amount of vines was not as big as it is today. The *Stickelrebe* required a lot more work, than the methods used today. The grapes did neither grow on the same height nor on the same side of the plant, which made the harvesting even harder.

Around the middle of the 20th century most of the wine growers in the area of Zurich changed their cultivation methods and started to plant their vines in lines. Nowadays only few *Stickelrebe* vines can be found in this region.²⁴

Today most of the vines are planted in lines, either parallel to the slope line or perpendicular to it. They are always connected by wires and wooden or iron stakes.

The vine training methods mostly used today in Switzerland are either cordons or the Guyot method. Thus the vines grow neatly in lines along the wires and the grapes grow all on the same height and on the same side of the plant. The methods used today have many advantages, which make the work in the vineyards easier.

Many vineyards along Lake Zurich and also in other areas in the canton are very steep. The wine growers often decide to plant their vines on terraces perpendicular to the slope line and not parallel to it. This makes the work in the vineyard a little easier for the viticulturist.

Before the viticulture crisis in the beginning of the 20th century, Räuschling was doomed to be a quantity wine, because nobody had the intention or the ability to improve this wine. It was hard work to cultivate this grape variety. In the region of Lake Zurich people believed, that out of ten years there would result only three good years and seven bad ones. In many years the yield was small, either because the rain damaged the berries during the maturation period or because of the coulure in spring. In the good years though, Räuschling grows quite big grapes. However at that time, nobody would consider cutting out some of the grapes or parts of them in order to make the wine better. The main goal was to produce as much wine as possible, even if that wine would not taste very good. It could always be sold, or used to blend it with other wines of higher quality. And in fact, if you leave all of the grapes on the

²⁴ Interview with Rico Lüthi (see appendix 9.1)

vine, you get a lot of grape juice with little flavour and a lot of acidity. This is because the aroma is all in the skin of the grapes and not in its pulp. The outcome of this method was around 1.5 to 2 kilos of grapes per square meter, which is much more than today's 500 to maximum 900 grams per square meter. These methods led to a great quantity of bad tasting wine and the reputation of Räuschling suffered. Many viticulturists decided to quit producing Räuschling, because they could not make a living with the ever-changing yields and they considered other grape varieties to be more profitable.²⁵

Today the wine growers who are still producing this wine, do it out of passion and because it is one of the only local and autochthonous grape varieties of this region. To improve the quality of the wine there are several methods, which the viticulturists apply in the vineyard.

Approximately one month before harvesting, the wine growers go into the vineyard to thin out the Räuschling grapes. They cut out half of all the grapes either by cutting off the lower part of every grape, or by cutting the grapes vertically in half. This is to make sure that the aroma is more concentrated in fewer berries. The sugar content increases and the acidity slightly decreases. The maturation is a little anticipated and above all the harvest is easier and faster. In the end the wine is always of a better quality, if the grapes have been thinned out before or during the maturation period.

In early summer, all of the wine growers including the Räuschling producers prune their vines. They cut out some of the leaves around the grapes. This is to make sure, that enough air surrounds the grapes and it avoids the moulding of the berries. If all the leaves would be left on the vine, it would be too hard to get to the grapes with the eventual herbicides, which prevent moulds and other diseases. The grapes would be packed inside of a thick wall of humid leaves, which eventually may lead to moulding. The best thing to do is to simply cut out the leaves closest to the grapes, which are not useful to the plant anyway, because they do not get any sunlight. This requires a lot of manual work though. Many wine growers have too many hectares to do the leaf removal manually. There are machines that are able to do this work. They are not as precise as a winegrower's hand, but they are a lot quicker.²⁶ It is important that not all of the leaves around the grapes are taken away. In the Räuschling vineyards, the viticulturist usually takes away the leaves only on one side of the vines, in order to

²⁵ Interview with Cécile Schwarzenbach (see appendix 9.2)

²⁶ Morando A. (2005), *BioVitiEnologia...o no?*, Asti, Edizioni Vit.En.

protect them from the hail. Also, if the grapes are exposed to the sun too much, they may burn and lose some of their acidity.²⁷

In the region of Zurich, all the vines need to be covered by nets during the maturation period in autumn, when the berries have changed their colour and are still ripening. This has to be done as soon as possible, in order to keep the birds away from the ripe berries.²⁸

4.2 Integrated production methods

In the canton of Zurich and also in most other wine regions in Switzerland, the winegrowers use the so called integrated production methods. This means to produce high quality grapes, wine and other grape products, while protecting the environment and the human health. The main goal is to use as less chemicals as possible in the vineyard. The winegrowers try to use chemical herbicides and pesticides only if there is a real hazard. For example only if there is the mildew disease present on the own vineyard or on the one of the neighbour, the winegrowers will use chemicals to fight it. However if there is no actual danger, no chemicals will be used for prevention.

The vineyards at Lake Zurich and in general in the canton of Zurich are all located on hills and some of them are in quite steep areas. The vines are planted either parallel to the slope line of the hill or perpendicular to it. The perpendicular vines are mostly planted with the terracing method, in order to facilitate the work for the winegrower and to prevent the soil from erosion. The vines that are planted parallel to the slope line of the hill are more prone to erosion. If the viticulturist decides to use herbicides to take away the grass and herbs between the vines, in order to prevent diseases and to get rid of harmful insects, the soil is even less protected from erosion. If it rains most of the good topsoil gets flushed down the hill and even more chemicals are needed to fertilize the soil again. It needs to be considered, that by taking away the herbs and grass between the vines, not only the harmful but also the good and useful insects are killed. There are many beneficent insects, which keep the vine healthy. All of the wine growers I met during my research claimed that using as less chemicals as possible is the best you can do for your vineyard. The only thing they do against the wildly growing weed between the vines is mowing two to four times

²⁷ Fox R. (2006) „Physiologische Aspekte der Traubenzonen Entlaubung“, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Obst und Weinbau*, Nr. 8/06, Page 6-8

²⁸ Interview with Rico Lüthi (see appendix 9.1)

every year. Summing up, integrated production means to follow the rules of a sustainable viticulture.

4.3 Common production methods of Räuschling wine

In general this white wine is made with the same methods used for other white wines. Räuschling is hardly ever put in wooden barrels, because of its delicate aromas, that could easily be overwhelmed by the flavours of the oak. The entire vinification process is done in stainless steel. In the old times, when Räuschling was still a quantity wine, there were no possibilities of controlling the vinification of this delicate wine, which made it difficult to get a high quality wine. The wine grower could not control the temperature and therefore neither the periods of the vinification.

At times when the temperature in the wine cellars could not be controlled, the malolactic fermentation only happened in late winter when the temperatures outside started to rise again. This means that quite a long time passed between the alcoholic fermentation and the malolactic one, which clearly had a great impact on the flavour of the final wine. The malolactic fermentation is the process where malic acids are transformed into lactic acids by the bacterium *Oenococcus oeni*. The pH of the wine increases slightly and the wine becomes softer in its taste. This particular bacterium is very temperature sensitive and only active at a temperature over 12° Celsius. Today the wine cellars are mostly equipped with cooling and heating installations. This makes it possible to decide whether and at which point he wants to do the malolactic fermentation.²⁹

Not all white wines go through the stage of malolactic fermentation. For some wines it is not wanted at all. Most Räuschling wines though do go through this second fermentation. Räuschling has a lot of acidity and by doing the malolactic fermentation, the acidity decreases slightly and the taste of the wine becomes more soft and structured. However, the production methods cannot be generalized, as every winemaker decides for himself how to produce his wines. This is a very individual decision taken, depending on the preferences of the winemaker. During the course of the research for this paper I met many different wine growers using several production methods. Some wine growers did not put their Räuschling wines through the malolactic fermentation, which led to a more dry and acid wine. Generally in wine

²⁹ Morando A. (2005), *BioVitiEnologia...o no?*, Asti, Edizioni Vit.En.

production there are hardly any rules. The Strasser family for example puts one of their Räuschling wines into oak barriques, which might be suitable for their wine but for others unthinkable. In the wine production the winemakers may experiment with different production methods and decide in the end, which final product they prefer.

5 Three examples of Räuschling producers

In the following part of this paper I am going to present three different Räuschling producing companies. I have chosen those three companies, because they are very different in their structure and their way of thinking.



Figure 5: View on Lake Zurich from Rico Lüthi's Räuschling vineyard

5.1 Lüthi Weinbau

On the front page of Rico Lüthi's homepage He says: "Sometimes I would like to catch the atmosphere at Lake Zurich within my wine bottles."³⁰ Rico Lüthi's objective is to transform his experience in the vineyard and the atmosphere of the region into his wines. He wants people to experience the beauty of this region while drinking his wines. His wines are supposed to transmit Rico's work and the originality of his vineyards to the people who consume this special wine.

Lüthi Weinbau is located in the town of Männedorf, about fifteen kilometres from the city of Zurich, at Lake Zurich. This town is in the middle of the Räuschling producing region. There are many vineyards on the hills of Männedorf right next to Lake Zurich. Two hectares of those vineyards belong to the Lüthi family. The young couple is renting the two hectares of vineyard since 1998. Before that, Rico learnt to be a viticulturist at different wine companies throughout the country. He gained many experiences working with several wine growers in different regions of Switzerland.

