

# RUDI PICHLER, GRÜNER VELTLINER FEDERSPIEL

WACHAU, AUSTRIA 2017

## FRUIT



## EARTH



## BODY



## TANNIN



## ACID



## ALCOHOL



*When it comes to a definitive, clear-cut expression of how wine should taste from a classic region, there are few labels I wholeheartedly trust year-in and year-out. Be it Grüner or Riesling, Rudi Pichler was one of my go-to producers leading up to the blind-tasting portion of my Master Sommelier exam. Today, I buy Pichler for another reason: sheer pleasure. —Ian Cauble, Master Sommelier*

I liken their extraordinary Grüner Veltliners to the annual, non-vintage releases of a renowned Champagne House—although they produce more premium labels, this is the bottle that defines their style and image. As such, Pichler's classic "Federspiel" Grüner is "the most important Rudi Pichler wine," and one that illustrates the focus of their entire lineup: textured minerality, piquant layers, and middle-of-the-pasture freshness. Every year, Rudi Pichler—who holds a prestigious 'Vintner of the Year' title in Austria—crafts a Grüner Veltliner Federspiel that 'wows' critics and consumers alike. An entry-level wine, sure, but that doesn't prevent it from entering the 99th percentile of elite white wine under \$30. If this is your first Pichler experience, the 2017 is a remarkable starting point, it is just about perfect, and a can't-miss addition for those who are already 'seasoned vets.' Enjoy!

Grüner Veltliner from the Wachau region of Austria is one of my favorite white wines, and not just because it is one of those perfect symbioses of grape and place—although that, of course, is a big part of it. Wachau Grüner also resonates with me because it is so often one of the most affordable ways to taste history. I mean, you're drinking wines from terraces first planted by the Romans! This wine from Rudi Pichler, whose family has tended vines in the Wachau since the 1700s, is a perfect example: I would say that they have the Grüner Veltliner grape, and their steeply pitched vineyards above the Danube, pretty well figured out by now. And yet this wine—dry and savory, yet blessed with an extra level of concentration (it is designated *Federspiel*, more on that below)—is hardly priced like the precious commodity it is. It almost doesn't seem fair, but if it works for Rudi, it works for me.

The Pichler estate extends across 15 hectares of family-owned vineyards (of which 65% are devoted to Grüner Veltliner), supplemented with grapes from three hectares of leased vines. This 2017 is a multi-vineyard blend, combining the two principal soil types of the Wachau—gneiss, a weathered metamorphic rock found at higher elevations, and loess, a wind-blown silt/sand found closer to the banks of the Danube.

Farming is carried out according to the sustainability parameters outlined by the Wachau's unique producers' association, Vinea Wachau, which also created the now-well-known designations "Steinfeder," "Federspiel," and "Smaragd" to classify the region's wines depending on the ripeness levels of the grapes at harvest. Today's offer is Rudi Pichler's flagship "*Federspiel*" bottling, which, by definition, is a slightly richer, riper wine that reaches between 11.5% and 12.5% alcohol by volume, but not nearly as ripe as *Smaragd* styles which are usually between 12.5%-15% depending on the producer. After handpicking their crop, grapes were crushed by foot and briefly macerated for several hours. The juice was then funneled into stainless steel for vinification without malolactic fermentation. Bottling occurred after seven months of aging on lees.

Whichever word you care to use—classic, benchmark, touchstone—the wines of Rudi Pichler are essential drinking for anyone who appreciates the mineral-infused precision of Austrian white wine. As is always the case with Rudi Pichler's Grüner, the mouthwatering appeal is its extra gear: There's plenty of light, zippy (and perfectly delicious) Grüner Veltliner out there, but this one is more substantial. There are layers of savory depth and heaps of deeply-etched minerality hiding beneath its playful aromatics of citrus blossoms, green apple, peach skin, grapefruit zest, arugula, river stones, white pepper, and snap pea. Still, the prickly zip of acidity slices through it all and creates a cleansing sensation on the finish. It's simultaneously rich, layered, and refreshing—exactly what I search for in top Grüner. Taste Pichler's 2017 Federspiel once and you'll understand why this category is so beloved by SommSelect and somms alike. Serve in all-purpose stems around 45-50 degrees and serve with just about anything on earth. I would recommend preparing some ginger-lemongrass pork lettuce wraps and make sure you secure enough bottles to last you over the next couple of years. There is always a time and place for Rudi Pichler!

## SOMM SELECT



COUNTRY  
*Austria*

REGION  
*Wachau*

SUB-REGION  
*n/a*

VARIETAL  
*Grüner Veltliner 100%*

ALCOHOL  
*12.5%*

OAK  
*n/a*

SOIL  
*Gneiss & Loess*

FARMING  
*Sustainable*

SERVICE TEMPERATURE  
*50°F*

GLASSWARE  
*All-Purpose Whites*

DRINKING WINDOW  
*Now-2022+*

DECANTING  
*30 Minutes*

PAIRING  
[\*Ginger, Lemongrass, & Pork Lettuce Wraps\*](#)

*"The precision, power, and exceedingly modest price of Pichler's Federspiel perfectly symbolize classic Austrian Grüner Veltliner. For those who want a region- and grape-defining wine from a widely celebrated producer, today's breathtaking 2017 accomplishes just that."*