

Achs
Beck
Gsellmann
Heinrich
Leitner
Nittnaus
Pittnauer
Preisinger
Renner

PANNOBILE

Magic Wand.



What you see illustrated above is the tool that transforms a wine into a Pannobile. Because each and every Pannobile is not simply produced but elected out of several excellent candidates. Only the ones that receive by Paul Achs', Judith Beck's, Andreas Gsellmann's, Gernot Heinrich's, Gernot Leitner's, Hans Nittnaus', Gerhard Pittnauer's, Claus Preisinger's and Helmuth Renner's approval in terms of quality and authenticity can be considered a Pannobile.

Nine Winemakers; One Idea

In the middle of the 1980s, Austria experienced a vinicultural revolution. Many winemakers implemented the latest cellar technologies and placed a strong emphasis on international grape varieties in order to bring more value to their wines. This expressed the new self-confidence of the Austrian producers and it pointed to the potential of their vineyards with an eye to when comparing them to those of the established wine-growing regions of other countries. However, this adaptation to modern methods sometimes led especially seen from today's viewpoint to a kind of uniformity of taste as well as to a decline in the regional typicality of the wines. Nevertheless, the international style was very successful on the market and proved to be an important step in the development of quality wine-growing in Austria.

However some winemakers had more vivid imaginations about how premium wines from their homeland should be. Thus, the idea of Pannobile was born, created by a group of winemaking friends and colleagues meeting regularly in Gols, a wine village on the northeastern shore of Lake Neusiedl (Neusiedler See). Their aim was neither to be "modern" nor "international", but to be committed to the soils, the character, and the climate of their region so that premium wines made from local grape varieties could be created.

Still, a vision is one thing, and the realization of it is something completely different. In 1994, the winemakers decided to establish an association that would turn their loose ideas into solid goals and provide a platform for the realization and control of those aims.

Seven winemakers, Paul Achs, Matthias Beck, Hans Gsellmann, Gernot Heinrich, Matthias Leitner, Hans Nittnaus and Helmuth Renner, founded the association. In 1998, Gerhard Pittnauer joined the group, as did Claus Preisinger in 2004.

The first Pannobile red vintage was 1992, and 1993 became the first Pannobile white vintage. Today, the Pannobile association already has an impressive history to look back on. Yet, while some things have changed, and much has developed, one thing has remained the same: being a part of Pannobile is the greatest passion of all.

The name of the association was put forward by Hans Nittnaus, who already had a cuveé called „Pannobile“. The word is an ideal representation of the group's focus: "Pannonia" refers to the region's name during Roman times, and underscores that origin is an important criterion of the wines; "Nobile" emphasizes the noble character of the wines. Ultimately, a Pannobile wine is one of complex structure and great aging potential.

Pannobile: The Wine

A Pannobile is the mirror image of the local grape varieties, the soils, and the special micro-climate of the best sites between Neusiedl am See und Halbturn. It must be, as the wine law states, a dry quality wine. As for the grape varieties permitted to be used, it can be made either as a single varietal wine or, as is more usual, a cuvée.

Through low vine yields and utmost concentration and care in the vineyards and in the cellar, the full potential of each vintage is tapped. In their youth, Pannobile wines are marked by a distinct fruitiness, making them very accessible right from the beginning. With bottle maturation, an array of rich and zesty flavors evolves while the charming fruit components are maintained. These wines can mature in the bottle for many years. In Pannobile wineries, the Pannobile wine ranks as the top cuvée, made from local grape varieties grown on the best sites.

PANNOBILE WHITE

These are complex, full-bodied wines with pronounced ripe, yellow fruit aromas. The palate features flavours that can range from juicy stone fruits and yellow apples to exotic fruits such as pineapples, melons, and litchis. This fruitiness is accompanied by a mineral spiciness that appears on the palate through a note of green almond or a certain saltiness. Due to the long contact with the fine lees, the wines acquire an additional creaminess. The distinct, natural acidity of the grape varieties used – even with their full physiological ripeness gives a freshness and juiciness to the wines.