³⁰ *Lüthi Weinbau*, www.luethiweinbau.ch, Lüthi R.

However, he always knew that he wanted to be his own boss. In 1998, when Rico took over the vineyard in Männedorf, there were already five different grape varieties planted there. He used what had already existed and started to produce wine right away. The vines on his vineyard are all about twenty to forty years old. Only the *Scheurebe* he decided to plant ten years ago out of his passion for this white grape variety from Germany.

The decision to rent a vineyard instead of buying one was an obvious one for Rico and his wife. To buy a vineyard is a very big investment and at the time it was no option for the Lüthi family. In the end they decided to rent the vineyard on a regular basis. Another decision they had to take was whether to build their own wine cellar, to rent one or to use the one of another wine company. To build your own wine cellar, with all the machines that are needed to make high quality wine, is another very big investment, which the family could not take. There are many wine producing families in Männedorf and its surroundings and many of them have long time experience in wine making and have their own wine cellars. The Lüthi family decided it would be best for them to bring their grapes to one of the big cellars in town and to produce their wines there. Since the beginning of their business, they transform their grapes into wine in the cellar of the Schwarzenbach family, more about them later on. Rico not only uses this cellar to transform his grapes into wine, but also to store his red wine, the Pinot Noir in the barrels. Over the years the two wine growers developed a great friendship, from which both of them benefit. In 2008 they started to work on the idea of producing a Räuschling wine together. The details about this coproduction you will find in the next chapter.

Rico Lüthi is a passionate wine grower with a job, which he does with lots of enthusiasm and commitment, but he is a realistic person and knows that in about twenty years he will retire and the family company will close down. There is nobody in the family who is willing to keep the company running, when the couple are no longer able to produce wine. This is another reason for them to rent the vineyard and the wine cellar. It would be too big of an investment to build a wine cellar, which they would have to sell again after thirty to forty years of using it. It is a quite rational way of thinking, but for them it was the right way.

When Rico started to produce wine on his own vineyard, it was convenient for him to have the interaction with the other wine growers in the cellar where he transforms the

grapes into wine. Like that he could discuss the wine production with his colleagues and did not have to make the decisions all on his own.

Producing wine from the grapes until the finished bottle is a full time job, especially in a family business where no external labours are helping during the year. The only time when the Lüthi couple gets some help in the vineyard is when the nets, which protect the grapes from the birds are put up and during the harvest.

It is hardly possible to do the work of a viticulturist part time or as a hobby, especially if you have only little land and cannot afford any external workers. The land and the plants require you to be ready to take care of them at all times. The only time of the year, when some vacations are possible for a wine grower is in winter. Summer is the most delicate period of the year, because that is when the grapes are ripening and the wine grower has to be ready at any time. Weather is an always changing factor. Depending on the humidity and the temperature it may be necessary to intervene against mildew with chemicals. If the person, who is responsible for the vines, is not available at that moment, there is a great risk that all the grapes are going to be bad. As a consequence the yield will be low in that year and the wine grower will not make any profit at the end of the year.³¹

About the grapevine Räschling Rico says that it is his speciality, apart from the *Scheurebe* mentioned above. He claims that nowadays the wine consumers prefer something special to the common known wines. Räschling is something very special because it exists only in this region. Lüthi's Räschling and their other wines are quite successful. They sell them mostly to private persons and to some restaurants in the region. As their production is small, they do not make a lot of advertisement for their wines. They are able to sell all of their wines every year without having to struggle.

³¹ Interview with Rico Lüthi (see appendix 9.1)

5.2 Weinbau Schwarzenbach

The Schwarzenbach family is in the agriculture and wine business since four generations. It all started in 1912 when Hermann Schwarzenbach I. bought the Reblaube a splendid farmers house in Obermeilen and the land, which came with it. For the first two generations the Schwarzenbach family were farmers, who produced many different kinds of agricultural products apart from wine. Then in 1962 Hermann III. decided to specialize in wine production and the family abandoned all other agricultural activities. It was the time after the big viticulture crisis; the hectares of vineyards in the whole country were still decreasing. However, Schwarzenbach was very passionate and courageous about the wine production. He can be considered a real wine pioneer in the region of Lake Zurich. He transformed his own grapes only, without



Figure 6 The basic Schwarzenbach Räuschling wine label

buying more grapes from other farmers as his ancestors always did. He changed the vine training method from the *Sticklehrebe* to the Guyot method, which is standard today. Also he was one of the first to leave the grass and herbs standing between the vines. All other wine growers at the time used chemical and physical methods to get rid of all greens between the vines. On top of everything, he planted some new grape varieties, like Pinot Gris and Chardonnay, which were not yet allowed in the canton of Zurich. He avoided the restrictions from the state by declaring them as vines planted for research. Soon after Hermann III. took over the business from his father, he started to train young farmers. This tradition goes on until today; there have been many young viticulturists that have learnt how to grow and how to make wine at the Schwarzenbach family.

Since the beginning of his work in the Reblaube, Hermann III. never abandoned the Räuschling vines. Like Cécile Schwarzenbach told me in the interview: “My father-in-law always remained faithful to the Räuschling”.³² Even if most of his neighbours decided to take out the Räuschling vines, because of the high amount of work it

³² Interview with Cécile Schwarzenbach, translated by the author (see appendix 9.2)

takes and the fewer profit it brings, he invested even more in them. He took good care of his Räuschling vines and planted some new vineyards. The result of this investment is that according to Cécile today Räuschling is the booming wine of the region. Apart from that, the Räuschling wines of the Schwarzenbach family are probably the most famous ones in the region of Zurich.

In 1986 Hermann IV. took over the family business and leads it until today. At that time they had only three and a half hectares of vineyards. Over the time they expanded their business to the today's eight hectares. Now they cultivate twelve different kinds of grape varieties of which they produce about twenty-five different wines every year.³³

In 2002 Hermann's son Alain entered the wine family business, assuring that the family business will go on at least for another generation. This led to the decision of building a whole new wine cellar in 2007. In this new and modern wine cellar there is enough space for the grapes of the eight hectares of the family Schwarzenbach and the production of the wine of many other wine producers from the region, including Rico Lüthi. The new wine cellar makes it possible to control the whole process of transforming the grapes into wine. Here the temperatures and the humidity can be controlled at all times.

The work is clearly divided between the family members. Hermann deals with the white wines, while Alain deals with the red ones and the mother Cécile deals with the marketing and accounting of their wine business. The Schwarzenbach family is very well known in the canton of Zurich and outside of its borders. They are the ones that invest most in the product placement and marketing of their firm. Since 2012 there is even a second company which belongs to the Schwarzenbach family, more about that in the next chapter about the wine yeast 1895C.³⁴

³³ Kilchmann M. (2012), *100 Jahre Schwarzenbach Weinbau*, Winterthur, Schwarzenbach Weinbau

³⁴ Interview with Cécile Schwarzenbach (see appendix 9.2)

5.2.1 The yeast 1895C

In 2008 the Schwarzenbach wine company held a wine degustation for the 113th anniversary of their Räuschling production. Friends of the family and many important wine connoisseurs were invited to this special event to taste different Schwarzenbach Räuschling wines from the last 113 years. Räuschling has the right acidity to be aged for more than twenty years similar to some Riesling wines. Some of the wines tasted during the tasting in 2008 were over one hundred years old and according to the persons who attended the degustation, still tasted excellent.

Also attending the degustation was a professor from the wine research institution in Wädenswil, who wanted to test some of the wines on yeasts that were still alive. After the event, some of these Räuschling wines were tested in the laboratory and in fact they found some *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* yeasts in bottles from 1895, 1935 and 1962, which were still alive. In the research institute in Wädenswil on the other side of Lake Zurich, the yeasts were isolated from the wines, reactivated and multiplied. After the discovery of the yeast, different wine producers in Switzerland started to use it and had success with it. This led to the creation of the company called Swiss Wineyeast in 2010. In 2012, for the first time a bigger production of the yeast in the laboratory was possible. The yeast company is still very young and there are not many wine producers who know use this particular yeast. In future it may be successful as it is a natural and local wine yeast, which has not been modified in the laboratory. Today most yeasts used for the conventional wine production are created in the laboratory and are not autochthonous to the region where they are used. In the laboratory the scientists are able to select the yeasts and in this way decide partly how the taste of the end product will be. The wine producers choose the yeasts, according to the wine they want to produce. Nowadays many wine growers prefer yeasts that do not change the taste of their wines. The most natural thing to do is to not add any yeast to the wine before fermentation. In that case the naturally present yeasts in the wine cellar will do their job on the must and the wine producer has no control at all over the fermentation of his wines. This is a very risky method and therefore most of the wine producers choose to add yeasts, which has been selected before in the laboratory. The 1895C yeast is in between the two types of yeast. It is a local yeast, which has been isolated and reproduced in the laboratory. Like this the

wine grower is able to use an autochthonous yeast, without having the risks of using the naturally present yeasts.

