



Vibrant vineyards in South Styria

**The Sausal's Warga-Hack Winery is a biodynamic operation with naturally different Rieslings, Sauvignon Blancs and Burgundies from extremely steep single-site, single-owner vineyards on slate soils.**

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## THE WARGA-HACK WINERY|

Since 1998, Rainer Hack has managed the Warga-Hack family winery in the Sausal, since 2002 together with his wife Jasmin Scheucher-Hack, from whose family an important part of the winery's ten hectares of vineyards originate.

The couple converted to organic agriculture in 2004, and were certified organic in 2009. Warga-Hack was the first organic-certified winery in Kitzeck, their base of operations at the time. In 2017, Rainer and Jasmin Hack went one step further and became members of the Demeter Biodynamic Association. This decision has not only affected their winemaking and wine styles, but above all it has had a great impact on the vineyards. Since the conversion, these have been full of biodiversity, animal and plant life, and differ greatly from the grape monoculture vineyards that are still common here. The couple sees the vineyards as a habitat for an infinite amount of nature, and as an adventure playground for their three children. "Between our vines, over 50 years old, the flowers can sprout and the bees hum, the grass can grow high and birds can nest in the vines." The logical consequences of this are more vital soils, and vines that thrive perfectly without mineral fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides. The winery is characterized exclusively by manual work and biodynamic recycling management.

Jasmin and Rainer Hack know about the uniqueness of their vineyards in the Sausal, a geological peculiarity in southern Styria. Only here is phyllitic shale, which is up to 350 million years old, found. The extremely steep slopes of Kitzeck and Demmerkogel, half of them terraced, give the Rieslings, Sauvignon Blancs, and Burgundies from the Wilhelmshöhe, Pistor, Trebien, and Römerstraße sites an unmistakable smoky minerality. Seeking primary fruit from Warga-Hack is futile.

The winery was also well known for its fine Buschenschank (a rustic wine tavern), with a fantastic view over the Sausal vineyards. In 2017, the couple decided to sell it in order to concentrate fully on the winery. In the course of this, their base of operations was transferred from Kitzeck to Demmerkogel, in St. Andrä in the Sausal.

This reorganization was followed by a brand relaunch with a new logo and website.

## THE VINTNERS

Jasmin Scheuer-Hack and Rainer Hack got married in 2002 and now have three children: Maximilian, born in 2003, Ferdinand in 2006, and Theresa in 2012. The birth of their first child was also the main impulse for converting to ecological agriculture, so the couple's children could grow up in unencumbered, rich nature. The couple were able to quickly counter the unanimous conviction in the region that because of its climatic and geological conditions the Sausal is not suitable for organic farming, by their soon perfectly flowering and vital vineyards, as well as their high-quality wines.

One big validation of this, and a first convincing success, was the new partnership in 2016 with Salzburg wine dealer Döllerer, who enjoys an excellent reputation throughout Austria for his high-quality, well-chosen wine range. The couple are jointly responsible for all the wines of the winery.

### Rainer Hack

After attending the regional school for viticulture in Silberberg, Rainer Hack trained as a winemaker and cellarmaster. After several years in which he, along with Jasmin and his parents Sissi and Willi Hack, took care of their renowned Buschenschank and its guest rooms, he grew the desire to concentrate exclusively on wine and to convert to organic farming. In 2006, he was the first Sausal winegrower to complete the organic certification course in Krems, and before the conversion in 2015, the Demeter basic course for biodynamic cultivation in Göpfritz an der Wild, as well as a first preparatory seminar with renowned French biodynamics consultant Vincent Masson.

For Rainer Hack, this step into the vineyard-intensive and elaborate biodynamic working methods was the only option.

“We are fortunate to be able to harvest grapes in our own intact biotope”.

### **Jasmin Scheucher-Hack**

Jasmin Scheucher-Hack grew up as an innkeeper's daughter in Graz, and received her doctorate in architecture from the Technical University there. Design and art have also remained important to her as a winemaker, and she incorporates both into the new construction at the winery, including the cellar.

Her family's love for wine resides in her genes, just one of the reasons why she is also actively involved in the winery in this respect. During her studies, she completed several winemaking courses at the technical school in Silberberg and also took the Demeter basic course for biodynamic cultivation in Göpfritz an der Wild.

Jasmin Scheuer-Hack is primarily responsible for marketing and sales, but also forms a team with Rainer when it comes to the stylistics of the wines. Bottling only takes place when both are completely convinced by every wine.

