

LEON BEYER

www.leonbeyer.fr - contact@leonbeyer.fr
2 rue de la première armée, 68420 Eguisheim, France
Tel: +33 (0)389 216 230 - Fax: +33 (0)389 239 363



Vintage 2010 & 2011

Small though yields were in 2010, Marc Beyer says they were adequate in the realm of basic bottlings. It was only when it came to the special cuvees that volume dropped off dramatically, as much due to the need for stringent lot selection and declassification of usually prime fruit sources as to overall paucity of juice. The results are especially impressive in the line-ups that are ostensibly “low end,” and with Riesling. Given the track record for vinous longevity at this address (not just of how vintages from the 1970s and 1980s developed two decades on, but also because methods have remained unusually constant) I recommend them with special urgency to those who like this house’s relatively lean and adamantly dry style and who prefer to savor their Riesling with bottle age. The restrained Beyer style has largely flattered 2011 in a series of bottlings immediately engaging when it comes to Riesling, while Gewurztraminer takes the palm in terms of profundity and potential longevity.

88 PTS – Gewurztraminer 2011

The mint and lychee in the nose of the Beyer 2011 Gewurztraminer anticipate the wine’s understated and metaphorically cool but persistently juicy palate impression. A touch of salt adds saliva inducement to the subtly herbal finish. I would anticipate enjoying this by 2017.

87 PTS – Gewurztraminer 2010

Cinnamon, celery root and lychee in the nose of Beyers’ basic 2010 Gewurztraminer set the themes also for a slightly soapy palate impression. Peat and black tea smokiness as well as bitter green herbs mark the sustained if not especially juicy finish. I would plan on serving this by 2015.

93 PTS – Gewurztraminer Comtes d'Eguisheim 2011

The Beyer 2011 Gewurztraminer Comtes d'Eguisheim comes from a section of the Eichberg that does not usually inform this cuvee. A gorgeously multi-faceted nose of mint, pennyroyal, catnip, celery root, rose petal, and peony also sets the themes for the wine’s silken and expansive as well as engagingly juicy palate performance. The wine’s high-toned inner-mouth evocations of musky liquid floral perfume and cooling herbal essences extend into a prodigiously long and at once both soothing and stimulating finish. This utterly fascinating and distinctive, not to mention remarkably vivacious and metaphorically cooling, elixir represents Gewurztraminer in a key that some tasters may not even recognize. It is likely to prove versatile at table through at least 2028.

88 PTS – Gewurztraminer RESERVE 2010

The Beyer 2010 Gewurztraminer Reserve represents a blend of the most successful lots from this grape and vintage and could conceivably end up being released as a Reserve Comtes d'Eguisheim, though Marc Beyer deems that unlikely. Black pepper, caraway and smoky black tea combine for a distinctively piquant nose and palate, the latter picking up bitter herbal aspects in its persistent, though somewhat rustic, finish not at all unlike that of the corresponding regular bottling. I would tentatively plan on serving this by 2017 (though I don't know when it will be released).

91 PTS – Gewurztraminer RESERVE 2011 E

Caraway, clove, rose petal and black pepper intensely mark the nose of a Beyer 2011 Gewurztraminer Reserve E (tentatively titled) that originated in the Eichberg. The aforementioned elements continue on a silken palate of surprisingly and very satisfyingly juicy, crisp character that puts me in mind of stalk celery. A long, invigoratingly incisive and mouthwateringly saline finish caps this unexpectedly vivacious, downright refreshing bottling of Gewurztraminer almost sure to prove versatile at table through 2022.

90 PTS – Gewurztraminer RESERVE 2011 P

A Beyer 2011 Gewurztraminer Reserve P – from Pfersigberg – is engagingly juicy and dominated by celery root and muskmelon, its persistent finish intriguingly and mouthwateringly tinged with alkali and salt. At once understated in terms of varietal character yet impressively distinctive and unexpectedly vivacious, this bottling ought to merit following through 2022.

92 PTS – Gewurztraminer Vendanges Tardives 2011

From a parcel in Pfersigberg adjacent to that in Eichberg which supplied this vintage's strikingly successful "Comtes d'Eguisheim" bottling and, says Marc Beyer, reflecting a soil more typical of Eichberg than of Pfersigberg, a Beyer 2011 Gewurztraminer Vendange Tardive is memorably and intriguingly scented with rose petal, decadent lily, peppermint and lychee. The profusion of high-toned herbal and herbal essences on a silken palate is positively Chartreuse-like, and, like its immediate siblings in the present collection, delivers an animation and sheer juiciness that one doesn't usually associate with Gewurztraminer, much less one from this vintage. The alkaline and stony elements in a long finish seem somehow to shimmer while the sense of salinity milks the salivary glands. A slight impression of sweetness discreetly supports the flavors while also guaranteeing an alcoholic restraint similarly appropriate to the wine's whole personality. Expect this beauty to be worth following through at least 2028.

