

# Tasting Highlights: Alsace

**2004 offers clarity, finesse and balance**

Bruce Sanderson

Posted: Monday, July 10, 2006

The 2004 vintage in Alsace offers the kind of wine I like to drink: crisp, clean and balanced, with well-defined flavors and a transparency that permits the *terroirs* to shine. To date, I have tasted 76 recently released Rieslings and Gewürztraminers; one-third have earned outstanding scores (90 points or more) on the *Wine Spectator* 100-point scale.

The Rieslings are very dry in 2004, with fresh acidity. The Gewürztraminers tend to be richer (because they are harvested with more natural sugar in the grapes) yet show finesse and balance. The Josmeyer Brand is the driest-tasting wine in this group.

The granite soils (Brand, Kaefferkopf, Schlossberg) tend to produce aromatic, lacy, open-textured wines, while the limestone and marl soils (Furstentum, Mambourg) imbue the wines with more richness, structure and power. Schoenenbourg contains both limestone and marl, but also gypsum and sand. It is the source of complex, structured Rieslings that need time to show their best.



Mick Rock/CEPHAS

*The Schoenenbourg vineyard is the source of complex Rieslings that need time to show their best.*

Wine	Score	Price
<b>HUGEL Riesling Alsace Jubilé 2004</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>\$36</b>

Though not on the label, this comes from the *grand cru* Schoenenbourg vineyard. Peach and lemon flavors vie with the tart structure in this lean, sharp white. There's richness there, but it's tightly wound and needs time to integrate. Be patient; this has potential and will show more mineral notes with age. Very good value. Best from 2008 through 2018. 150 cases imported. —*B.S.*

<b>ALBERT MANN Gewürztraminer Alsace Grand Cru Furstentum Vieilles Vignes 2004</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>\$32</b>
--	-----------	-------------

Spearmint and hard lemon candy aromas segue into litchi, grapefruit and spice flavors in this complex, full-throttle white. Off-dry, yet balanced, it picks up acidity and a hint of bitterness on the lingering finish. Very good value. 100 cases imported. —*B.S.*

<b>ALBERT MANN Riesling Alsace Grand Cru Schlossberg 2004</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>\$29</b>
---	-----------	-------------

Rich and peppery, this full-bodied, floral white quickly turns firm and drying. So intense. The ripe apple, white peach and mineral notes are matched to a lacy texture and return on the finish; give this a little time. Fine power and balance. Best from 2008 through 2018. Excellent value. 200 cases imported. —*B.S.*

<b>WEINBACH Gewürztraminer Alsace Grand Cru Mambourg Cuvée Laurence 2004</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>\$159</b>
--	-----------	--------------

Lush yet balanced, with enough acidity offsetting the light sweetness and framing the citrus candy, honey and dried rose flavors. Medium-bodied and graceful, this lingers with a honey and citrus aftertaste. 30 cases imported. —*B.S.*

<b>JOSMEYER Gewürztraminer Alsace Grand Cru Brand 2004</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>\$59</b>
--	-----------	-------------

An elegant style, on the dry side, with more spice and litchi notes, accented by grapefruit peel. It has fine intensity and integration, ending with a long, floral and spice aftertaste. 125 cases made. —*B.S.*

**WEINBACH Gewürztraminer Alsace Altenbourg 92 \$71**  
**Cuvée Laurence 2004**

Intense and rich, this has a hint of sweetness that carries its honey, spice and mineral flavors. The last are particularly pronounced, from the graphite aroma to the long, salty finish. 75 cases imported. —*B.S.*

**J.-B. ADAM Gewürztraminer Alsace Kaefferkopf 91 \$57**  
**Cuvée Jean-Baptiste Vieilles Vignes 2004**

Opulent and harmonious, this is silky and evokes honey, litchi and grapefruit notes, with a good underlying structure. That keeps the flavors focused through the long finish. —*B.S.*

**WEINBACH Gewürztraminer Alsace Grand Cru 91 \$79**  
**Furstentum Cuvée Laurence 2004**

An off-dry style, showing licorice, honey, peach and spice notes. It seems a little compact, despite its richness, yet has intensity and length. It's even chalky on the mineral-tinged finish. 50 cases imported. —*B.S.*

**J.-B. ADAM Riesling Alsace Kaefferkopf Cuvée Jean- 90 \$46**  
**Baptiste Vieilles Vignes 2004**

This is flinty and crisp, with apple, peach and mineral flavors wrapped tightly around the firm structure. Fine texture and dry on the finish, with a lingering stony aftertaste. —*B.S.*

**BOTT-GEYL Gewürztraminer Alsace Les Eléments 90 \$24**  
**2004**

Rich and verging on oily in texture, this is bright and full of litchi, honey and floral notes. It's beautifully balanced and harmonious, gliding to a long, grapefruit-tinged finish. 300 cases imported. —*B.S.*

**SCHOFFIT Riesling Alsace Harth Tradition 2004 90 \$23**

This has a cool, reserved side, but also ripe peach, quince and mineral flavors. It's well-balanced and lively, with a long, mouthwatering finish. Best from 2007 through 2015. 200 cases imported. —*B.S.*