

# David Schildknecht Applauds the “outstanding results... achieved” by Rainer Wess in 2010.

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RAINER WESS, KREMS (WACHAU & KREMSTAL)				
2010	GRÜNER VELTLINER WACHAUER	(\$17.00)	WHITE	89
2010	GRÜNER VELTLINER TERRASSEN	(\$22.00)	WHITE	89
2010	GRÜNER VELTLINER PFAFFENBERG	(\$35.00)	WHITE	91
2010	GRÜNER VELTLINER LOIBENBERG	(\$35.00)	WHITE	92
2010	RIESLING WACHAUER	(\$18.00)	WHITE	88
2010	RIESLING TERRASSEN	(\$22.00)	WHITE	87
2010	RIESLING PFAFFENBERG	(\$35.00)	WHITE	89
2010	RIESLING LOIBENBERG	(\$35.00)	WHITE	91
2008	RIESLING TROCKENBEERENAUSLESE	(unknown)	SWEET WHITE	94

Rainer Wess has moved into and modernized the expansive old monastic Stiftskeller set into the deep loess of Krems’ Sandgrub vineyard, but with a one-third crop reduction he didn’t need the extra tanks he had installed. He says he didn’t de-acidify any Grüner Veltliner, only Riesling, though harvest did not get going seriously until late October and Wess emphasizes that for the top wines, the extra difference was made by waiting until the third week in November, “but after that,” he adds, “you could forget it.” Wess let the better fruit sit in the press for 6-8 hours but he thought it would be unwise to allow too much skin contact. Given the outstanding results he achieved, I wouldn’t dream of questioning any part of his strategy! That fermentations were slow, Wess says he cannot take credit for, but it appears to have been an example of nature compensating for the vintages high acidity by assuring plenty of time on buffering lees. The wines had all been bottled for less than a month when I tasted them. Wess’s basic **2010 Grüner Veltliner Wachauer** displays the clarity, purity, and excellent value with which I have long associated this bottling. Satiny in texture and juicily informed by fresh lime with hints of green bean and rhubarb, this is a crystal-clear, exuberant example of the 2010 vintage untamed yet far from raw. Salt and pepper accents add to the invigorating finish. This should continue to delight for at least a couple of years, though I would favor it in its high-spirited youth. Interestingly, at 12.5% this is not an especially alcoholically light wine, a function Wess would argue of the need to postpone harvest. But it is plenty buoyant in personality, which is surely what counts if lightness is what you seek. The standard set this vintage by Rainer Wess’s least expensive bottling was bound to challenge his **2010 Grüner Veltliner Terrassen** blend, but it rises to the challenge. Snap pea and French green bean are tinged with smoky black tea, tobacco, and while this lacks quite the charm or exuberance of its ostensibly lesser sibling, there is a polished feel and a refreshing, impressively persistent, black pepper-tinged, saliva-inducingly savory finish. Wess’s **2010 Grüner Veltliner Pfaffenberg** displays a peppermint-like high-toned herbal pungency along with scents and a nipping, almost palpably crunchy palate impression of fresh snap pea and cress. Blond tobacco and black pepper add savor to a long finish at once luscious, vivacious, and focused in a way that one can by no means take for granted in this vintage. I suspect this will be worth following for a decade. White peach, snap pea, cracked black pepper, and bittersweet floral perfume scent the Wess **2010 Grüner Veltliner Loibenberg**, then go on to inform a juicy, sappy, polished palate offering a striking sense of clarity to stony and crystalline nuances as well as a vibratory, lusciously lingering finish. This superb exemplar of its great site ought to perform

well for another ten or a dozen years. What’s more, it represents a terrific value for a wine of its pedigree. Wess’s **2010 Riesling Wachauer** is one of those Rieslings of its vintage that resemble Grüner Veltliner in their herbal and vegetable flavor leanings, in this instance with subtly bitter and nutty suggestions of leafy autumn greens, blond tobacco, and roasted root vegetables. Displaying a good sense of stuffing allied to ample refreshment, this finishes with a distinctly *Urgestein* sense of crystalline, ore-like mineral impingement. I would plan on enjoying this over the next couple of years. Incidentally, a portion of the blend went through malo, and much of the fruit came from the cool Spitzer Graben at the western edge of the Wachau. There is an overtly wet stone shading to Wess’s coolly herbal and melony **2010 Riesling Terrassen** that contrasts with the dynamic, diverse mineral shadings of the corresponding “Wachauer” bottling. There is also less sheer refreshment, though more sweetness of fruit, as well as somewhat greater persistence. All in all though, this is quite ripe and well balanced for a generic Riesling of its vintage. The Wess **2010 Riesling Pfaffenberg** delivers a tingling, invigorating amalgam of white pepper, lemon zest, salt, and crystalline mineral nuances against a background of honeydew melon, under-ripe apricot and gooseberry. Plus, the pithy, piquant, savory finish is just plain long. There is a good sense of density as well as of acids that were largely left to hang-out and have managed to generate energy and refreshment without excessive tartness. I wouldn’t be surprised to see this maintain satisfaction over the next 5-7 years. While – like its Pfaffenberg counterpart – Wess’s **2010 Riesling Loibenberg** contains only five grams of sugar, it gives a more luscious, sweetly-fruited melon and white peach with fig account of itself. Peppery and crystalline mineral notes point to the Urgestein fundament of this site, and Latakia-like tobacco pungency in the nose adds interest to a finish of vibratory intensity and formidable sheer persistence. This notable success story for its grape and vintage ought to retain its appeal for at least the next half dozen years. (The, today, more delicate and elegant 2008 showed well – but certainly not better – alongside.) Tasted by me in finished form for the first time in June of this year, Wess’s **2008 Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese** features a pure, buoyant essence of apricot with downright refreshingly juicy lemon and grapefruit, and a slick of honeyed botrytis secretion, all wreathed in nobly white truffle-like fungal scents and transparent to crystalline mineral notes and piquant candied citrus rinds. This lusciously-lingering almost ethereal Riesling elixir ought to be worth following for at least the next quarter century