"We love to sit on our terrace high up on the Wilhelmshöhe and enjoy a glass of our own wine, created out of nothing but grapes, and the sense of how to make it right".

### **THE SAUSAL**

The southern Styrian Sausal hill country lies between the Sulm and Laßnitz rivers, separating the eastern Styrian from the western Styrian basin as part of the central Styrian ridge (Sausal Schwelle) and protruding about 100 meters high from the surrounding countryside. The soils of this elevation consist of paleozoic shales (300 to 350 million years old) and differ from the rest of southern Styria, whose soils consist mainly of deposits from the primeval seas. In the Sausal, shell limestone only occurs at lower layers. The highest elevation is 671 meters above sea level in the Demmerkogel, and the vineyards here are among the steepest in Europe with grades of up to 90%. Through sophisticated manual labor, these extremely steep vineyards are also partly cultivated on terraces, but often the rows of vines run vertically. The most important towns of the Sausal are Sankt Nikolai in the north, Sankt Andrä-Höch in the west, and Kitzeck in the south.

The origin of the Sausal name lies in the Latin "solva silva" for Sulmwald, from which the term Susal was derived in the Middle Ages. The hypothetical derivation of "Sau-Suhle" due to the abundance of wild boar in the area is not scientifically justified.

This region, with one of Austria's oldest wine origin designations, is famous for its minerally wines with delicate smoky flavors derived from the shale. Viticulture has existed here since Roman times, often practiced by the clergy since the beginning of the 12th century. In the Sausal in those days, the archbishops of Salzburg directed their local farmers to cut down the forests to plant vines. In addition to grapes, chestnuts, pumpkins, and various types of fruit such as figs and kiwis also thrive in this region due to its Mediterranean-influenced climate.

## 1. The Sausal Climate

The climate in the Sausal is Illyrian Mediterranean, characterized by strong temperature differences. On one hand, the southern sunshine heats strongly during the day, on the other hand, the area cools down just as strongly at night due to the proximity of the Koralpe - a mountain range of the Noric Alps between the Mur and Lavant rivers. These fluctuations give the grapes complex flavors and a concise acid structure, part of the Sausal wines' character. The altitude of the Sausal vineyards, up to 670 meters above sea level, additionally requires a slow and long vegetation process which is also important for the finely engraved flavor profile of Sausal wines.

Due to the large altitude differences in the Sausal hills, there are many different microclimates in the vineyards, which promote the large number of single-site vineyards. Due to the steepness of the slopes, the sun's rays hit the vines more frontally, allowing physiologically mature grapes which still possess sufficient acidity when very ripe to be harvested, despite the nocturnal and autumnal coolness. Due to their tight minerality, they never become too broad.

## 2. The Sausal Soils

The Sausal soils represent one special feature, consisting of 85% various types of slate, and 15% shell limestone. These barren soils ensure slow vine growth and low yields. They characterize the wines, which express an often salty mineral character and a certain smokiness.

**The Slate.** While for millennia today's southern Styria was flooded by primeval seas, most of the Sausal formed a compact island-like elevation. The limestone deposits formed from coral reefs and marine animals, which dominate the soils of the rest of southern Styria, can therefore only be found in the Sausal in the lower areas around the northern village of Flamberg, and in individual small southern stretches. The Sausal itself is characterized by its multi-layered phyllitic slate soils of different colors, its sericite quartzites, clay shale, and green, red, grey and blue-black slates. Each of them shapes the wines in its own way, which are always taut and salty-minerally.

## FULLY CONVINCED BIODYNAMIC

The Warga-Hack Winery has been a certified member of Demeter, the world's oldest biodynamic agricultural association, since 2017. In Austria, around 60 wineries belong to the association, characterized by collective continuing education, preparation days, and friendly cooperation.

Biodynamic farming is subject to strict guidelines that go far beyond the standards of EU organic regulations, and are certified by independent inspecting bodies. Biodynamic farming focuses on the health of the soil and vines, a great personal concern of Jasmin and Rainer Hack.

The core issue of biodynamics is circular economy, and with it independence from warehouses and other suppliers. Ideally, a farm is autonomous, which is why biodynamic winemakers often also keep animals. The animal life determines the plant life and vice versa.

Plant and animal biodiversity in the vineyards and soil, maintaining and strengthening the vines, building up humus through composting, applying biodynamic preparations, and working in the rhythms of nature and the moon are the cornerstones of this method of farming.

Elaborate manual work in the vineyard is a prerequisite, as synthetic sprays, fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides are strictly taboo. The work in the wine cellar is gentle, the wine is guided as gently as possible, and is never manipulated. It gets the time it needs to become high-quality, harmonious, and storable in the bottle.