The main advantage of the yeast 1895C is that it maintains the real taste of the grape variety. It does not change the natural taste of the wine. It is especially adapted for producing Räuschling wine but it may also be used for other white and red wines as well as for sparkling wines. Another advantage of this yeast is, that it needs hardly any nutrients. Furthermore it has a high alcohol tolerance; it withstands an alcohol content over fifteen percent volume. This can be an advantage in the red wine production. The wine producers usually want to produce wines with only little residual sweetness. All of the sugars need to be fermented by the yeast for the wine to taste dry. If the yeast has a low alcohol tolerance by the time it ferments one part of the sugars present in the must the yeast dies, because of the high alcohol concentration. Like that there will be left some residual sweetness.

The 1895C yeast is used today by the Schwarzenbach family as well as by the Lüthi wine business. Both of them have produced wines with this yeast, which have achieved different wine awards.³⁵ The wine yeast 1895C was used for the first time for the fermentation of the R3 wine more about it in the next chapter.

5.2.2 The R3 wine

R3 is the name of the wine, which is made by three different wine growers. It is a particular and prestigious wine, as only the best grapes are used for its production. In 2007 three different wine growers from the region of Lake Zurich came together and decided to produce a Räuschling wine, which is better than all other Räuschling wines. The three producers are Hermann Schwarzenbach, Rico Lüthi and Monica Bürgi from the Weingut Rütihof Uerikon. The three wine companies are all located within twenty kilometres distance from each other along Lake Zurich. They produce different white and red wines and all of them produce the local grape variety Räuschling. Some years ago the three wine growers were sitting together and had the wish to produce a Räuschling wine that is typical and that transmits



Figure 7: The R3 wine bottle

³⁵ *Swiss Wine Yeast*, www.swisswineyeast.ch, Swiss Wine Yeast GmbH (2013)

the terroir of Zurich. The idea was to do a selection of the main harvest from three different vineyards of the region. During the main harvest there is one harvesting team, which picks only the most perfect and ripe grapes for this special wine. There is a second harvesting team, which picks the rest of the grapes to produce the more simple, basic Räuschling wines for each company. The harvest therefore is the most delicate time in the production of this wine and it employs a lot of human labour, which explains the rather high price of 28 Swiss Francs (about 23 Euros) for every bottle. Compared to the prices of the basic Räuschling wines (from ten to eighteen Swiss Francs) of these wine producers the R3 wine is a quite expensive one.

Not only the harvest is special about this wine, but also its vineyard sites. The Räuschling vines used for this wine are grown on three different sites with three different kinds of soils. On the Räuschling vineyard of the Schwarzenbach family in Meilen the soil is mainly limestone with sandy clay. In Männedorf at Lüthi's vineyard there is mainly clay loam. Last but not least in Uerikon at Monica Bürgi's vineyard, there is pebbly lime soil on granite. These three different kinds of soils are all typical for the region of Lake Zurich. This is why the wine growers decided work together and produce this typical wine. For the production of it the natural yeast 1895C is used. The first vintage was 2008 when they produced 2000 bottles. This particular wine is sold to both private persons and to restaurants in the region.³⁶

The production of the R3 wine is quite small and probably it will not increase, as the three companies would have to increase the size of their vineyards. This wine is a very good example for a typical and high quality Räuschling wine. It expresses all the characteristics of the Lake Zurich terroir. However, the companies invest very little in the marketing strategy of this wine. Instead they hope it will speak for itself. I think there could be done a lot more to promote this special wine also outside the borders of the canton of Zurich. The promotion of such special wines always brings in interested people from outside, which could be a gain for the whole region.

³⁶ R3, www.r3-wein.ch, Hasler M. et al.

5.3 Winzerkeller Strasser

The third winery I visited is located in the northern part of the canton of Zurich in the town Laufen-Uhwiesen. This region of the canton is called the *Weinland*, which literally means the land of wine. It is an area where many wineries are located and most of them mainly produce Pinot Noir, Müller-Thurgau and some other wines. I decided to visit this third winery to get an insight on a different reality. The two wineries before were both located at the shore of Lake Zurich a region with a lot of prestige. This winery instead is located in a region of which many do not even know that it produces wine. However, it is interesting to see and taste the differences between the two regions, which are only about forty kilometres away from each other.

Also this winery is a family business. In the 1980's Albert Strasser started to produce wine as a hobby. Soon he decided to make his passion into his daily work and started to produce wine professionally. In the early 1990's he graduated in viticulture and oenology and expanded his production by buying more vineyards. The family's wine soon became quite famous in the region and also beyond the canton of Zurich. In the beginning of the 2000 years they had to move into a bigger house, where they had more space in the cellar for the production and the storage of their wines. Nadine Strasser, the daughter of the family, decided to become a wine grower as well early in her youth and went to study in the French speaking part of Switzerland. In 2003 she came back and started to produce her own wines in the winery of her father. Only six years later Nadine Strasser and her husband took over the family business, due to the very early death of Albert Strasser.

Since the beginning of their wine production the Strasser family produces Räuschling. The second vineyard they bought was an old Räuschling vineyard. After the first few years Albert Strasser realised that the location of this vineyard was not ideal for the production of Räuschling. Due to its exposure the Räuschling grapes



Figure 8: Strasser's basic Räuschling wine

were not able to grow well. Therefore they soon bought more vineyards close to the first one, which were more suitable. However, they did not want to lose the old vines that were on the first vineyard. They decided to replant the old Räuschling vines, which already were about forty years old. Albert Strasser hired a professional to do the plant propagation of the old Räuschling vines. The family meticulously controlled the process of the propagation and their grafting onto the American vines to protect them from the Phylloxera. They planted the young shoots at the new locations. Still today these vines are used for the production of their Räuschling wines. At the place where the old vineyard used to be they built their house.

Today the Strasser winery has six hectares in total, of which one hectare is Räuschling. In the interview with Nadine Strasser she said: "Müller-Thurgau is a rather boring grape variety, everyone produces it. Räuschling is a lot more interesting with its crisp acidity. Räuschling has a lot of potential it can be used for many different wines and it is not at all boring. Above all it can be aged."³⁷

In fact, the Strasser winery produces five different wines, which contain the grape variety Räuschling. They produce the basic Räuschling white wine and put one third of the must into big oak barrels. The second Räuschling they make is called *Räuschling Fumé*. It is fermented in small oak barrels and it stays in them for at least ten months. They also produce a rosé wine called *Schiller*, which is a blend of Räuschling and Pinot Noir. At last they produce a sparkling wine and liquor out of Räuschling. The barrels they use for the Räuschling wine production need to have been used before, otherwise they would give too much taste to the wine.

About fifteen years ago the Strasser family started to think about producing their wines following the biodynamic rules. They always thought it could not be right to use too many chemicals in the vineyards. They did not like the fact that they had to wear protective clothes and gloves when working in the vineyard. All new vineyards they planted were planted in the biodynamic way. They soon decided to apply for the Demeter certification. To get the certification of being a biodynamic agricultural business every farmer has to go through a transition period. The Strasser family is in the transition period since three years now. Today all of their vineyards are certified biodynamic, but their wines are not yet. They do not declare their transitioning on the wine labels though. In this region there are not many wineries that have the Demeter or any other organic or biodynamic certificates. Many claim to produce their wines in

³⁷ Interview with Nadine Strasser, translated by the author (see appendix 9.3)

an organic or even biodynamic way, but do not have any certificates. It may be true what these producers say, but nobody knows for sure. Many of those producers are convinced of the principles of an organic or biodynamic production, but do not have the patience of getting through the transitioning time and all of the paper work that comes with it. Nadine Strasser was afraid of the bureaucracy too before applying for the Demeter certificate. However, she wanted the consumers to have trust in their business. If a producer claims to be biodynamic without a certificate the consumers can never fully trust him, because there is no controlling power. Whether there is a difference in taste between the wines that are produced conventionally and those produced with the biodynamical methods cannot be known for sure. Nadine Strasser and her family once compared two Räuschling wines, one from their biodynamic vineyards and one from their conventional vineyards. They claim that they tasted different; that the biodynamic one had more refinements and that it was tastier. In any case it is not only the taste that counts. The main reason for having a biodynamic production is the protection of the earth, the plants and the people.

Apart from the bureaucracy there are other obstacles the Strasser family had to overcome in order to obtain the Demeter certificate. Having a biodynamic production means not to use any chemicals in the vineyards. The only help are the biodynamic preparations. 2012 was a difficult year for Strasser's vineyards. In summer there was too much rain. Humidity, too little sun and heat are the perfect conditions for the growing of mildew. That year a big part of the grapes were destroyed. The Strasser family could have used some chemicals, because they are still transitioning. Their problem was though that most of their vineyards are too steep to use any machines when the soil is wet. They could not treat all of their six hectares manually before all of the grapes were infested. Especially the Müller-Thurgau vines suffered a lot. The Räuschling vines suffered less and could resist the mildew more effectively. This is why Nadine Strasser is thinking of planting even more Räuschling vines instead of the Müller-Thurgau ones. Her father was already convinced to stick to the traditional, more difficult but also more resilient grape vine Räuschling, instead of changing to the easier to handle Müller-Thurgau. Even if they have to go through many difficulties, they continue to believe in the biodynamic production. The Strasser winery is a company with a lot of, which should play a model role for other wineries in that region.³⁸

³⁸ Interview with Nadine Strasser (see appendix 9.3)

6 The social and geographical environment

6.1 The Zurich wine terroir

It is a controversial question, what terroir really means and whether it really exists. Some claim terroir is everything what makes a wine as it is and that it has a great influence on the taste of the wines. Others claim that only the knowledge and the decisions of the wine maker influence the taste of wine. In this chapter I will try to give a short description of what terroir might be in general and what the Zurich wine terroir is.

