

An aerial photograph of a large, multi-towered stone castle perched on a hillside. The hillside is covered in trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red. A wide river flows through the valley below the castle, with a long barge carrying cargo moving along its length. The background shows rolling hills and more forested areas under a soft, overcast sky.

ANNE KREBIEHL MW

A dark grey, semi-transparent rectangular area that serves as a background for the main title text.

THE WINES OF
GERMANY



Weingut Rudolf Fürst

Bürgstadt

www.weingut-rudolf-fuerst.de

Paul Fürst is one of Germany's true Pinot pioneers. Modest about his towering achievements, he reports humbly of his exacting, uncompromising quest for quality. Back in 1971 it was an unusual move to go far afield to be apprenticed but Paul Fürst decided to train at Schloss Johannisberg, Rheingau. 'It was an elite estate,' he says and credits the mature and often very old Riesling wines he was allowed to taste there with setting him on the path of pursuing the same world-class status for Spätburgunder. Every production parameter was questioned, as he learned, travelled and experimented to emerge as Germany's finest Spätburgunder producer. The poor sandstone soils lend a transparency 'that forgives not a single mistake in viticulture, but they also have the potential for the greatest finesse,' Paul says. In 2017 his son Sebastian formally took over, having joined his father in 2007. Sebastian, equally modest, has inherited Paul's magic touch and continues to fine-tune. The Geisenheim graduate trained in Germany, Alsace, South Africa and at several addresses in Burgundy. Father and son farm 20 hectares, which include the Bürgstadter Centgrafenberg, the fillet piece of which, Hundsrück (with poorer soils), is a south-facing slope in a lateral valley of the Main river and since 2004 also the Klingenberger Schlossberg. The Schlossberg, first documented in 1261, is a dramatic, terraced, steep site of hot days and cold nights. The Fürsts have planted very high-density vineyards and spare no effort whatsoever in tending these vines – mechanization is impossible. The Spätburgunders astonish with their ethereal transparency and a fine-boned structure that belies their beautiful depth. These wines age effortlessly – as a vertical of Centgrafenberg going back to 1990 proved. Hundsrück has quiet power, Centgrafenberg has cool, peppery spice, Schlossberg has herbal savour. Whole bunch vinification figures in various proportions, up to 100 per cent. 'This green [the stems] later lends sweetness and power,' Paul Fürst says. However, Spätburgunder's earlier-ripening cousin with identical DNA, Frühburgunder (see box, page 53), gets equal top billing here. There is also fine, super-slender, dry Riesling while Chardonnay and Weissburgunder grown in Astheim (Volkach) are increasingly important, too. It is down to Paul Fürst that these sandstone sites in Bürgstadt and Klingenberg, so perfectly suited to this variety, are monuments to Spätburgunder culture today. Pinot lovers should make the pilgrimage. VDP member estate.

Try: Bürgstadter Berg Spätburgunder, the village wine, which already spells purity, tension and elegance.