Furthermore, responsibility for the entire value chain and society at large is demanded. These are topics that Rudolf Steiner dealt with 100 years ago, as a forerunner of the modern sustainability discussion.

Jasmin and Rainer Hack follow this path with conviction, and the quality of their wines is their validation.

## THE VINEYARDS (SITES) OF THE WINERY

Many of the small-scale single-site vineyards of the Sausal were already operated by the archdiocese of Salzburg in 1322, and the clergy continued this quality work over the following centuries. The microclimates and different soil structures were evaluated and catalogued through observation over a long period of time.

As in all the other winemaking regions of Austria, all vineyards in the Sausal are currently being remeasured and recorded in the vineyard register. The Warga-Hack winery cultivates around ten hectares in the Wilhelmshöhe, Pistor, Trebien and Römerstraße sites.

### 1. Wilhelmshöhe

Where:	Demmerkogel
Soil:	Blue-black slate
Orientation:	Southern exposure with southern basin
Altitude:	500 to 600m
Grade:	45 to 60%
Varieties:	Welschriesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Morillon, and Pinot Gris
Age of Vines:	20 and 50 years
Wines:	Welschriesling Ried Wilhelmshöhe, Sauvignon blanc Ried Wilhelmshöhe, Morillon Ried Wilhelmshöhe, Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) Ried Wilhelmshöhe

Wilhelmshöhe is a Warga-Hack monopole (fully owned site). It is characterized on the one hand by the southern basin, which brings high daily temperatures, and on the other hand by the proximity of the Koralpe, which is responsible for low temperatures at night. An exciting single-site vineyard, in which future vintage wines full of character mature every year.

## 2. Pistor

Where: Demmerkogel

Soil: Blue-black slate

Orientation: Southwestern exposure

Altitude: 440 to 540m

Grade: 50 to 70%

Variety: Riesling

Age of the Vineyard: 20 years

Wine: Riesling Ried Pistor

The Pistor vineyard is a monopole (fully owned site), on terraces, characterized by its steep grades and particularly barren slate soil with a very low humus content. This barrenness is perfect for the late-ripening Riesling, whose growing season is thereby slowed down and whose ripening time is delayed even further. The flavors are thus particularly precise, with a low alcohol content and a very good impression on the palate.

## 3. Trebien

Where: Kitzeck

Soil: Red slate

Orientation: South-Southwestern exposure

Altitude: 440 to 530m

Grade: 45 to 50%

Varieties: Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, and Welschriesling

Age of Vines: 30 years

Wines: Welschriesling Kitzeck-Sausal, Weißburgunder Kitzeck-Sausal,  
Sauvignon blanc Kitzeck-Sausal, Riesling Kitzeck-Sausal

The Trebien vineyard is located in Kitzeck, about five kilometres from Höch. This is where our Ortswein (local "Kitzeck-Sausal" wines) begin. They stand for Sausal typicality: clear varietal flavors, delicate fruit, minerality, and a fine acidity.

#### 4. Römerstraße

Where:	Einöd
Soil:	Red slate
Orientation:	Southwestern exposure
Altitude:	380 to 460m
Grade:	50 to 100 %
Varieties:	Welschriesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Muskateller
Age of Vines:	20 and 40 years
Wines:	Welschriesling Maische, Sauvignon blanc Maische Muskateller Maische, Sauvignon Blanc natur

Römerstraße is a very special vineyard, divided in two by a road. Below the road it has a trajectory up to a 100% grade, and above the road it is laid out on terraces. Both parts are cultivated exclusively by hand without the use of tractors. The grapes from the Römerstraße provide the perfect basis for our natural wines. Due to the higher temperatures caused by the southwest orientation, the grapes produce less acid, which makes them ideal for mash fermentation.

## QUALITY PYRAMID

As is customary internationally, and following the example of Burgundy, the wines of the Warga-Hack winery are bottled under the categories of Ortswein (local wine) and Riedenwein (an Austrian term for a single-site vineyard wine).

It goes without saying that as biodynamicists, Jasmin and Rainer also incorporate their closeness to nature in the vineyard and into the cellar for both categories. All wines are fermented spontaneously with the grapes' own natural yeasts, remain in steel tanks or barrels until they reach optimum maturity, and are bottled without any fining agents. They go one step further in the Naturwein (natural wine) category. These are bottled unfiltered and unsulphurized, after even longer storage in barrels. All of our wines have been organic since the 2009 vintage, and Demeter-certified as of the 2017 vintage.

