



FINESSE WITH FRESHNESS

German winemaker Markus Schneider is known for wines that focus on individuality and quality, wines that are making quite an impact on the Thai wine enthusiast.

Meeting Markus Schneider recently once again brought into focus how far German wines have come from their stereotypical image reflected in a glass Riesling. Nothing wrong with that grape, or the wine, I have had great Rieslings and really enjoy drinking it, but the fact is it no longer describes where German wines are today. Representing this new brand of winemakers and wine is Markus Schneider whose wines underline his individuality. His only philosophy is passion and his theatre is his vineyard in Pfalz valley. His grapes of choice are Merlot, Syrah, Portugieser, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Blanc, Pinto Gris, Riesling, Chardonnay... whatever sparks his creativity.

For him it is important not to imitate wine styles but to act on his own to create a wine that *he* would like to drink. And his success lies purely in this individuality which comes coupled with quality. What stands out about the wines Schneider creates is the international quality, created from international varieties, bottled with more than a large dose of humour. These wines would appeal to any market, yet they are distinctive. His Sauvignon Blanc brings New Zealand (Kaitui) to mind, his reds are rich, deeply coloured with stronger tannins than one would expect from Germany, his rosé an easy-drinking wine that is fresh and fruity. And wine enthusiasts in

Thailand once introduced to Schneider wines have taken to them with great enthusiasm, enjoying the *joie de vivre* he manages to distil into the glass of wine.

Expression caught up with him at a wine dinner at Viu, St. Regis Bangkok where Chef Bastian Mantei had created an exquisite multi-course menu to match Schneider wines. We took the opportunity to ask the winemaker some pertinent questions.

From your own wines, which is your favourite?

I love all my wines as parents love all their children, but particularly good are this year's Sauvignon Blancs.

Which of your wines reflect what you want to do?

The entire collection is the result of my inspiration and hard work. I cannot select any one wine as all my wines are interlinked and there is a red line between all of them from my basic wines to my top wines.

Would you say German wine-making has broken the stereotypes it is subjected to?

Of course there are stereotypes, some true, some very



wrong. It is true that some of the world best Rieslings and Pinot Noirs are produced in Germany, but it is wrong that Germany has only good wines of these two grape varieties as today you can find fabulous red wine cuvees and wonderful Pinot Blancs and Sauvignon Blancs to name only a few. A group of young winemakers including me is working hard and successfully to change the 'sweet and cheap image' of German wines.

Besides your own, what are your favourite wines?

Great Rieslings from Germany and all the good wines which are produced today around the world. There are so many. Unfortunately, I probably will not be able to drink and to enjoy all of these wines.

Is your wine natural or organic?

We work in the vineyard according to organic principles of course, without artificial fertilizers, without insecticides and herbicides. Our winery and our home is located right in the middle of my vineyards. I want my family including my two small children to live in a healthy natural environment.

How would you describe your winemaking style?

Hundred percent Schneider.

Has your wine won any awards?

Newcomer of the Year (from the Magazine *Der Feinschmecker*), Discovery of the Year (*Gault Millau*), Entrepreneur of the Year (Meininger publishing house).

What about this business inspires you?

Working with and in the nature, to be dependent on nature, the annual "battle" to achieve the maximum and the tradition of our family.

How do you look at Asia as a market?

Full of admiration I look at the dynamism and the drive of the Asian countries and as a passionate connoisseur and aficionado I admire the local "cuisine", especially the Thai cuisine which fits quite great to my wines.

How has Thailand reacted to your wines?

Absolutely positive and full of enthusiasm – which makes me very proud!

If there is one Markus Schneider wine that I must drink, which one would it be and why?

My latest red wine Holy Moly – because if you drink it you will hopefully understand what I want to express with my wines: finesse linked with power – that is red wine Made in Germany!

What is the most exciting thing happening with German wines today?

The fact that German wine finally is getting back again the standing and reputation which German wine had 100 years ago, when it was present at all expensive and good wine lists of the whole world!

When pairing food and wine, do you approach Riesling differently from Sauvignon Blanc?

Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling! Two wines, very good for Thai cuisine with their sharpness, elegance and light sweetness. A Riesling with some residual sugar will match perfectly with the spicy Thai food for example. Of course all is dependant on the ingredients, the recipe and method of preparation. But you should discover it yourself as taste is very subjective.

How has climate change altered your vineyards?

Climate change has had a great influence in Germany; there are no qualitative "small" vintages any more. The disadvantage is that we have had to fight in the last five years repeatedly with dry and hot summers.

What is your favorite summertime food and wine pairing?

In Bangkok: Thai Street Food with Schneider Sauvignon Blanc Kaitui and at home on my terrace: a good piece of meat with a large bottle of Holy Moly. ■

WHERE TO GET YOUR FIX OF MARKUS SCHNEIDER WINES

Markus Schneider's wines are very popular in Thailand and can be found on the wine lists of many five-star hotels, top restaurants and luxury boutique resorts. It is impossible to list all of the places but below is a small selection:

IN BANGKOK:

Nahm of David Thompson; Le Du Wine Bar & Restaurant; Plaza Athenee Hotel; Karmakamet Diner; W Bangkok; Bo.lan Restaurant; Whale's belly Restaurant & Bar; Salt Aree Restaurant; The Mandarin Oriental; Okura Prestige Hotel; Le Beaulieu; Twist Eat and Drink Thonglor.

OUTSIDE BANGKOK:

Six Senses Samui & Yao Noi; Iniala, Phuket; Kata Rocks, Phuket; Boathouse, Phuket; and The Sarojin, Khao Lak.