90 PTS – Muscat RESERVE 2010

Marc Beyer's 2010 Muscat d'Alsace Reserve – from mostly old vines, half Ottonel, in the Pfersigberg – is silken and slippery in texture yet infectiously juicy in a way too seldom experienced with this genre, but which, when experienced, reveals classic, dry Alsace Muscat's *raison d'être*. Mint, basil, chamomile and tangerine rind on the nose usher-in a palate saturated with coolingly green herb-infused honeydew melon and tangerine. Hints of white pepper and crystalline mineral impressions along with mint and citrus zest make for an ultra-invigorating as well as –refreshing finish. Expect this to be a versatile star at table (if you will just let it!) through at least 2020. Unfortunately, Muscat is one cepage – whether or not there is a reserve bottling – that Beyer releases almost immediately, so that the 2012 is on sale at the winery in 2014. What's more, I have not located any recent Beyer Muscat in U.S. markets. But this 2010 will justify a serious search. (From 2011, Beyers did not essay this bottling, but instead only a regular Muscat which I did not taste.)

89 PTS – Pinot Blanc 2011

As usual half-each Auxerrois and genuine Pinot Blanc, the Beyer 2011 Pinot Blanc offers fascinating scents and flavors of toasted peanut, along with fresh, juicy apple and crisp salad turnips. This is impressively lively and interesting for its vintage and should prove deliciously adaptive at table through at least 2015.

90 PTS – Pinot Blanc 2010

The Beyer 2010 Pinot Blanc offers a house-typical, very subtly oxidized aura of high-toned kirsch and mirabelle, joined by a hint of mothball. The aforementioned aspects dovetail nicely into the fresh apple and sweet corn, toasted nuts and pungent green herbs that inhabit a palate at once creamy, vivacious and juicy, a juxtaposition of which true Pinot Blanc (which makes up half the blend here) is uniquely and harmoniously capable. This classic of its type will prove highly versatile at table through at least 2015.

87 PTS – Pinot Gris 2011

Peat-like smokiness and scents of roasted peanuts, pork rinds and dried porcini strikingly mark the nose of Beyer's regular (a.k.a. "Tradition") 2011 Pinot Gris. That trio of elements reprises on an expansive if somewhat glassy palate, leading to an attractive but slightly brusque finish. I would plan to put this through its considerable paces at table through 2015.

87 PTS – Pinot Gris 2010

The regular Beyer 2010 Pinot Gris is scented with dried Porcini mushrooms, peat and smoked meats. A similar bitterness is present here as in the corresponding 2011, so that the two are remarkably similar. There is predictably a bit more brightness and primary juiciness here that carries into the finish, though the aromas are less striking. I would suggest drinking this – marginally reductive though it still is two years after bottling – by 2015.

89 PTS – Pinot Gris RESERVE / Comtes d'Eguisheim 2011

Rather dank wet stone, hummus, fresh mushroom and moss notes in the nose of the Beyer 2011 Pinot Gris Cuvee Reserve des Comtes d'Eguisheim anticipate the intriguing, subtly glossy but rather opaque palate impression. Stony, alkaline, and piquantly nutty notes add interest and help extend an understated but persistent finish. I would anticipate this being best enjoyed by 2018.

90 PTS – Pinot Gris Vendange Tardive 2010

A Beyer 2010 Pinot Gris Vendange Tardive is gamey and meaty in a butcher shop fashion in the nose as well as florally perfumed in a musky, narcissus-like manner. Full, but firm in feel, it finishes with suggestions of peach and pineapple fruit supported by subtle sweetness and an intriguing persistence of musky and animal elements. Satisfyingly juicy and mouthwateringly saline, this won't be everyone's cup of Pinot Gris due to its prominently animal dimension. Expect performances worth revisiting through at least 2020 and quite possibly well beyond.

86 PTS – Pinot Noir 2011

Also recommended, but no tasting note given.

88 PTS – Pinot Noir RESERVE Comtes 2009

A Beyer 2009 Pinot Noir Cuvee Reserve des Comtes d'Eguisheim is a bit ungainly in its tannic rusticity and piquancy (characteristics that applied even more to two 2011 Pinots I tasted alongside) but makes a distinctive and fascinating impression nonetheless. Alkaline, chalky, brown spice, moss-like and ashen elements all inflect a matrix of smoked meat and fresh pit-tinged purple plum on a grainy palate leading to a finish that, although tannic and sharply piquant, is also mouthwateringly saline and juicy. I would tentatively plan on serving this by 2018, though it will certainly be interesting to witness how it evolves.

88 PTS – Pinot Noir RESERVE Comtes 2011

Also recommended, but no tasting note given.

87 PTS – Riesling 2011

Mint, apple and orange are joined by faint suggestions of fusel oils in a captivating nose from Beyer's 2011 Riesling; though the wine's appealingly juicy, satiny mid-palate is relatively simple and culminates in a modest, faintly bitter finish. Still, there is plenty of appeal here, including ample refreshment. I would plan to enjoy this bottling by 2016. (I was unable to locate a sample of the corresponding 2010, and neither was Beyer when I visited him.)

