Extraordinary General Meeting of the VDP Prädikat Wine Estates

Unanimous Vote for Ongoing Evolution of the VDP Classification
- VDP Classification Pyramid Adjusted -

On 25 January 2012, VDP members met for an extraordinary meeting in Neustadt/Pfalz. The main topic was the ongoing evolution of the VDP classification, a subject of considerable deliberation during recent months.

With its decision to pursue classification in 2002, the VDP helped spark the worldwide renaissance of German wine. Initially, the peak of the VDP classification pyramid was established with the designations “Erste Lage” (cf. Premier Cru in Burgundy) and “Grosses Gewächs”. It was agreed to postpone fleshing out the middle segment in order to glean additional experience by exchanging views with those in the market. To this day, all legally permissible nomenclature as well as inhouse alternatives have been used. The goal of the present resolution on the continuing development of the VDP classification is to keep its value proposition, improve its clarity, and provide consumers with explicit information.

After lively debate and fair discussion, the delegates unanimously voted to adopt the resolution proposed on VDP classification, in which the nomenclature of the VDP classification is more logically positioned; the correlation between top wines and their site of origin is strengthened; and the middle segment is more clearly structured. The resolution takes effect with vintage 2012.

The resolution includes the following points:

1) **Four designations denote VDP appellations of origin**

   - VDP Grosse Lage (like Grand Cru in Burgundy)
   - VDP Erste Lage (like Premier Cru in Burgundy)
   - VDP Ortswein (like Village in Burgundy)
   - VDP Gutswein (like Bourgogne régional in Burgundy)
2) New designation to denote the origin of top-level wines – VDP Grosse Lage – rather than VDP Erste Lage
The top-level category has been renamed. A new category has not been created, but rather the terminology has been shuffled in order to reconcile the discrepancy between the designations Erste Lage and Grosses Gewächs, as well as underscore the equally high status of wines with residual sweetness produced from grapes grown in exceptional sites.

3) Review of the designation to denote wines in the middle segment – formerly known as wines from classified sites
All VDP regional associations and member estates have been assigned the task of critically reappraising the above-named category. The goal is to be more discriminating in determining what constitutes a very good site, i.e., do the wines produced from grapes produced in such sites really show site-specific characteristics…terroir…and if not, those sites should no longer be named on labels. In all, the number of classified sites is to be reduced.

4) VDP Erste Lage – an opportunity to differentiate between the very best and very good sites
The use of the designation VDP Grosse Lage to denote the absolutely finest vineyards of a region is valid for all member estates across the board, effective as of vintage 2012. The use of the designation VDP Erste Lage to denote very good sites is optional, to be determined region by region. The regions can also determine when, if ever, to introduce the use of VDP Erste Lage. In other words, some regions might feel the designation VDP Grosse Lage suffices to describe its classified sites; other regions might wish to differentiate between their very best and very good classified sites, in which case they can opt to use the designation VDP Erste Lage to denote the latter.

5) Regional differences are taken into consideration
The VDP national association has set up an overall classification model. At the same time, the regional associations have considerable leeway in refining the model to take regional differences into consideration.

6) Clear vote on Grosses Gewächs
Henceforth, Grosse Gewächse originate in Grosse Lagen – a clear statement that eliminates ambiguity. Members unanimously approved ongoing use of the designation Grosses Gewächs to denote the finest dry wines from Germany’s finest vineyards, a term that has achieved international recognition since its introduction.

7) Prädikats are reserved for wines with residual sweetness
The Prädikats can be used for wines in all categories. The Prädikats are to be used exclusively for wines with natural, ripe sweetness – with one exception: Gutsweine, which can be vinified in any style (dry, off-dry, sweet). Specific taste profiles for the Prädikats are to be determined region by region.
Members are to refrain from using Prädikats for dry and off-dry wines, thereby enabling the Prädikats to resume their traditional meaning. Here, too, Gutsweine are an exception, as mentioned above.

**In closing:** The VDP classification is a work in progress. This resolution marks a further refinement of earlier models with regard to the language of the label (the correlation of “great” with “great”) and simplified structure based on three broad categories: Gutswein, Ortswein and Lagenwein. The last category includes the designations Grosse Lage and Erste Lage, comparable with Grand Cru and Premier Cru in Burgundy. In addition, the use of the internationally recognized designation Grosses Gewächs to denote Germany’s finest dry wines was applauded.

The delegates have asked the national executive committee to develop a clearly structured, uniform, and consumer-friendly communication strategy to convey the message of the resolution. The task is to be completed by the time the general meeting convenes this summer.

According to VDP president Steffen Christmann: “With this step, VDP members have clearly underscored the significance of the vineyard as the basis of wine quality, i.e., the very finest German wines are produced from grapes grown in Germany’s very finest sites. VDP growers embrace an international maxim that is not difficult to understand: the narrower the appellation of origin, the higher the quality of the wine – a principle that was the norm during the heyday of German wine at the start of the 20th century. At the same time, the VDP classification acknowledges that practices and traditions vary from region to region, and the regional associations have the freedom to take these into consideration within the overall framework set up by the national association. The sharper the profile established by a region or estate, the greater its chance of success in the market.”
Resolution Passed on the Ongoing Evolution of the VDP Classification

VDP Extraordinary General Meeting • 25 January 2012 • Neustadt/Pfalz

1. Henceforth, VDP appellations of origin are designated as follows:
   - VDP Grosse Lage (like Grand Cru in Burgundy)
   - VDP Erste Lage (like Premier Cru in Burgundy)
   - VDP Ortswein (like Village in Burgundy)
   - VDP Gutswein (like Bourgogne régional in Burgundy)

2. First, the regional associations determine which of their vineyard holdings qualify for VDP Grosse Lage (or optionally, VDP Erste Lage) status. It is up to each region to decide whether or not to differentiate between great sites and very good sites. VDP Gutsweine and VDP Ortsweine denote wines originating from sites of average and medium potential, as decided by the regional associations.

3. The goal is to implement the “one wine principle” for dry wines bearing the name of a classified vineyard site. The traditional Prädikats are reserved for all wines with natural, ripe sweetness. Specific taste profiles for the Prädikats are to be determined region by region.

4. A dry wine from a VDP Grosse Lage is a Grosses Gewächs.

5. The designation “trocken” (dry) is mandatory; “halbtrocken” (off-dry), optional.

6. The same labeling options apply to both VDP Ortsweine and VDP Lagenweine. VDP Gutsweine can be either Qualitätsweine (QbA) or Prädikatsweine in any style (dry, off-dry, sweet).

7. To avoid undue hardship, members can request exemption from the VDP regulations outlined above. The reason for the necessary exception must be declared.

8. The regional associations will immediately develop more detailed, regionally relevant concepts, bearing in mind compliance with the regulations outlined above.

9. All individual requests for exemptions (point 7) require the approval of the member’s respective regional association. These, as well as the implementation of regionally relevant concepts (point 8), require confirmation by the national association.

10. The resolution outlined above takes effect with vintage 2012.

Neustadt an der Weinstrasse/Pfalz, 25 January 2012