



Robert Parker's Wine Advocate #221

---

**2010 Famille Hugel Riesling Grossi Laüe (by Stephan Reinhardt) 96/100**

The 2010 Riesling Grossi Laüe succeeds the Jubilee Rieslings produced between 1989 and 2009. Jubilee has always been a selection of the best Riesling plots within the Schoenenbourg, in which the Hugel family holds 5 hectares. Until 2005 (there was no 2006 produced), the Jubilee Riesling also included the Schoelhammer parcel which, starting with vintage 2007, is now exclusively cultivated for the Riesling Schoelhammer. The remaining six Riesling Hugel plots (adding up to 3 hectares) on the marl soils of the Grand Cru Schoenenbourg make up for the bright colored 2010 Riesling Grossi Laüe, which will be released by the end of 2015. This wine has developed a lovely maturity over the years and starts very clear and intense, with nicely spicy and floral flavors on the nose. On the palate, this still developing Schoenenbourg reveals all the characters a grand cru from this exceptional appellation should have: depth, a noble richness, density, concentration, a complex and persistent minerality, a tight and age-worthy structure, and a very long and tension-filled finish. The fruit is expressed clearly and subtly here, and the finish is dry and stimulating. However, Marc Hugel stresses that "the Jubilee or Grossi Laüe wines reach their peak after seven to 15 years," although he personally believes "it should be 40 years old -- but this is not a very commercial point of view." Whereas Marc served me the wine from the 375 ml bottle in June this year at the Domaine in Riquewihr, his brother Etienne poured me the 2010 from the Magnum earlier this year at ProWein in Düsseldorf (still under the Jubilee label), which was absolutely exceptional in its densely-woven and tension-filled complexity and mineral persistency. The score relates to the Magnum, the given tasting note describes my impressions from the 375 ml bottle I tasted in June. Note: The also, at that time unreleased 2010 described by my colleague David Schildknecht last year, was still designated as Jubilee, whereas in fact the wine goes into the market as Riesling Grossi Laüe end of 2015.

**2010 Famille Hugel Pinot Gris Grosse Laüe (by Stephan Reinhardt) 93/100**

From the Sporen and the Rosenberg, the 2010 Pinot Gris Hugel Grossi Laüe was raised in older barriques and offers a lovely clear, deep and concentrated but still yeasty nose. Very elegant and rich on the palate, this powerful, dense, dry yet still extremely young Pinot Gris is well structured and full to bursting with tension, vibrancy and brightness. Very long in the finish, with a stimulating salinity, this is a great and expressive Pinot Gris with an aging potential at least for another 15 to 20 years.

**2010 Famille Hugel Gewurztraminer Grosse Laüe (by Steph. Reinhardt) 92+/100**

The 2010 Gewurztraminer Grossi Laüe is clear and fresh on the nose, and very dense and almost oily textured on the initially sweet palate. This concentrated

and firmly structured 2010 is still very young and slightly bitter in the finish, but very promising.

## 2010 Famille Hugel Pinot Noir Grosse Laüe (by Stephan Reinhardt) **89+/100**

From 25 and partly 45 year old vines in the lieu-dit Pflöstig (Rosenberg), the 2010 Pinot Noir Grosse Laüe opens with a lovely coolish and fresh nose displaying sour cherries, redcurrant, leafy aromas and roses. Silky, elegant, fresh, pure, straight and firm on the palate, with grip, vitality and good tension, this is a promising, long and mouthwatering, though still very closed Pinot that I would not open before 2018, but still in 2025. "This wine needs 10 or 15 years to show its true character," says Marc Hugel, naming the 1990 from the half bottle which showed "excellent" recently.

A lot of interesting news -- and wines -- have to be reported from Hugel & Fils in Riquewihr.

First of all, the name Hugel & Fils is passé, the new name is Famille Hugel. This underlines the fact that the domaine is family-owned since 1639, respectively 13 generations, and that there are currently three generations representing the Hugel "tribe," as Etienne Hugel calls his family: André Hugel and his sons, Etienne and Marc, nephew Jean-Philippe, together with 13<sup>th</sup> generation, the cousins Jean-Frédéric, Marc-André and Christian. "We are on the move," says Etienne Hugel, one of the busy bees of the family that produces 100,000 cases per year, of which around 90% is exported to more than 100 countries worldwide.