When talking about wine and its production nowadays it is almost inevitable to mention terroir. The term terroir is French and cannot be literally translated into English or any other language. An attempt of translating the term is 'sense of taste', but this does not communicate all of the meanings that the term terroir implies. Wines are always connected and interlinked with the terroir from which they come from. They are always in connection with their place of origin. The term terroir includes landscape, history, climate, soil, geomorphology, grape variety, vineyard and the work of men. All of these factors have great influence on the end product, the wine. Probably the three most important factors are the grape variety, the environment and the people on which I am going to concentrate in this chapter.

There are a lot of different grape varieties in the world and each of them has a different interaction with the environment. That is why not every grape variety grows well in every environment. The interactions between these two factors vary a lot. The resulting product is directly related to the interactions between the vine and its surroundings. Depending on the climate, the soil and the exposure of the vineyard a vine produces different tasting grapes and thus the wine will taste different too.

However, there is a third very important factor, which is the human labour. Without men, who work the land and press the grapes, there would be no wine at all. Two wine growers who live right next door to each other and who grow the same grape varieties will not produce the same wine, because the human factor is what makes the difference. It gives the produce uniqueness and originality. The wine grower analyses his land and his grapes and makes many decisions before producing his wine. Every wine grower has different priorities and decides in a different way, which leads to different wines.

Terroir is not only the vine the environment and the people but also the history of the place and the people. In places, with a long history of wine production the inhabitants have more knowledge of their territory and its climate. They have long time experience of working in the vineyard and in the wine cellar, which usually leads to a higher quality of the wine.

In different parts of the world different factors are considered to be important for the quality of the wines. In some parts for example in France and in Italy the place of origin of the wine is the most important quality indicator. The history of the place of origin accounts for the wines quality. Moreover, the wines are usually named after the region they come from and not after the grape variety. In other regions like in Germany the USA and also Switzerland the grape variety is considered to be more important than the region. Most of the wines from these areas are called after the grape variety they are made of. There are also places where the production method is the most important factor of the wine production. The wine producers there usually try to meet the demand of the consumers. This results in similar tasting wines, as all of them have similar production methods. This is usually the case in places where there is hardly any wine tradition.³⁹

Terroir is a phenomenon that can be found only for wine and for no other food products. Like Nicola Perullo says in his essay "Wineworld": "the result of this interaction between habitat, grape and human labour seems not to exist elsewhere: it is unique to wine".⁴⁰ Terroir and its diversity are the reasons for which to most people wine is more interesting to discuss than other food products. Another reason for which people discuss more likely about wine than other food products is the reproducibility of the tasting experience of wine. Wine is an agricultural product, which different persons may experience in different parts of the world in the same way. The reason for that is that wine is filled into bottles closed by corks, which makes its transportation and conservation over time possible. If two people taste the same wine in different places and times it will still be the same wine and the tasting experience will be quite similar. Perullo: "A glass container, manageable and transportable, has made possible a repeatable and shareable experience."⁴¹ This fact makes it possible to discuss about wine in a more objective way. This fact makes

³⁹ Marengi M. (2007), *Manuale di Viticoltura*, Bologna, Edagricole

⁴⁰ Perullo N. (2012) „Wineworld: Tasting, making, drinking, being“, *Rivista di Estetica*, Nr.51, Page 3-48

⁴¹ Perullo N. (2012) „Wineworld: Tasting, making, drinking, being“, *Rivista di Estetica*, Nr.51, Page 3-48

the experience of tasting wine similar to the one looking at an artwork and discussing about it. Looking at a piece of art, all of the observers see the same things but they may interpret it in different ways. The same thing happens when tasting wines all of the tasting persons drink the exact same wine but interpret it in different ways.

Taking a closer look at the canton of Zurich I will concentrate on the three main factors of terroir, which are the environment, the grapevine and the human labour. We may start with the environment. The geology of the canton of Zurich is quite homogenous. It consists mainly of conglomerate, which is a sedimentary rock and derives from the Alps. In the mountains there was and still is constant erosion by the weather. The rocks that were loosened by erosion were transported down the valley by the rivers. The rivers deposit these loose rocks all along the Swiss Plateau, where also the canton of Zurich is located. Today they form the main part of the soil in the whole Swiss Plateau, which goes from northeast to southwest of the country and is surrounded by the Alps. This conglomerate makes a perfect ground for the growing of vines. Not all of the areas are ideal for the production of wine though. The weather also plays an important role. The region of the canton of Zurich and in particular Lake Zurich benefits from warm winds, which come down from the Alps. These winds create a good climate for the vines to grow well. In general this region does not have the ideal weather conditions for vines to grow but the winds make it possible.

Apart from the environment also the vines are an important factor for the terroir of a wine. Apart from the autochthonous Räuschling vine there are many other vines cultivated in the region of Zurich. Most of the vines are not originally from this region but have been imported after the viticulture crisis. The most famous example is Pinot Noir. All the wine growers in the canton of Zurich cultivate Pinot Noir. After the viticulture crisis the easiest thing to do was to plant Pinot Noir. Many wine makers from this region already knew this French grape variety. Some of the Swiss viticulturists went to France to learn how to make wine. There they also learnt about the grape variety and the wine Pinot Noir. When Pinot Noir was introduced in Switzerland, everyone was passionate about it immediately and almost all wine growers started to produce it instead of the traditional and local varieties. Something similar happened after the arrival of the hybrid vine Müller-Thurgau, which in many vineyards replaced Räuschling and other local vines. In 1992, the reform of the agricultural law established new restrictions for many grape varieties. The wine growers could not plant whatever grape variety they wanted anymore. There were

only a few varieties that were allowed to plant. This restriction was certainly helping to fight the Phylloxera, but it also banned many autochthonous grape varieties from the vineyards. However, there were some families who stuck to autochthonous grape varieties like Räuschling and decided not to replace them with Müller-Thurgau. Examples for that are the Strasser and the Schwarzenbach families mentioned above. Nowadays the main vines cultivated in this area are the international ones. There are some vineyards cultivated with local varieties and the consumers demand them more and more.

Today 98 grape varieties are allowed to plant for the production of wine in the canton of Zurich. In the last twenty years many new grape varieties have been created and planted. Especially some new fungus resistant grape varieties were very successful in the region of Zurich and in Switzerland in general. In the last two years though the increase in species diversity declined. Just a few new grape varieties have been planted in the last two years. Only the new Pinot Noir clones are more successful. Many wine growers think they will be the future of viticulture.⁴²

The third main factor of terroir is the human labour. The people who grow the wine and the techniques they use to do this. In the region around Lake Zurich and the city of Zurich a big part of the population does not have any special interest in local wine or Swiss wine in general. Most wine buyers are used to consume foreign wines. The reputation of Italian, French or Spanish wines is a lot better than the one of Swiss wines. This may be because those countries always exported their wines to Switzerland. In times when the Swiss wine growers were in crisis the people of Switzerland used to consume wines from other countries with bigger wine resources. As Switzerland is a quite small country it is not able to produce the amount of wine, which is consumed by its inhabitants. The entire country imports more than double the amount of wine, which it produces. This is probably another reason for which Swiss wine is hardly ever exported.⁴³

In the past there were many more families in the canton of Zurich who dedicated their lives to the production of wine, but there are still some left today. Some of them are producing wine since many generations and some of them only just started. The community of wine producing families exists and it may also grow in the future. An indication for its growth is the association for young wine producers from Switzerland.

⁴² Wirth A. (2012), *Rebjahr und Weinlese 2012 im Kanton Zürich*, Zurich, Strickhof

⁴³ *International Organisation of Vine and Wine*, www.oiv.int, OIV (2012)

Three years ago, a few young wine growers came together and created the association *Junge Schweiz Neue Winzer* (Young Switzerland New Viticulturists). At the moment twenty-five wine producers take part of the association. All of the members are no more than 39 years old. The main reason for the coming together of these wine producers is to enable the exchange of knowledge between them. The association holds regular meetings in one of the vineries. There the members get the chance to taste the wines of the others and discuss about them. These are perfect occasions for the young wine growers to see what problems other viticulturists from Switzerland have to cope with. Moreover, they may discover how the others solve common problems. The main aim of the association is that the members all benefit from each other.⁴⁴ The creation of this association is a promising sign for the Swiss wine world. It shows that there is a big interest in keeping the Swiss wine production alive and that there are many young wine growers who are passionate about the production of wine in Switzerland.