This provides a very harmonious character. In addition, the utilisation of old vines guarantees years of good development potential in the bottle.

PANNOBILE RED

These are strong, multilayered wines with clear, dark berry fruit tones. The spectrum of aromas range from black cherry to blackberry and elderberry. The fruitiness is supplemented by a cool, herbal spiciness with mineral tones. This earthy expression accentuates the wines' fruitiness as well as their complexity and, in combination with the fine tannins, forms a tightly woven structure and juiciness on the palate, which goes on and on. These features make the wines very elegant and silky. Although the wines have good a aging potential, they nevertheless are already open in their youth, offering an animated drinking pleasure.

APPEARANCE ON THE MARKET

Each Pannobile wine is bottled in the winery of its producer, and is marketed under that producer's label. The wines are filled in bottles only (half-bottles, 0.75 liter bottles, or big bottles). The closures are usually made of natural cork, although there are alternatives such as glass caps or stelvin caps. Plastic closures are not permitted.

Pannobile: How Does a Wine Become One?

Each member puts together his own variants for his new Pannobile wines. Through the members' mutual blind tastings along with critiques and suggestions, the perfect compositions of the wines are found, just like the new vintage. At the beginning, the base wines for each winery's Pannobile are subjected to the critical opinions of the other members. Blind tastings held regularly are the main guarantor of quality in the evolution of the wines. Only then when the wines meet the rigorous demands for quality and typicality of all nine producers can they be bottled and sold under the Pannobile name. Even though the Pannobile wines are marked by self-imposed restrictions and regional similarities, each one shows the unmistakable signature of its producer. Every vintage features up to nine white and red Pannobile wines.

The Grape Varieties

The diversity of the soils and micro-climates around Gols led to the cultivation of various grape varieties, here and not to the concentration on just one leading variety. Therefore, the use of different varieties is typical of a Pannobile wine.

White varieties: Weissburgunder, Chardonnay

Red varieties: Zweigelt, Blaufränkisch, St. Laurent

PANNOBILE WHITE

The white wines develop a firm, powerful body and complex aromas, thanks to the Pannonian climate. The Burgundian varieties used grow on well-drained gravel soils with meagre amounts of loam. These, along with portions of shell limestone, help provide a solid structure for the wines. Weissburgunder (Pinot blanc) and Chardonnay tend to be the most important varieties for white Pannobile wines. They are well adapted to the climate and give to the wines great durability.

PANNOBILE RED

Since the 2006 vintage, only the local varieties Zweigelt, Blaufränkisch, and St. Laurent have been used for producing a red Pannobile wine.

The early ripening Zweigelt prefers soils that are not too heavy and rich in humus. This variety usually reaches its peak form at high sites and, therefore, tend to be cool. For example, in the red gravelly soils on the southern edge of the Parndorfer Platte and in the chalk rich upper part of the Golser Wagram, the Zweigelt develops not only its usual fruitiness, but also floral components and a distinct herbal spiciness. These all come together on the palate with juicy tannins – demonstrating the complexity of the wines. As part of a cuvée, Zweigelt lends above all juiciness and depth.

The late ripening Blaufränkisch needs the warmest sites of the Wagram in order to show all of its complexity. It reflects the typical character of the sites as practically no other variety can. From the vineyard slopes with soils consisting of sand, loam, and chalk come juicy and fruity-toned wines with a fine, graceful structure.

On the one hand, wines from the sites exude the blackberry and cherry notes that are typical of the varietal, and on the other hand show the distinct Blaufränkisch spiciness. This is expressed by herbal and leafy notes along with subtle liquorice tones. And there is also racy acidity, which delivers an animated freshness to the wines and emphasizes their elegant character at the same time. The Blaufränkisch from these sites are marked by fine tannins which contribute to the firm structure of the wines. All of these facets together result in multi-layered wines with precise fruit, lots of tension, and a considerably lingering palate. The Blaufränkisch brings spiciness, structure, elegance, and length to the cuvées.

