



Born in Alsace (yet not into a family of vigneron) the former sommelier Julien Schaal has run a boutique winery in Saint Hippolyte since 2001, when he teamed up with Olivier Biecher, a négociant for whom he works as a winemaker. Julien handcrafts more than 12 Grand Crus, but one-third of the production is for his own brand, while the other part is sold under the Jean Biecher label. Even though Julien makes the wines for both brands, each one has its own crus. "Since I couldn't afford to buy land, that is by far the best deal I could have made to fulfill my dream of handcrafting wines from Alsace's greatest terroirs," he explains. "I must admit, though, this is a bit of an unusual set up for Alsace, whereas it is absolutely normal in South Africa."

South Africa is where Julien Schaal's winemaking career began in 2001 when he was 21 years old and started with "nothing but 6,000 euros." Today Julien rents a cellar space at the Paul Cluver winery in Elgin where he stores all his equipments, tanks, barrels, etc. I have included two beautiful Cape Chardonnays from there into this report.

In Alsace Julien exclusively produces dry Rieslings from Grand Cru appellations that all have very different soils: limestone (Rosacker), schist (Kastelberg), sandstone (Altenberg), volcanic rock (Rangen), gypsum (Schoenenbourg) and granite (Sommerberg). Only the Altenberg de Bergheim is Riesling co-planted with Gewurztraminer. I have often seen Julien's Kastelberg plot, but this autumn was the first time I managed to taste his series of six Alsace Grand Crus, and I was very impressed by at least four of the wines. Julien Schaal is a hot "new" name in Alsace and is already distributed in the US.



*Robert Parker*  
WINE ADVOCATE

2017 Julien Schaal • Alsace  
Grand Cru Kastelberg Riesling  
"Schiste"

Rating

**94**

Release Price

**\$19.99**

Drink Date

**2023 - 2037**

Reviewed by

[Stephan Reinhardt](#)

Issue Date

31st Oct 2018

Source

[239, The Wine Advocate](#)

From 50-year-old vines in Alsace's one and only (very small but steep) schist terroir in Andlau (Bas-Rhin), Julien Schaal's 2017 Alsace Grand Cru Kastelberg Riesling "Schiste" is super pure, fresh and flinty on the deep and stony/lemony nose. It's like perfume distributed onto stones! Full-bodied, lush and very elegant on the palate, this is a powerful, tight, straight, bone-dry, austerely mineral, piquant and tensioned yet fine Kastelberg based on ripe and perfectly healthy grapes. Great concentration and length here! The finish is enormously pure, salty and highly stimulating. Dry Riesling at its best! This is still a baby but with great aging potential. And have look at the price! Tasted September 2018.



*Robert Parker*  
WINE ADVOCATE

2017 Julien Schaal • Alsace  
Grand Cru Rangen Riesling  
"Volcanique"

Rating  
**92**

Release Price  
**\$29.99**

Drink Date  
**2020 - 2030**

Reviewed by  
[Stephan Reinhardt](#)

Issue Date  
31st Oct 2018

Source  
[239, The Wine Advocate](#)

From the only (at least most famous) pure volcanic terroir in the beautiful Rhine region Schaal's 2017 Alsace Grand Cru Rangen Riesling "Volcanique" from Thann combines purity and finesse with ripeness, depth and intensity on the dark, flinty/smoky nose with its ripe and concentrated but elegant fruit aromas. Full-bodied, dense and compact on the palate, this is a very elegant, charming and well-balanced Rangen with remarkable finesse and salinity but yet not the power, complexity and vibration of Schaal's finest 2017s, Kastelberg, Schoenenbourg and Rosacker. The finish is very salty and reveals nice grip. This 2017 is perfectly round and almost lush, and it already drinks very well. Tasted September 2018.



*Robert Parker*  
WINE ADVOCATE

2017 Julien Schaal • Alsace Grand  
Cru Rosacker Riesling "Calcaire"

Rating

**93**

Release Price

**\$24.99**

Drink Date

**2021 - 2038**

Reviewed by

[Stephan Reinhardt](#)

Issue Date

31st Oct 2018

Source

[239, The Wine Advocate](#)

Julien Schaal's 2017 Alsace Grand Cru Rosacker Riesling "Calcaire" is a spectacular wine with clear, super ripe and concentrated Riesling fruit intertwined with spicy notes of crushed limestones on the nose. "In the Rosacker, we are always harvesting the most beautiful grapes, no matter the vintage condition," says Julien Schaal, adding that this must is the slowest fermenting one but always finishes dry. Full-bodied and very elegant on the palate, the 2017 is a very fine, round but complex, mineral and persistent Rosacker with great vitality, finesse and lingering salinity. It has just the right phenolic structure. The unknown amount of unfermented sugar is discreet and, in any case, perfectly balanced by the mineral character of this cru. This is a stunning Rosacker that is ripe, mineral and complex—"a complete wine," as Julien calls it. In any case, this is limestone expression at its best.



*Robert Parker*  
WINE ADVOCATE

2017 Julien Schaal • Alsace  
Grand Cru Schoenenbourg  
Riesling "Gypse"

Rating

**93**

Release Price

**\$19.99**

Drink Date

**2022 - 2033**

Reviewed by

[Stephan Reinhardt](#)

Issue Date

31st Oct 2018

Source

[239, The Wine Advocate](#)

The 2017 Alsace Grand Cru Schoenenbourg Riesling "Gypse" is very clear, bright and deep on the complex and mineral nose that represents a coolish, reductive character. Full-bodied and large yet very fine and highly elegant on the palate, this is a pure and persistently salty Riesling with great finesse and remarkable length. It has just a kiss of sweetness, which is perfectly balanced. This is a long-distance runner with a very long and promising finish. A great wine from the steepest part of one of the greatest terroirs in Alsace, this interpretation is all about finesse and pure salinity. It is less powerful and rich than the Rosacker but a very fine Riesling from gypsum soils. Tasted September 2018.





*Robert Parker*  
WINE ADVOCATE

2017 Julien Schaal • Alsace  
Grand Cru Sommerberg  
Riesling "Granite"

Rating

90

Release Price

\$19.99

Drink Date

2022 - 2030

Reviewed by

[Stephan Reinhardt](#)

Issue Date

31st Oct 2018

Source

[239, The Wine Advocate](#)

From the amphitheater, the 2017 Alsace Grand Cru Sommerberg Riesling "Granite" is intensely fruity and almost exotic in its spicy and slightly nutty expressions. Very pure but ripe and rich, with flinty flavors, generously lush fruit and charming texture, this is a full-bodied, intense and powerful Sommerberg that is still searching for its finesse and balance. Very young and (still?) a bit bitter on the finish yet not as tensioned or vital as the great Kastelberg, Schoenenbourg or the powerful Rosacker. Tasted September 2018.