Summing up the terroir of the region of Zurich is young and promising. It includes old traditional grape varieties like Räuschling as well as many new and innovative ones. Most of the wine growers have a similar set of grape varieties, of which they have quite good knowledge. However, many viticulturists are open to new production methods and to the use of newly developed fungus resistant grape varieties.

⁴⁴ *Junge Schweiz Neue Winzer*, www.jsnw.ch, Junge Schweiz Neue Winzer (2013)

6.2 Dynamics of Swiss wine production

This last part I will dedicate to the dynamics of the wine production in Switzerland today. For that purpose I consulted with an important wine expert from Switzerland. Gabriel Tinguely works as an editor at the 'Hotel&Gastro Union', which is one of the leading communication companies in the gastronomic world of Switzerland. He also established the Internet site 'Weinlandchweiz.ch', which illustrates all of the wine producing regions in Switzerland and lists most of the wine producers. The following information if not further specified is based on the correspondence with Gabriel Tinguely.

The Swiss wine production has changed a lot since the turn of the century and it was a positive change. There has always been and there is still a small elite of wine producers who established their names over a long time in Switzerland and some of them also abroad. The majority of the wine growers are in the middle class though.

In the past few years the young viticulturists invested a lot of time and effort in their education in the field of oenology and viticulture. Apart from these two main disciplines many study new technologies concerning the production of wine. They do research on the invention of new fungus resistant vine clones and try to figure out new methods to increase the quality of the yield. The students learn their profession at the wine schools in Switzerland and do internships in vineries abroad. Back home they experiment with new methods in the vineyards and in the cellars but they also try to valorise the local varieties. However, most wine growers in Switzerland combine the traditional vinification methods with the more innovative and new ones. In the cellar the producers tend to use less wood for the production of the wines and many start using concrete eggs. It is a common practice to use chemicals in the vineyard only in the case of real emergencies. Therefore, in Switzerland they tend to go towards an organic wine production even if many do not declare it with certificates. Many care about their grapevines and do not want to harm them in any way. The organic agriculture industry in general in Switzerland is booming. Looking around in a regular supermarket a great part of the products have a green package to show the consumers that they are organic. According to 'bioaktuell.ch' the Swiss online platform for organic farmers in Switzerland organic wine is produced only since thirty years ago. It is one of the youngest organic agricultural productions of the

country. Today there are almost 190 organic wine producers in Switzerland.⁴⁵ They are certified with the label 'BioSuisse', which is probably the most important organic label of the country.⁴⁶ In total 380 hectares of vineyards are organic in Switzerland, this represents only two percent of the entire Swiss wine production.

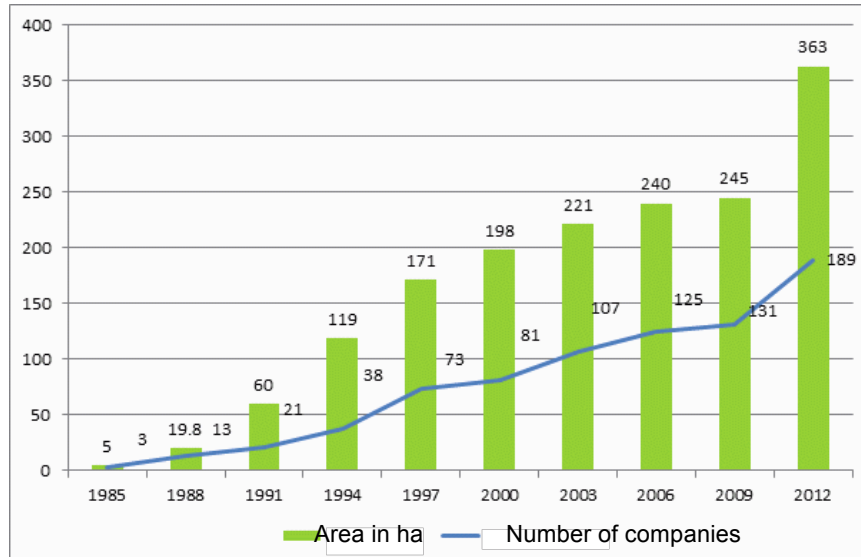


Figure 9 Development of organic viticulture in Switzerland

As you can see in the graph above in 2012 since three years there was a significant increase in organic wine producing companies, before that the increase was rather slow.⁴⁷

Even if the organic wine production is growing people who buy organic food products do not necessarily buy organic wines. Most wine consumers do not care whether their wines are organic or not. Probably it is not considered as important, because it is a processed food product. People mainly care about food to be organic, if it goes from the field straight to the plates.

In the French speaking part of Switzerland though there is a small movement of people who believe in the values of natural and organic wines. In 2012 in Biel the first edition of the *Salon ViniVivi* took place.⁴⁸ The principal aim of this wine tasting event was to present to the local people the diversity of natural and organic wines. A big part of the exhibitors at the tasting event were foreign wine producers and not Swiss. This shows that the biodynamic and organic production in Switzerland is still young and may still grow. Altogether the event can be considered a great step towards the recognition of natural and organic wines in Switzerland.

⁴⁵ *Bio Aktuell*, www.bioaktuell.ch, Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau (2012)

⁴⁶ *Bio Suisse*, www.bio-suisse.ch, BioSuisse

⁴⁷ *Bio Aktuell*, www.bioaktuell.ch, Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau (2012)

⁴⁸ *Salon vini vivi*, www.levinnaturel.ch, V Concept

Concerning the prominence of Swiss wine abroad it is hardly known outside the country's borders. The statistics say that two percent of Swiss wines are exported. There are some evil tongues though who claim that one percent of the two exported percents are actually no Swiss wines but imported foreign wines that just pass through the Swiss wine market. Believing these assumptions only one percent of Swiss wines are actually exported. This fact is not proven though. The producers who export their wines are distributed all over the country. They have created strong relationships over a long period of time with foreign private importers. One big problem, for which many Swiss producers do not export their wines, is the small amount they produce. Switzerland has a quite small wine production, because the size of the vineyards is very limited. Most viticulturists own only few hectares, on which they cultivate several different grapevines. There is hardly any monoculture in the vineyards. The wine growers prefer to cultivate up to ten or more different grape varieties and produce even more different wines. It is not possible to promote a wine abroad or even in the own region if there are only 500 to 1500 bottles every year. Another problem for the spreading of Swiss wines abroad is its taste. For example most Italians do not like Swiss white wines, because of their low acidity. They are used to the high acidities of their own white wines and therefore would not consider drinking or even importing the softer Swiss white wines. However, there are always attempts of promoting Swiss wines abroad. The marketing company Swiss Wine Promotion attempts to promote Swiss wines inside of the country and abroad.⁴⁹ One example was the Swiss wine tasting at the biggest wine event *ProWein* in Düsseldorf in March 2013. At this event about fifty top Swiss wine growers presented their wines to the German wine community.⁵⁰ Apart from Germany Swiss wines are also brought to Japan and China where the wine consumption is still growing. Especially the wines from the French speaking part of Switzerland are brought to these countries. The wines from the region of Zurich are hardly found outside the borders of the region. This may have different reasons. One reason for sure is its price. The labour costs of the producers are quite high and the taxes that the importers need to pay are so too. Because of these reasons many may think it is not worth importing these wines. Another reason may be that the wine growers do not have any problems selling all of their wines in their own regions. In order to sell their wines in places that are farer

⁴⁹ *Schweiz Natürlich*, www.swisswine.ch, Swiss Wine Promotion

⁵⁰ *SwissWine@ProWein*, www.swisswine-at-prowein.ch, Weininformation

away they would have to promote them, which means more work for the viticulturists. It seems that the wine growers from Zurich are happy with their existing regional clientele.

Summing up today's Swiss wine growers are mostly young and try out new methods in order to improve their wines. Moreover, they go towards an organic production where they use only very few chemicals in the vineyards and in the cellars. Most wine growers do not consider the promotion of their wines as very important, because they are mostly able to sell their wines without any advertisement. Switzerland in general is hardly known for its wine production even if it is located in the centre of the wine producing countries of Europe. The German speaking part more than the French and the Italian speaking part of Switzerland could do a lot more to promote its wines in the own country as well as abroad. I think the most important thing to do in future is to encourage the local people to consume more of the regional wines. The producers and the wine shops should try to show to the local people the diversity and the potential of the Swiss wines. This may be done with more events like the Salon ViniVivi in Biel or with simple tasting events organized by the producers. The wine production in Switzerland could have a promising future if the wine growers started to promote their wines amongst their own people. If the demand of local wines would be bigger the viticulturists would only benefit from it. Altogether the Swiss wine production still needs much effort in order to compete against its foreign competitors.

7 Conclusion

I chose the grape variety Räuschling as the subject of my final thesis in order to find out more about the wine production in the region of Zurich. In the end I learnt about the history of wine production in Switzerland, the Zurich wine terroir and the people who are behind the bottles of wine. It was very interesting to meet different wine producers who all have a great passion for the wine production and especially for the Räuschling wine.