### \* **Ortswein** (village wine)

Like all of wines of Warga-Hack, the local wines come exclusively from their self-managed vineyards in the Sausal and are sold under the name "Kitzeck-Sausal", at the earliest in the May following their harvest. They stand for Sausal typicality: expression of the soil, clear varietal flavors, delicate fruit, minerality, a fine acidity, and long-lasting on the palate.

### \* **Riedenwein** (single-site)

Warga-Hack manages the two monopoles (fully owned site). Wilhelmshöhe and Pistor, which are among the best and most demanding sites in the Sausal. In the foreground is the terroir, and with it the soil, microclimate, and signature of the winemaker. The grape variety is clearly recognizable, but subordinates itself to the soil, which is clearly expressed regardless of the respective vintage. After at least one year in the barrel, these wines have a high aging potential.

### \* **Naturwein**

Only the highest quality grapes from the most barren parts of the vineyards - often only three grapes per vine - are used for this category. The wines of Warga-Hack's natural line are aged in 600-liter Startinfass (starter barrels, old Styrian barrel size) and the mash-fermented wines in 300-liter Halbenfass (half barrels, also an old Styrian barrel) before being bottled unfiltered and

unsulphurized after two years. These wines are very lively and have a lot of structure. The grape variety recedes into the background, the wines are stable in the open bottle for a long time, and really impress with their richly varied flavor spectrum. Wines for lovers, and still rather the exception in the Sausal.

#### \* Aperitif

Warga-Hack's Vermouth

In Grandmother's time, it was common in the Sausal to drink a glass of vermouth against all kinds of ailments, but above all against melancholy. This old tradition should be taken up again, because the wormwood herb grows wild in Warga-Hack's vineyards on the steep southern slopes. This lemony, refreshing vermouth is ideal as an aperitive or a summer evening drink.

### THE VARIETIES & THEIR PROPORTIONS

Fitting the region, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, and Burgundy varieties are grown at the Warga Hack winery. In Styria, Riesling is limited to the Sausal but impresses here with its high minerality and slate notes.

#### The varieties of the winery according to proportion (in percent)

##### WHITE WINE

- 12 % Welschriesling
- 20 % Sauvignon Blanc
- 20 % Riesling
- 20 % Pinot Blanc
- 10 % Pinot Gris
- 10 % Morillon (Chardonnay)
- 5 % Muskateller

##### ROSÉ

- 3 % Zweigelt

## TRADING PARTNERS

Warga-Hack is still a young winery, on the road from an insider tip to greater fame. Along the way, it can grow in peace with more trading partners. When the personal interaction and product ranges fit, Jasmin and Rainer Hack are looking forward to new cooperations, both at home and abroad.

## AUSTRIA

Salzburg: Döllerers Enoteca & Weinhandelshaus, [www.doellerer.at](http://www.doellerer.at)  
Vienna: Agora Vino/Leo Kiem, [www.agoravino.at](http://www.agoravino.at)

## EXPORT

Switzerland pur gourmet/Branko Mucina, [www.purgourmet.ch](http://www.purgourmet.ch)

## AWARDS & RATINGS

- 2016/17 Gault & Millau Austria 15 to 17 points
- 2017/18 Gault & Millau Austria 15 to 17 points
- 2017/18 Falstaff 90 to 92 points
- 2017 Falstaff Muskateller mash-fermented among the top muscatels in Austria
- 2018 Vinum wine magazine 04/2018 16 points

## NATURALLY WE ARE DIFFERENT!

"Naturally, our vineyards are especially high and steep, naturally our view is the most breathtaking and seems endless, naturally our up to 40-year-old vines grow on pure slate in the heart of the Sausal.

But what makes us fundamentally different: between our vines, the flowers can sprout and the bees hum, the grass can grow high and birds can nest in the vines. Our vineyards are not only our livelihood, but also a habitat for an infinite amount of nature and an adventure playground for our three children.

We love to sit on our terrace high up on the Wilhelmshöhe and enjoy a glass of our own wine, created out of nothing but grapes, and the sense of how to make it right.

Hard facts: no mineral fertilizers or synthetic pesticides, no additives such as purebred yeast, gelatin, enzymes, or any other 'fining agents'.

We give our wines all the time they need to develop optimally. We have the privilege of accompanying them until the right time for bottling, to love their rough edges, and then proudly bring pure naturalness with real Sausal terroir to the tasting."

Jasmin und Rainer Hack



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