Indeed the domaine has recently announced the first comprehensive changes since 1921 (when the Maggi-yellow color of the labels was introduced), starting the 1st of September. "Much more than just a change of name, the presentation and structure of our range of wines has been totally renovated," Etienne Hugel reports.

Not just have the labels been refined and all legal information relocated to the back label, the whole range has been restructured.

You start into the Hugel world with the Gentil Hugel, a dry white assemblage of all noble Alsatian grape varieties except of Pinot Noir. The wine "revives an ancient Alsace tradition whereby a wine assembled from a range of noble grapes was called 'Gentil.'" The Hugels communicate and further: "Perfectly dry, our Gentil brings together the elegance of Riesling, the richness of Pinot Gris, the fruit-driven aromas of Gewurztraminer and Muscat, and the freshness of Pinot Blanc and Sylvaner."

New is the Classic (former Hugel) range that represents "the essence of the pure, dry Famille Hugel style" and now includes Muscat and Pinot Gris, along with all the other noble grapes. The grapes of the Classic range are predominantly purchased but obligatory hand-picked from vineyards with clay-limestone soils in Riquewihr and neighbouring villages, and give classic gastronomic wines with a dry expression.

The Estate range is a new creation for Riesling and Gewurztraminer grown in selected, family-owned plots in Riquewihr's top sites. The Riesling comes from the marl soils in and around the Schoenenbourg, the Gewurztraminer from the clay soils of the Sporen where the family owns 8 ha. Both Riesling and

Gewurztraminer represent 40% each of the family's vineyards, which adds up to 30 hectares.

Last but not least, there are some new wines to be announced: First of all the spectacular dry Riesling Schoelhammer, "the great dry Riesling from the Schoenenbourg" (flyer) or "the most profound expression of Grand Cru Schoenenbourg" (Etienne Hugel), whose first vintage is the just recently released 2007.

Schoelhammer is a steep, south facing parcel with Triassic Keuper marl soils in the heart of the oldest part of the Grand Cru Schoenenbourg, slightly east of the historical center of Riquewihr. Climbing from 290 up to 320 meters altitude, there are just 30 rows of Riesling on this long, drawn-out 0.63 hectare plot, whose grapes were always processed separately at Hugel until the family decided also to bottle it separately, starting with the great 2007 vintage. Since then, the Schoelhammer has been produced every year except of 2013, but will go into the markets only after several years of bottle aging.

However, the prestigious wine is not marketed as Grand Cru, since the production of an Alsace Grand Cru has to be announced in advance to the officials, something the Hugels never did since 1992. Thus, the first vintage of Schoelhammer Riesling that could be sold as Grand Cru is the 2015, which has been officially declared like the other new wine of this autumn: Riesling Grossi Laüe.

Starting with the 2010 vintage, the Grossi Laüe range succeeds the Jubilee line, which was introduced to celebrate the family's 350th anniversary in 1989, with the finest dry Hugel wines made from Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir.

Grossi Laüe (Grosse Lage in German) signifies the finest vineyards in Alsace dialect and represents an equivalent to the German Grosses Gewächs or the Burgundian Grand Cru. It is the first time since the Second World War that Hugel uses Alemannic terms like Grossi Laüe or Schoelhammer on the label. Etienne Hugel points out: "After Réserve Exceptionnelle in the 1930s, Réserve Personnelle in the 1960s and the 20 years of Jubilee, Schoelhammer and Grossi Laüe mark a veritable return to the timeless cultural values of our family, deeply anchored in our historic vineyard terroirs. We have finally left the denial of everything what's Alemannic behind us. It's time to speak Alsace dialect now."

The family is proud of their Vendange Tardive and Selection de Grains Nobles range, and with the newest releases, namely the 2010 Gewurztraminer Selection de Grains Nobles S and the corresponding 2009 Riesling there are at least two fantastic bottled reasons.

One more thing: Always open to technological progress, Famille Hugel has introduced DIAM, a new high technology cork closure to overcome the growing problem of "cork taint." "This technology eliminates every trace of TCA, the substance that causes 'cork taint,' without interfering with the quality of the wine," the Hugels report. Since the family wants their finest wines to be drunk after years in the bottle, the new closure is insofar very promising, since Diam guarantees bottle consistency and "allows the wine to develop for many years in the bottle, as harmoniously as it would with a perfect natural cork."

With all due respect to the changes, there is one thing that will probably remain forever: The Maggi-yellow signature color of the Hugel brand and many of the wines from the Hugel family