Wine production in Switzerland has a long history. The Romans were the first to bring their vines over the Alps and in this way introduced the Swiss people to the culture of wine. Until the end of the 19th century, a big part of the agricultural land in Switzerland was cultivated with vineyards. The principal aim was to produce as much wine as possible and in general people did not care much about their wine's quality.

With the appearance of the Phylloxera in France and also in Switzerland the viticulture changed. The malicious insect destroyed many vineyards, which many wine growers soon abandoned. A big part of former viticulturists decided to change their profession because of the problems related to the Phylloxera. At first the wine production in Switzerland and all over Europe decreased rapidly. However, there was always the need for wine and soon a solution against the pest was found. The grape variety Räuschling as well as many other local grape varieties started to disappear after the viticulture crisis. Some wine growers in the canton of Zurich discovered the value of the grape variety Räuschling and started to plant more and more vineyards with it.

The origins of this grapevine are not quite sure though. Its fathers are most likely Gouais blanc and Savagnin. It is most probable that the Romans introduced this grapevine to Switzerland many centuries ago. Nowadays Räuschling is autochthonous to the region of Zurich and its wine is considered to be the speciality of many wine-producing companies. After the viticulture crisis many wine growers were forced to cultivate more resistant grape varieties, like Pinot Noir and Müller-Thurgau. In the late 1980's and 90's though some viticulturists understood the value of the local grape variety Räuschling and started to plant more of these vines. In the past, Räuschling had always been a variety of which low quality wine had been made of. Its reputation was low as the harvest was very inconstant and the wines not very good tasting. Nevertheless, some wine growers in the region of Zurich discovered that with the right cultivation methods and the controlling of the harvest Räuschling could make a very promising white wine, that can be aged for more than ten years. Today there are 23 hectares of Räuschling vineyards worldwide, 18 of which are located in the canton of Zurich. Today many local people appreciate this delicate white wine. Some even compare it to the German Riesling, as it can be stored for a long time due to its high acidity.

The three wine producers I met for the research of my thesis all produce Räuschling. The Lüthi and the Schwarzenbach family both are located in the very prestigious region of Lake Zurich. Rico Lüthi works only on two hectares of vineyards where he cultivates several different grape varieties. He is very passionate about his work and his wines have a good reputation among Swiss wine consumers. Rico's wine company is still very young. He is the first of his family to start a wine business. Although he and his wife are still in their young years they already know for sure that

after their retirement their wine company will not go on. About the Räuschling grapevine Rico says that it is always good to have a speciality among the other more common wines.⁵¹

The Schwarzenbach wine company is with its eight hectares a lot bigger than the Lüthi wine company. This family cultivates wine in the fourth generation now. Their name is well established in the canton of Zurich and they are famous for their Räuschling production. In the interview with Cécile Schwarzenbach she said that her father in law always wanted to stick to the Räuschling vine, because it is one of the only local and autochthonous grapevines at Lake Zurich. In 2008 they held a wine tasting to celebrate their 113 years of Räuschling production. At the degustation the guests were able to taste Räuschling wines that were one hundred years old and still tasted good. Among the three wine businesses I met this one was the only one that invests quite a bit in the promotion of their wines and in public relations.⁵²

In 2007 Rico Lüthi, the Schwarzenbach family and another third wine company from the same region came together to produce one very particular Räuschling wine. The principal aim of this project was to transmit the terroir of Zurich in one typical wine. They chose the grape variety Räuschling, as it very typical for the region of Zurich. The result is the R3 wine made out of three different vineyards with only the very best Räuschling grapes.

For the visit of the third wine company I drove up forty kilometres to the *Weinland* (land of wine). The Strasser family cultivates wine in the second generation. The Räuschling vines they use were there even before the family started to grow wine. This wine business was the most special one I encountered. The very young couple of Nadine Besson-Strasser and her husband Cédric lead the wine business, which they are currently turning into a biodynamic wine production. In this area of the canton there are only very few who are certified to produce biodynamic or even organic wine. This couple though is convinced that it is necessary to look after the health of their vines and themselves by not using any chemicals neither in the vineyards nor in the wine cellar. About the Räuschling vine Nadine Strasser said that they prefer this local vine, which they think is more interesting and diverse to the very common white grapevine Müller-Thurgau. The Strasser family experimented a lot with the Räuschling vine and now produce five different wines with it. One of them is

⁵¹ Interview with Rico Lüthi (see appendix 9.1)

⁵² Interview with Cécile Schwarzenbach (see appendix 9.2)

very special, because they put it into oak barriques. I think the Strasser family has great potential and especially in the future with their Demeter certificate they will be even more successful.⁵³

In the region of Zurich most wine producers sell their wines directly at home to private customers or to local restaurants. Apart from the fact that this region is very little known for its wine production, there is also hardly any promotion for the wines outside the borders of the canton. The reason for this may be that the wine producers are able to sell all of their wines with hardly any advertisement. Due to their rather small production they simply do not have the capacity to meet the demand of the local consumers and in addition to that people from other places. This does not only apply to the canton of Zurich but to the entire country. Even if there are some wine-producing regions in Switzerland that are known outside of the country the main part of the production stays inside. I think there could be done a lot more in order to promote Swiss wines among the citizens of Switzerland. Most Swiss people do not consider drinking Swiss wines because its reputation is not very high or because they simply do not know any of the Swiss wines. Moreover, most public wine tastings have the aim to sell foreign wines and not local ones. If the promotion of local wines would be more intensive I think many young people would consider consuming them more frequently.

Concerning the production methods in Switzerland a lot of wine growers tend to go towards an organic wine production. There are many young viticulturists who believe in the organic and the biodynamic wine production methods. The consumers become more and more aware of a healthy nutrition, which includes the consumption of organic wine. Nowadays there are still only very few who certify their production as organic or even biodynamic, but I think it is possible that in the future this sector will grow. Even if Switzerland is not famous for its wine production there are some very promising young wine producers who give their best to meet the demand of the local wine market.

⁵³ Interview with Nadine Strasser (see appendix 9.3)

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8.4 Interview partners

1. Rico Lüthi, 15.8.2013
2. Cécile Schwarzenbach, 22.8.2013
3. Nadine Strasser, 13.9.2013

9 Appendix

9.1 Interview with Rico Lüthi

15.8.2013

Was wird heute im Rebberg und im Keller anders gemacht als früher?

Heute nimmt man nur die schönen Trauben und nicht alle Trauben die an der Rebe sind, also reicht auch ein kleiner Ertrag um einen guten Wein herzustellen. Nur die Qualität zählt und nicht die Quantität.

Die Vorteile des Räuschling sind, dass er keine Aromabombe ist. Er ist nicht zu vergleichen mit dem Gewürztraminer, jedoch ist er sehr fein und fruchtig im Geschmack.

Er hat wenig eigenes Aroma, was zum Problem werden kann.

Heute gibt es fast nur noch Drahtbau und keine Sticklebe mehr. Heute sind alle Rebberge im Direktzug oder terrassiert.

Die Reben werden ausgelautet, die Sonne macht das Aroma. Der Saft der Trauben hat wenig Aroma, das Aroma ist vor allem in der Haut der Trauben. Die Sonne ist gut für die Trauben, man nimmt das Laub um die Trauben herum weg, damit sie mehr Sonne kriegen. Man soll aber nicht alle Blätter wegnehmen, weil sie ansonsten zu viel Sonne abbekommen. Wenn die Trauben zu heiss werden, verlieren sie an Säure.

Heute schneide ich immer einen Teil der Trauben weg, etwa sechs Wochen vor der Ernte, um die Qualität der restlichen Trauben zu verbessern.

Das Unkraut wird nur zwei bis drei Mal pro Jahr gemäht.

In den Steillagen sind die Reben auf schmalen Gehterrassen. Wenn da das Unkraut mit Chemikalien bespritzt würde, würde es zu viel Erosion geben. Das Unkraut hält den Boden zusammen. Es ist ausserdem wichtig wegen den vielen Kleinlebewesen die dort leben, von welchen die Rebe profitiert. Auch Blumen und Kräuter sind nützlich für die Rebe, gegen tierische Schädlinge, wie zum Beispiel der Sauerwurm (gegen welchen manchmal Pestizide verwendet werden.).

Gegen andere Schädlinge wie die Spinnmilbe oder die gemeine Rote muss nicht gespritzt werden.

Alle meine Reben sind nach dem französischen Steckbogen Rebschnitt (Guyot) geschnitten, andere Winzer in der Gegend benützen auch andere Rebschnitte.

Früher war alles Sticklebe, jede Rebe stand einzeln mit einem Pfahl in der Erde. Sie waren nicht miteinander verbunden wie heute. Mit Schnur wurden die Reben am Pfahl festgemacht.

Wie oft benützen Sie chemische Mittel gegen Schädlinge?

Gespritzt wird nur ca. 6-8 mal im Jahr je nach dem wie das Wetter ist, gegen Mehltau und Graufäule vor allem. Insektizide benutzen wir praktisch keine.

Wie gehen Sie im Weinkeller vor?

