



## ALSATIAN ASSETS

*2005 offers a winning combination of ripe fruit and well-defined acidity.*

*By Alison Napjus*

The 2005 vintage in Alsace delivered high quality in all its major grape varieties and wine styles.

You'll find dry Rieslings with bracing acidity alongside elegant, apricot-laced late-harvest Pinot Gris and intense, floral Gewurztraminer dessert wines. Alsace enthusiasts and novices alike will enjoy the fruit-forward personality of the 2005s, as well as the bright acidity that makes them so compatible with food and promises fine development for top bottlings.

Alsace is best known for Riesling, which is widely planted there and consistently produces many of the area's top wines. The 2005 Rieslings are generally harmonious, showing peach, citrus and pineapple, as well as floral and mineral notes.

But 2005 was a good vintage for other varietals from the area as well. The racy acidity and purity of fruit that define the vintage helped most grape varieties excel, and this is probably best exhibited in Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer. Both grapes have less natural acidity than Riesling, but in 2005, the wines remained focused, accenting a zesty edge and giving an enjoyable hint of bitterness to the flavours of fresh and dried stone fruits and citrus fruits that are typical of these grapes.

The acidity of the vintage also benefits the region's late-harvest and dessert-style wines: *vendanges tardives* (VTs) and *selections des grains nobles* (SGNs). The VTs are on the market now, and the best versions show great concentration, with dried and tropical fruit flavours, terrific balance and silky texture.

[...] Tucked in France's northeast corner, Alsace is a haven for wine lovers who struggle to remember grape varieties associated with appellations in other French wine regions. The vast majority of its bottlings include a grape name on the front label, and the number of grape varieties used in Alsace is relatively small.

Most Alsace wines are made from white grapes, with Riesling, Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer leading the way, followed by smaller amounts of Muscat, Pinot Blanc, Auxerrois and Sylvaner. Pinot Noir, the only red grape grown in Alsace, is increasing its small share of the area's vineyard acreage.

Several producers stood out for their consistent quality in our tastings, making solid wines at a variety of price points and styles from the region's place to start for wine drinkers looking to try a new Alsatian grape variety or style.

[...] Also in this price range are Zind-Humbrecht's basic AOC Alsace bottlings and the dry wines of **Domaines Schlumberger**. Look for the dry, aromatic Zind-Humbrecht Gewurztraminer 2005 (90, \$30) or the silky **Domaines Schlumberger Pinot Gris Grand Cru Kitterlé 2005 (91, \$40)**.

[..] Alsace rarely receives the fanfare of some of France's other wine regions, such as Burgundy, Bordeaux and the Rhône, for example. But with the exception of the 2003 vintage, Alsace has experienced an unbroken string of outstanding years since 2000. The 2005's in particular are delicious right now, and the top versions will be enjoyable for the next 10 to 20 years. Given the region's high-quality track record in the new millennium and its stylistically diverse range of offerings, Alsace deserves renewed recognition as one of France's premier white-wine regions.

*New York – based tasting coordinator Alison Napjus has been with Wine Spectator since 2000. Senior editor Bruce Sanderson contributed to this report.*





## Recommended Wines from Alsace

By *Bruce Sanderson*

**Pinot Gris  
Grand Cru Spiegel 2005  
90 / 100**

A spicy edge to the dried apricot and grapefruit flavors in this white, accented by racy acidity and a thread of honey.

**Gewurztraminer  
Grand Cru Kessler 2005  
90 / 100**

This off-dry white shows lush flavors of orange blossom, pomegranate, Clementine and spice, with a delicate, honeyed finish. The texture is silky, and there's enough acidity for balance. Drink now through 2018.

**Gewurztraminer  
Sélection de Grains Nobles  
Cuvée Anne 2000  
93 / 100**

This rich white threads a caramelized sugar note through the orange confit, dried apricot, smoke, white pepper and cardamom notes. The concentrated flavors sit on a light frame, with integrated acidity and a nutty note that lingers on the finish. Drink now through 2020.





## Alsace Tasting Report

*By Bruce Sanderson*

### Domaines Schlumberger

86/100 – Pinot Blanc Princes Abbés 2005

90/100 – Riesling Princes Abbés 2005

90/100 – Riesling Grand Cru Saering 2005

90/100 – Riesling Grand Cru Kessler 2005

87/100 – Pinot Gris Princes Abbés 2005

90/100 – Pinot Gris Grand Cru Spiegel 2005

91/100 – Pinot Gris Grand Cru Kessler 2005

91/100 – Pinot Gris Grand Cru Kitterlé 2005

93/100 – Pinot Gris Vendanges Tardives 2005

90/100 – Pinot Gris Sélection de Grains Nobles Cuvée Clarisse 2000

88/100 – Gewurztraminer Fleur 2005

90/100 – Gewurztraminer Grand Cru Kessler 2005

89/100 – Gewurztraminer Grand Cru Kitterlé 2005

93/100 – Gewurztraminer Vendanges Tardives Cuvée Christine 2004

90/100 – Gewurztraminer Vendanges Tardives Cuvée Christine 2005

93/100 – Gewurztraminer Sélection de Grains Nobles Cuvée Anne 2000