St. Laurent, another early ripening grape, favors higher, cooler sites as well – such as those on the southern edges of the Parndorfer Platte, with their iron rich gravel soils. Here, with a beautiful view to the Lake Neusiedl the variety enjoys the thermal elements which allow it to reveal a piquant, forest berry fruit character. The clear, tight aromas are also well woven on the palate. St. Laurent contributes plenty of finesse and structure to a cuvée and its distinct acidity supports the varietal's freshness and vibrancy

Aims and Values

VINICULTURE

To sharpen and preserve the authenticity of the Pannobile, each winery selects its own vine material. This provides the best mother plants in the vineyards of Gols. Rootstocks are very important for the improvement of the quality. Thus research is conducted over a long period of time in order to determine the ideal rootstocks for the selected vines.

VINEYARD CULTURE

Each Pannobile winemaker strives to use the natural resources as effectively as possible. The re-cultivation of the traditional fauna and flora, which means the achieving of bio-diversity in the vineyards, is the most important goal of the producers. Biological cultivation is planned for all of the Pannobile wineries within the near future. The building up of humus by using compost and the green seed process should decrease erosion, promote soil life, and make the vines more resistant. Moreover, the vines should achieve a better balance between vegetative and generative growth, which will ultimately result in a significant increase in the vineyards' lifespan.

PRODUCTION CULTURE

The grapes must have full physiological ripeness, and they have to be healthy and free from botrytis. They are harvested solely by hand and placed carefully into crates. Through the selection in the vineyards as well as on the sorting tables in the cellars, a double quality control is made before pressing. The grapes are processed with as little mechanical stress as possible.

PANNOBILE WHITE

The grapes are pressed very carefully so that any changes to the must are generally avoided. The biological reduction of the acidity during finishing depends on the vintage and the decision taken by each winemaker. The wines mature on the fine lees in wooden barrels. During barrel storage, an exchange of gas through the wood pores takes place, allowing for a slower maturation of the wines. Barrels of different sizes from 225 to 2.000 litres - as well as different ages are used for the maturation of the wines. These wines mature in barrels for approximately twelve months; then they are bottled and come to the market two years following after the harvest. The first day on which the new vintage of the Pannobile white can be purchased is June 1.

PANNOBILE RED

The alcoholic fermentation takes place spontaneously with natural yeasts in open or closed vessels. The mash is moved carefully by plunging and pumping over. The maceration should result not only in maximum extraction, but also in the greatest possible finesse and structure. Therefore, the maceration time lasts two to four weeks. The biological reduction of the acidity takes place partially in barriques and partially in steel tanks, but is not prematurely initiated. With the use of wood, the natural oxygen consumption is promoted and a slow and harmonious development of the wines is attained that way. A pronounced wooden character with roasted aromas is unwanted. Barrels of different sizes from 225 to 2.000 litres - as well as of different ages are used for the maturation of the wines.

For further maturing, the wines remain in the barrels for approximately 15 months. The fining of the wines is spontaneous through repeated drawing off. At the beginning of every September, the latest Pannobile red vintage is presented by all nine Pannobile producers. The release is always two years after the harvest.

IMPROVEMENT AND CONCENTRATION

Improvement of the must is usually avoided. Only in exceptional situations is a moderate chaptalization permitted in order for the final product to achieve more harmony. Aromatization – such as with wood chips and the adding of tannin are forbidden. All technical procedures for must concentration as well as component separation are not accepted either.

Wine Growing Area

All Pannobile member wineries are at home in Gols, a village in the northern Burgenland. With 1.500 hectares of vineyards, Gols is one of the largest wine-growing communities in Austria. The village of Gols as well as all of the Pannobile vineyard sites belong to the wine-growing area of the Lake Neusiedl. While future Pannobile member wineries do not have to be located directly in Gols, the vineyards and the wine-growing focus and aims must be in line with the Pannobile mission.

SITES

Pannobiles are clearly wines of origin. The sites extend from Neusiedl am See, Weiden am See, Gols and Mönchhof to Halbturn. They are situated on the southern edge of the Parndorfer Platte, a gravelly plateau to the north of the above-mentioned villages, and which extends from the west to the east. The Pannobile sites lie on southeastern slopes. A Pannobile site must feature a special composition of soils and micro-climate that guarantees optimum conditions for vine development. Once designated as Pannobile, the sites are recorded on a cadastral map.