Wir sind in einem anderen Weinkeller eingemietet. Wir produzieren da unseren Wein. Es wäre zu teuer einen ganzen Keller mit der ganzen Ausstattung aufzubauen, nur für eine Generation von Weinbauern. Wir wissen jetzt schon, dass nach unserer Pensionierung unsere Kinder das Unternehmen nicht weiterführen werden. Deshalb haben wir so entschieden, es würde sich nicht lohnen einen Keller und die Maschinen zu kaufen. Wir mieten einen Teil des Kellers eines Freundes in Obermeilen. Auch der Austausch mit dem anderen Winzer im Weinkeller ist sehr wertvoll.

Welche Hefe benützen Sie?

Wir benützen eine einheimische Hefe von einer Räuschling Flasche aus dem Jahr 1895 vom Grossvater des Freundes mit dem Weinkeller. Die Weine die zu der Zeit überhaupt in Flaschen gefüllt wurden, waren nur die Besten. Die schlechteren Weine wurden gar nicht erst in Flaschen gefüllt sondern im Fass verkauft. Von diesen alten Räuschling Weinen haben wir die Hefe isoliert. Ein Mikrobiologe hat dies im Labor in Wädenswil gemacht.

Was bedeutet integrierte Produktion für Sie?

Integrierte Produktion ist Standard in dieser Region. Es bedeutet so wenig wie möglich und so viel wie nötig an Chemikalien im Rebberg und im Weinkeller zu benützen.

Wie viele Subventionen erhalten Sie vom Staat?

Wir Winzer, verglichen mit anderen Bauern, kriegen relativ wenig Direktzahlungen. Ab 50% Neigung des Rebberges gibt es mehr Geld vom Staat, der Flächenbeitrag ist ziemlich klein.

Wie viele Mitarbeiter haben Sie?

Nur saisonbedingt habe ich Mitarbeiter. Beim Netzt auslegen über den Reben habe ich vier Personen die mir helfen. Beim Abfüllen des Weins auch vier Personen und beim Ernten der Trauben sind es etwa 15 Personen. Während dem Rest des Jahres arbeiten nur meine Frau und ich.

Ich bin hauptberuflich Winzer, es ist sehr schwierig nur im Nebenerwerb Rebbau zu betreiben, wegen dem Wetter etc, man muss immer bereit sein für die Reben. Man kann nicht einfach weg gehen.

Seit 1998 bin ich selbständig. Vorher habe ich auf einigen verschiedenen Weingütern gearbeitet um Erfahrungen zu sammeln. Aber alleine zu arbeiten ist immer besser. Ich habe den Beruf Winzer in einer Lehre erlernt.

Wir besitzen unseren Rebberg nicht, sonder wir pachten ihn. Die Scheurebe ist die einzige die ich neu gesetzt habe, alle anderen waren schon da als wir den Rebberg übernommen haben. Die Scheurebe ist jetzt etwa zehn Jahre alt alle anderen sind zwischen 20 und 40 Jahre alt.

Erzählen Sie vom R3 Wein den Sie gemeinsam mit zwei anderen Winzern herstellen.

Er gewinnt jedes Jahr Auszeichnungen, zum Beispiel den Grand Prix du Vin Suisse.

Jedoch hat er ein wenig mühe in der Westschweiz, weil da die Walliser sehr stark sind.

Es ist ein spezieller Wein da es eine Auslese der Hauptlese ist. Das heisst, nur die besten Trauben werden genommen für diesen Wein, was zu einem besseren Aroma führt.

In diesem Wein werden drei typische Zürichseeböden vereint. Die Molasse in Meilen, ein schwer lehmiger Boden am Lattenberg und eine höhere und saurere Lage vom Rebberg von Monika Hasler.

Nur mit der Sorte Räuschling gibt es dieses Projekt, es ist sehr aufwendig und der Wein hat deshalb einen hohen Preis.

Wo ist euer Wein erhältlich?

Wir verkaufen den Wein vor allem an Gastronomie Betriebe der Region und den Rest verkaufen wir direkt zu Hause an Privat Kunden. Wir exportieren unseren Wein nicht, da es mit zu viel Bürokratie verbunden wäre. Ausserdem sind das Porto und die Verzollung teurer als der Wein selbst. In Zürich verkauft sich unser Wein sehr gut, es gibt ein grosses Einzugsgebiet. Wenn man sich ein bisschen für den Verkauf einsetzt, dann klappt das sehr gut.

In dieser Region haben alle Winzer eine Hagelversicherung für ihre Reben, mit meistens 20% Selbstbehalt. Dieses Jahr haben wir einen grossen Hagelschaden.

Wir produzieren ca. 18000 Flaschen pro Jahr, mit zwei Hektaren Reben. Der Ertrag variiert jedes Jahr um etwa 300-400 Gramm pro Quadratmeter.

Charaktereigenschaften des Räuschling sind sein rötliches Holz, die rauen Blätter, die grossen Trauben und das viele Laub.

9.2 Interview with Cécile Schwarzenbach

22.8.2013

Erzählen Sie mir etwas über den Räuschling und wie sich der Rebbau und das Keltern verändert haben?

Räuschling ist eine alte autochthone Traubensorte, sie wurde durch den Müller-Thurgau ersetzt. Räuschling ist extrem anfällig, von zehn Jahren sind sieben schlecht und nur drei gut.

Oft gibt es viel zu wenig Trauben, die Blüte im Frühling ist sehr heikel. Auch im Herbst ist diese Rebe heikel, da die Beeren sehr gross sind und leicht im Regen platzen. Dies führt zu Weissfäule und Graufäule.

Früher wurden die Trauben gar nicht reduziert, die Trauben liess man ganz wachsen und man erntete immer alle Beeren. Dies führte zu 1.5-2 kg Ertrag pro Quadratmeter, was sehr viel ist verglichen mit heute. Somit wurde der Wein eher wie ein saurer Most, mit viel zu wenig Aroma. Deshalb sagten alle der Räuschling muss weg, er bringt zu wenig Geld ein. Er hat viel zu oft schlechte Jahre und in den guten ist der Wein auch nicht wirklich gut.

Wir sind dem Räuschling jedoch immer treu geblieben, wegen der Tradition und unserer langen Familiengeschichte. Heute ist der Räuschling schon fast ein Kult geworden. Alle schreien nach Räuschling.

Heute reduzieren wir die Trauben, wir passen auf, dass der Wein auch wirklich gut wird. Wir ernten erst wenn die Trauben schön gold gelb sind und viel Zucker enthalten.

Der Räuschling hat eine schöne Säure, er ist ein feiner Wein, filigran mit einer floralen Zitrus Aromatik. Er passt genial zu Süsswasserfisch.

Wovon stammt der Räuschling ab?

Er gehört zur Traminer Familie, er ist auch verwandt mit dem Heida aus dem Wallis. Er ist auch im neuen Buch von José Vouillamoz zu finden.

Die Rebe wurde von den Römern in die Schweiz gebracht. Man vermutet dass die Römer den Räuschling in die Schweiz gebracht haben, einen Teil davon haben sie nach Zürich gebracht, der andere Teil ist im Wallis gelandet. Dann haben sich in den beiden Regionen zwei verschiedene Reben entwickelt, durch die verschiedenen Böden und Klimas.

Wie gehen Sie im Keller vor?

Beim pressen des Räuschling muss man aufpassen, da die Beeren so prall sind. Man muss sehr vorsichtig sein im Keller, damit die Aromen nicht verloren gehen. Alles wird nur im Chromstahl gekeltert und nicht im Holz. Den Räuschling in Holz zu lagern, würde das leichte, feine Aroma dieses Weins überdecken.

Wir benützen unsere eigene Hefe aus dem Jahr 1895 von einer alten Räuschling Flasche.

In unserem im Jahr 2007 gebauten Keller, kann der ganze Prozess des Kelterns kontrolliert werden. Vor allem die Temperaturkontrolle ist sehr wichtig.

Der Räuschling macht einen biologischen Säureabbau, ansonsten wäre er viel zu sauer.

Wo ist Ihr Wein erhältlich?

Den grössten Teil unseres Weins verkaufen wir in der Region Zürich. 40% geht an Gastronomiebetriebe und 60% an Privatpersonen, von welchen der Grossteil direkt auf dem Hof verkauft wird. Wir beliefern nur zwei Weinhandlungen.

Das Marketing wird heute immer wichtiger. Wir erstellen jedes Jahr eine Broschüre, wenn die neuen Weine da sind. Ausserdem organisieren wir eine Ausstellung einmal im Jahr vor Weihnachten mit jeweils drei Künstlern.

Wir sind Mitglied bei den *Memoires des vins suisse*, wo wir regelmässig an Anlässe gehen.

Wie gross ist Ihre Produktion?

Wir haben insgesamt acht Hektaren Land von welchen wir ca. 70'000 Flaschen jährlich herstellen. Mindestens die Menge die wir selbst produzieren, keltern wir auch noch für andere Winzer aus der Region, die keinen eigenen Keller besitzen.

Wir vermieten den Keller für grössere Produzenten für zwei bis drei Schweizer Franken pro Flasche. Für kleinere Produzenten ist es teurer, so teuer dass es sich fast gar nicht lohnt für die kleinen. Wer seine Weine bei uns im Eichenfass lagern möchte, bezahlt dafür nochmals einen Betrag für die Nutzung unseres Kellers.