90 PTS – Riesling Comtes d'Eguisheim 2011

The Beyer 2011 Riesling Comtes d'Eguisheim predictably represents a better fit between cuvee style and vintage than does the corresponding (provisional) "Ecaillers" cuvee. And the "Comtes d'Eguisheim" is released even later than the "Ecaillers," so that 2008 is the vintage being offered as of mid-2014. Fusel oils, quince preserves, lime peel, kirsch, and a hint of mothball comprise the intense aromatic opening to a lush and expansive palate performance, its peach, quince and crabapple, underlain with piquant nuttiness. There is a lovely and surprising sense of lift as well as of transparency to nuance considering this bottling's sheer richness, though I'd like to see a bit more focus and sheer persistence, which might have accumulated since I tasted. I would expect this to be ready to drink on release and probably be best drunk by 2018.

92 PTS – Riesling Comtes d'Eguisheim 2010

House-typical hints of kirsch, fusel oils and mothball rise from the glass of Beyer 2010 Riesling Comtes d'Eguisheim, along with intimations of the fresh lime and tangerine that go on to dominate the palate for a vivacity and cut I don't associate with this cuvee (even allowing for its never appearing in the market with less than five years' bottle age), but which by no means precludes lushness and silken texture. Alkalinity and walnut oil piquancy lend counterpoint in a lingering finish of buoyancy and clarity. Look for fine performances through at least 2022. The two classic special Beyer Riesling cuvees – "Ecaillers" and "Comte d'Eguisheim" resemble each other in this vintage as closely as I can ever recall, though for now the former represents an accentuation of their common virtues.

89 PTS – Riesling Les Ecaillers 2011

Beyer might declassify their 2011 Riesling Les Ecaillers, as the wine was not slated for release before late 2014 and this estate has never hesitated to subject their offerings to severe scrutiny. The wine is lovely; the question is whether it has the brightness, firmness and mineral expression that characterize this "shuckers" cuvee from the deeply calcareous Pfersigberg. Hints of fusel oils and mothball mingle with kirsch and fresh apple in the nose, leading to a refreshing though gentle finish. I suspect that this will be best enjoyed by 2016.

93 PTS – Riesling Les Ecaillers 2010

Beyer's 2010 Riesling Les Ecaillers – unlike the corresponding, provisional 2011 – represents a classic of its cuvee, with bright acidity, and maritime intimations of salt, alkali and oyster shell from its nose to its refreshing, saliva-inducing and palate-staining finish. It's also house-typical in its high-toned suggestion of kirsch and faint hint of mothball, while mossy, woody aromatic notes also emerge with airing. What's surprising is just how vividly prominent an apple, lime, tangerine and white peach fruit component this wine exhibits and how close to lush its texture is, which makes for lovely counterpoise to vintage-typical high acidity. I anticipate that it will drink beautifully through 2025 and quite possibly wellbeyond.

91 PTS – Riesling R de Beyer 2011

Purple plum distillate, lime peel, smoky black tea, and horseradish make for as aggressively pungent and piquant an aromatic display to the 2011 Riesling R de Beyer as I can recall from any youthful Riesling of this domaine. High-toned esters continue inner-mouth against a sappy fresh apple, lime and honeydew background, but there is a glossy feel. While invigorating, this wine has a much more restrained effect on my palate than on my nasal cavity and hairs! Highly satisfying, aromatically strikingly, and intense, this looks set to superbly express its vintage's full-fruited virtues and to delight and fascinate through 2025.

92 PTS – Riesling R de Beyer 2010

Saline, alkaline intimations of sea water as well as hints of moss, black tea, gentian distillate and seaweed make for a strikingly complex and intriguing aromatic display in Beyer's 2010 Riesling R de Beyer, whose palate impression is similarly multi-faceted and mineral. Quinine and fruit pit piquancy add to the stimulation and length, while fresh lime delivers concomitant sheer refreshment. This should make for fascinating showings at table through at least 2025.

91 PTS – Riesling Vendange Tardive 2011

Sourced from the Pfersigberg, the Beyer 2011 Riesling Vendange Tardive – assuming this bottling doesn't get declassified en route to its release several years from now – is dominated by quince and Persian melon, laced with distilled floral essences in the nose and informing a lush palate, with quinine and fruit pit piquancy serving as counterpoint to discreet sweetness. It would be nice to experience a bit more sheer juiciness to the finish, but it is certainly persistent. I'd tentatively envision this being best enjoyed by 2022.

90 PTS – Sylvaner 2010

A Beyer 2010 Sylvaner displays a cooling aura of herbs and lime allied to deep nuttiness and to refreshingly and animatingly Riesling-like acidity. Overtones of pit fruit distillates, such as are generally associated with the non-reductive style of Beyer, add complexity for all but those who are extremely finicky about volatility. Silken in texture yet with real spine, this finishes with underlying stoniness and fascinating length. It ought to prove delightfully versatile through at least 2017. (Marc Beyer elected not to bottle a corresponding 2011, believing the vintage less than conducive to quality with this cepage which does not – regrettably – enjoy prestige.)