In geological-tectonic terms, the Pannobile communities lie in the West Pannonian Basin – a young basin in the Alpine-Carpathian system. Three main vineyard designations are distinguished according to soil and micro-climatic conditions.

SOILS OF THE SITES:

The Parndorfer Platte is a vast plateau with terraces formed by gravel deposits from the Danube river. The ideal geological conditions for wine-growing are found on the southern end of the Platte. It consists of terraces which are up to ten meters thick, dating to the Ice Age and comprised of soil with limy fine sediments. On the surface is a layer of silt with pebbly gravel. This means that the surface soils are porous, while the deeper layers are ideal for water storage.

At the southwestern end of the Parndorfer Platte is the Wagram, which features a tertiary base of sandy-loamy material covered by gravel. The sites here consist of finely grained sand and chalk sediments, which lie deep, and of a surface layer of silt and gravelly pebbles.

The Heideboden is the lower lying area at the foot of the Wagram, which extends to the reed-laden shore of the lake. Here, are chalk rich black earth soils as well as gravelly soils with a meager portion of chalk. Wines from the sites on the Heideboden can be used only for the production of Pannobile white wines.

THE CLIMATE

The Pannobile region lies in the Pannonian climatic zone. Extremely hot and dry summers are the norm here, as are cold winters and rainfall in spring and fall. On a yearly average, though, the entire Pannonian zone is rather dry, with a total rainfall of less than 500 mm.

The Gols region is one of the warmest ones in Austria: the average annual temperature is 10.6 °C. There are at least 61 days with temperatures above 25 °C during the summer.

An important factor contributing to the micro-climate here is the Lake Neusiedl. At 36 kilometers long and twelve kilometers wide, it is the largest steppe lake in Central Europe. As a climate regulator, it increases the air humidity as well as it lengthens the vegetation period. In summer, this vast lake heats up to 28 °C during the day. And during the night, it gives off warmth, which wafts across the surrounding area. The risk of late frosts in spring are minimized, and the fall tends to be long and warm late into the season. These are the conditions in which even late ripening varieties prosper so well. The intensive sunshine promotes ripe, juicy tannins, while the dipping night temperatures bring a cool fruitiness to the wines, preserving the acidity for which the wines are renowned.

What also plays a very important role is the wind. From the Lake Neusiedl, warm air continuously rises towards the Wagram, where it mixes with the cool winds of the Parndorfer Platte. This phenomenon produces special air currents that create in the vineyards a coolness in the summer and warmth in the spring and fall. Moreover, these air currents allow for the leaves and grapes to dry quickly after a rainfall and, therefore, preserve the health of the grapes.

The Mission

The group is open for new members who have the same values. In order for the group to expand, the proposal and unanimous acceptance of a new group member is required. Mutual appreciation, personal relationships, and open contact with each other are the special characteristics of the group. The style of communication is honest, direct, and spontaneous. Members of the Pannobile-group have new ideas and are open to outside impulses. Mutual cooperation and reciprocation are highly important for all members. Further development and the exchange of expertise are essential to the thinking of the group. A central point in the group's work is the critical tasting of each other's wines as well as the wines from other producers. As a result, the quality of each producer's own work can be questioned and even improved.

Besides the work within the group, social activity outside of the group is of major importance to the Pannobile members. To underscore this approach, the nine members founded the "Pannobile Sozial" association in 2006.

The idea is to use wine as a mode to provide assistance. Through various producer events or through special wine projects, such as Sarastro 2003, money is collected and distributed to people in need in a fast and uncomplicated way. The use of the money has a regional emphasis, which means supporting projects and people in the area. The Pannobile winemakers identify themselves with the aims and values of their mission. They live in accordance with it, and it forms the basis of all their doings.