9.3 Interview with Nadine Strasser

13.9.2013

Erzählen sie mir vom Räuschling und von Ihrem Betrieb.

Meine Eltern haben bei Null angefangen Wein zu produzieren. In einem kleinen Riegelhaus in Uhwiesen, die erste Parzelle war Blauburgunder, dann haben sie eine andere Parzelle von einem alten Herrn übernommen, genau dort wo jetzt unser Haus steht, es war eine Räuschling Parzelle. Da diese Parzelle in einer Mulde drin war, ist der Räuschling immer verrieselt und kleinbeerig geblieben, was zu schlechten Erträgen führte. Die Lage war nicht geeignet für den Räuschling und Reben allgemein. Bald haben meine Eltern gedacht, Riesling-Sylvaner ist langweilig, diesen machen alle, wir wollen etwas anderes machen. Dann haben wir noch eine weitere Parzelle gleich neben der ersten übernommen und entschieden Räuschling anzubauen. Räuschling haben wir angebaut, da dieser ein sehr viel interessanter Wein ergibt als Riesling-Sylvaner, die knackige Säure macht ihn interessant. Wir nahmen also die alten Räuschling Reben der ersten Parzelle und haben diese in der neuen Parzelle angepflanzt. Mit Hilfe einer Rebpflanzschule, die wir genauestens überwacht haben. Sodass die alten Räuschling Reben auf die amerikanische Rebe gepfropft wurde und dann in der neuen Parzelle eingesetzt wurden.

Wir haben also den alten Räuschling Klon, der schon immer hier war übernommen. Dieser war schon vor 20 Jahren 40-50 Jahre alt, wir wissen nicht genau was es ist, wir haben ihn einfach übernommen. Die amerikanische Rebe unten an der Räuschling Rebe ist SO4, oder je nach dem was es für ein Boden ist, braucht es eine andere Unterlage. Die bestimmt die Rebschule, wir geben ihnen nur die Reben die wir haben wollen.

Wir haben insgesamt sechs Hektaren Reben, davon ist ein ganzer Hektar Räuschling, ziemlich viel verglichen mit anderen Räuschling Produzenten. Räuschling hat sehr viel Potential. Man kann viele verschiedene Weine damit herstellen. Wir keltern ihn normal im grossen Holzfass, einen lagern wir im Barrique, wir machen einen Schaumwein und eine Variante als Rosé zusammen mit Pinot Noir, den Schiller. Den Räuschling kann man lange im

Keller lagern, nach vier bis fünf Jahren ist er immer noch gut geniessbar, wegen seiner guten Säure.

Für den Räuschling im Holzfass nehmen wir ein grosses Holzfass, welches schon mal gebraucht wurde und ein Beton Ei, damit er atmen kann und um mehr Fülle reinzubringen. Dieser Wein ist sehr begehrt bei unseren Kunden, also machen wir ihn weiterhin so.

Wie hat sich der Rebbau und das Keltern verändert?

Früher war alles Sticklebe, was eine grosse Menge an Trauben bedeutete und nur wenig Laub. Dies führte zu, zu wenig Öchsle Grade, damals waren 60° Öchsle schon gut, heute sind 80-90 Standard.

Jetzt müssen wir oft gar keine Trauben mehr rausschneiden, da wir biodynamisch sind. Wir spritzen keine Chemikalien mehr, also verrieseln die Blüten oft. Somit gibt es eine natürliche Selektion, welche den Ertrag automatisch verkleinert und die Ernte verbessert. Das biodynamische hat den Pfupf aus der Rebe genommen, man muss nicht mehr düngen. Wir arbeiten nur mit Kompost, es gibt kleinere Trauben und sie verrieseln öfters.

Wann haben Sie sich entschieden biodynamisch zu werden?

Vor zehn Jahren haben wir angefangen auf biodynamisch umzustellen. Was neu gesetzt wurde, wurde von Anfang an biodynamisch gesetzt. Jetzt sind wir im dritten Jahr zu Umstellung auf Demeter. Unser Betrieb ist schon anerkannt biodynamisch, aber die Weine kommen erst noch. „In Umstellung“ auf die Etikette zu schreiben, lohnt sich für uns nicht.

Wir kennen niemanden der biodynamisch produziert hier in unserer Gegend, auf jeden Fall niemanden der anerkannt ist. Es gibt einige die sagen sie wären biologisch oder sogar biodynamisch aber sie haben kein Zertifikat, weil es mit grossem Aufwand verbunden ist. Es gibt auch den verdacht dass oftmals gesagt wird dass jemand biologisch ist aber man weiss dann nicht was er wirklich im Rebberg alles macht. Jeder möchte möglichst biologisch dastehen, aber was sie dann wirklich machen weiss man nicht. Dies ist nicht wirklich vertrauensvoll und wir wollen dies sein.

Haben sie grosse Schwierigkeiten keine Chemikalien benützen zu dürfen?

Dieses Jahr war in Ordnung, letztes Jahr war die reinste Katastrophe. Im Sommer letztes Jahr hat es sehr viel geregnet. Pilze brauchen Wärme, Dunkelheit und Feuchtigkeit. Dies war der Fall letzten Sommer und die meisten Trauben wurden von Pilzen befallen. Ein weiteres Problem ist, dass wenn es viel regnet, sind die Böden sehr nass und in den Steillagen wird es unmöglich mit dem Traktor zu arbeiten, weil er abrutschen könnte. Es ist uns nicht möglich sechs Hektaren Reben von Hand zu behandeln, also verloren wir ein Grossteil der Ernte. Vor allem der Riesling-Sylvaner hatte viele Probleme letztes Jahr. Er verendete sofort. Der Räuschling hingegen war resistenter gegen den Mehltau, als hätte er einen natürlichen Schutz gegen den Pilz. Deshalb wäre es gut noch weniger Riesling-Sylvaner und noch mehr Räuschling anzupflanzen.

Warum haben Sie sich entschieden biodynamisch zu werden?

Vor längerer Zeit schon haben wir gedacht, dass es nicht gut sein kann so viele Chemikalien im Rebberg zu benützen. Wir fanden es komisch, bei der Arbeit im Rebberg einen „Astronautenanzug“ anziehen zu müssen, damit wir selbst keinen Schaden von den Chemikalien davontragen. Wir mussten immer mit Handschuhen arbeiten, was ziemlich unangenehm ist. Ausserdem waren immer Totenköpfe auf den Eimern der Chemikalien. Das alles gefiel uns nicht und so haben wir entschieden biodynamisch zu werden. Auch die Ernährung haben wir zu der Zeit auf biologisch umgestellt. Wir wollten es ganz oder gar nicht machen.

Das Problem war jedoch, dass vor zehn Jahren, noch sehr wenig Informationen über die biodynamische Landwirtschaft, vorhanden waren. Nur in der Westschweiz haben wir einen Kurs über biodynamischen Rebbau gefunden und besucht. Auch die Produkte, welche man bei der biodynamischen Landwirtschaft verwendet, waren auf dem Schweizer Markt nicht erhältlich. Wir mussten sie selbst von Frankreich oder Italien mit dem Auto über die Grenze bringen.

Anfangs wollten wir das Demeter Zertifikat nicht anstreben, wegen der extrem vielen Bürokratie. Dann haben wir jedoch gedacht, dass wenn wir uns nicht zertifizieren lassen, sind wir nicht wirklich glaubwürdig. Es kann ja jeder sagen

er produziere seinen Wein biodynamisch. Also haben wir die Hürde in Angriff genommen.

Gibt es einen geschmacklichen Unterschied zwischen den Demeter Weinen und den herkömmlichen Weinen?

Es ist schwierig zu sagen, da jeder Jahrgang anders ist. Am Anfang hatten wir einige Parzellen von Räuschling die noch konventionell angebaut wurden und einige, welche schon biodynamisch waren. Da haben wir die frisch vergorenen Weine einmal miteinander verglichen. Wir haben tatsächlich einen geschmacklichen Unterschied feststellen können. Der biodynamische Wein war noch zarter und hatte mehr Feinheiten als der herkömmlich produzierte Wein. Jedoch muss auch berücksichtigt werden, dass wir die Weine nicht blind verglichen hatten. Ausserdem konnten wir dann die Weine nicht bis zum Ende separat fertig keltern, sondern mussten sie mischen, wegen der Gesamtmenge.

Wie gross ist Ihre Produktion?

Wir produzieren etwa 40'000 Flaschen pro Jahr, von welchen etwa 8'000 Flaschen Räuschling sind. Unsere Kundschaft kennt den Räuschling gut, sobald man jedoch weiter raus geht, oder Leute fragt die noch nicht Kunde sind bei uns, kennen sie den Räuschling nicht. Der Räuschling ist sehr wenig bekannt auch hier in der Gegend.

Welche Hefe benutzen Sie?

Wir haben die Hefe C1895 einmal ausprobiert, jedoch war sie nicht viel anders als andere Hefen. Deshalb benutzen wir sie nicht mehr.