A Look at the Producers

Nine wineries and nine different personalities. Together, this group stands for one thing: Pannobile. This, is indeed, very exciting: nine families who, through their work in the vineyards and in the vinification of their wines, cooperate to produce fine Pannobile wines. Of course, it is not surprising that the group meetings – better known as the “Pannobile sessions” – are sometimes filled with intense discussions. Each member of each winery fights for his opinion, with conviction and determination. Perhaps that is really what defines the Pannobile group.

Year after year, Pannobile wines are judged at tastings conducted by numerous important wine magazines, and ranked as some of the best wines from Austria. The Pannobile producers are pioneers of many important developments in the Austrian wine scene: they inspired the increase in the awareness and reputation of Austria's red wines also outside of the domestic borders; and they have led in the discovery of terroir thinking as well as in the revival of autochthonous grape varieties, understanding early on that a new, fruitful synthesis of old wine-growing tradition and modern cellar techniques had to be found. Of major importance is that the Pannobile white and Pannobile red are always premium wines in each producer's range of wines. But for all nine members, the Pannobile is, year after year, the *vin de garde*: for this wine, the best grapes from the best sites are reserved; all of the care and mutual cooperation concentrate on the Pannobile.

From A to R

PAUL ACHS

In 1990, when Paul Achs took over the winery that had been in his family for at least three generations, he had just returned from a long stay in California. There, he had been strongly impressed by experiencing how Napa Valley left the shadow of Bordeaux and began developing its own unique character.

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JUDITH BECK

Judith Beck makes wines which completely reveal their vintage and terroir; they are more elegant than heavy, and they show a great clarity and individuality. "Wine and the joy of living and pleasure all go hand in hand." says Judith. "We prefer wines which captivate with each new bottle and each new sip."

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GSELLMANN & HANS

Hans Gsellmann, one half of the former Gsellmann and Gsellmann winery – started a new, independent winery in 2006 under the name "gsellmann & hans". Also responsible for this important step was Hans's son, Andreas, who will eventually soon manage the winery.

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HEIKE AND GERNOT HEINRICH

To anyone who has the chance to watch Gernot Heinrich working on his wines, it is immediately obvious that, even with his seriousness, he is a man who shows a kind of child-like joy in what he is doing. Perhaps it is this combination of concentration and light playfulness that expresses his taste.

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LEITNER FAMILY

Their grapes grow at some of the best sites of the wine-growing area: on the slopes of the Schafleiten, on the Ungerberg, and on the Salzberg. Due to the Leitners' dedication and pure, careful hand-work, these favored sites generate the best grapes for the family's precise wines. In these wines the varietal typicality and terroir are clearly reflected. Anyone who drinks a glass of Leitner wine will experience this for themselves.

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HANS AND ANITA NITNAUS

Hans Nittnaus is a wine-growing pioneer in Burgenland; a visionary whose imprint marks the Pannobile concept. Due to his continuous tireless work, "John" as he is known to his friends, is greatly responsible for today's distinguished modern Austrian red wine style.

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GERHARD PITTNAUER

The Pittnauer winery is young and dynamic, established in 1992 through the partial takeover of the family winery. Since then, Gerhard and his wife, Brigitte, through dedication and ambition, have placed their name at the top of the list of the best Austrian red wines. The Pittnauer vineyards thrive at the cooler sites of the plateau as well as on sun-kissed slopes. Their wines are defined by an impressive interplay of fruit and elegance.

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CLAUS PREISINGER

Claus Preisinger puts his passion and originality into his wines, which reflect not only a rich character, but also their geographical origin. He perfectly choreographs his wines without missing a single component. Claus Preisinger unceasingly strives to show the individuality, the typicality, and the unmistakable qualities of the Lake Neusiedl.

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BIRGIT AND HELMUTH RENNER

Winemaking for Helmuth and his wife, Birgit, already began in the cradle. Helmuth grew up at the winery of his parents. In fact, he worked there from his early childhood right up to the time he took it over in 1988. Birgit also comes from an old winemaking family. The Renners define themselves as "enlightened traditionalists", always interested in innovation, but with aim to preserving and using the important parts of tradition.

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