



Jasmin Schmid is an employee of Andreas Keller's Weininformation and works not only for JSNW but also for Swiss Wine Connection and Mémoire des Vins Suisses.

ELLEN WALLACE / HANS-PETER SIFFERT

# NEW PRODUCERS, JUST WHAT THE COUNTRY NEEDS

*33 Swiss producers under age 40 are teasing us with hints of the thousands of wines of the future that their wineries and others in the Alpine nation will be making in a few short years. An interview with Jasmin Schmid, secretary general of the group “Junge Schweiz – Neue Winzer” (JSNW).*

**The “Junge Schweiz – Neue Winzer” group is keen to be seen and heard, and in particular to have the next generation of consumers explore the future of Swiss wine with them. They will be doing this through regular events, tasting sessions and old-fashioned “getting to know each other time” with wine-lovers, using new-generation marketing approaches.**

“Our generation is much more about self-expression – for us, it’s about the person, not just the wine,” says Jasmin Schmid. “You are who you are as a winemaker and the wine represents you. The rest of us remember the people and their wines because of their stories.” She points out that on their website, [www.jsnw.ch](http://www.jsnw.ch), the member is listed first and then the winery.

Character, personality, energy, sometimes (happily) a bit “crazy” – we’re talking about men and women under 40 who are starting to develop the contours of tomorrow’s Swiss wines. Will the wines made by this new generation of Swiss

producers really be different, and is that good or bad? Jasmin is quick and firm when she replies, but I’m used to this from her; despite her youth she’s been a fixture as one of the organizers for events by Mémoire des Vins Suisses and others. “If you’re young, you ask more questions. I think tradition is very important - but you also need to be free to be a bit crazy! They have different ideas about winemaking.

“I think the wines will be different, not the same wines, because we’re using new ideas, newer technologies, and just because that’s what you do when you’re young. They will try out new things and find their own style.”

She reflects for a moment. “Sometimes, when a wine is completely new to us, it’s almost easier, we don’t have to think about it compared to its reputation. But I think you have to try to understand it. You need personal contact with the winemaker.

“That’s what’s so important for Switzerland because our wines don’t speak for themselves as easily as big-name

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Jasmin Schmid  
and Ellen Wallace  
in the wine cellar of  
Château Konkordia  
where the committee  
of JSNW meets



French or New World wines, for example, might. We need to put Swiss wines next to foreign ones and just show that Swiss wines can certainly stand up against the others.”

JSNW was formed in 2010 when a dozen young producers decided to get together to taste each other’s wines and learn from each other – and to have a little fun, party a bit, because after all, they are under 40. Like so many youthful efforts it compensated with enthusiasm what it sometimes lacked in organization. The wines, taken as a whole, were uneven: soaring and excellent at times, generally very good, but close to not so good at other times.

An internal discussion now is whether or not quality should be a membership criteria, as it is, for example, with the Mémoire des Vins Suisses group, which has provided some support for the JSNW. For a group of people starting out and needing to network, is it fair to cull the members based on quality? Will the group be dismissed by the public, if not all the wines are high quality?

The question is closely tied to how Swiss wines can be marketed now. The key “is knowing where people, especially young people go, and making sure the wines are there,” rather than focusing primarily on the media, says Jasmin. “You have to be at a hip place – a good location is half of

it. You have to get more people talking about your wine, broaden your horizons. Now is the moment, while the focus everywhere is on regional wines, because who knows how long it will last. The pendulum could swing back to international wines.”

JSNW members come from a mix of backgrounds, some of them working in family wineries that are well established and others starting out on their own. Educations have varied – from self-taught with apprenticeships in wineries to degrees at Changins, the university in western Switzerland where most oenologists in the country train.

Many in the original group went to school together. They were, and remain, predominantly Swiss German, although from 10 cantons. Last year several new people joined from Valais and Vaud, adding French to the mix, helping them move beyond the cultural, linguistic and political lines that are part of today’s Swiss wine world. Developing inter-regional friendships is important. Some of them, such as board member Fabrice Simonet from Vully, near Neuchâtel, or newcomers Stéphane and Isabella Kellenberger from Leuk in Valais and Jonas Huber in Ticino, grew up on language borders or in bilingual families, and are very much at ease in German and French or Italian; they help facilitate discussions.

More than their parents, perhaps, they have travelled and are starting to think in terms of Swiss wines, rather than just regional or local wines. They tend to see their own wines in a larger context that extends beyond the country’s borders, no matter what their personal sales ambitions are, geographically.

The range of backgrounds is remarkable, from Simone Monstein who came to wine after working successfully as an artist, and Susi Steiger-Wehrli, who trained in Australia and France before returning to Switzerland, wanderer Jürg Marugg who took a winemaker’s gap year, to Serge Diserens, an engineer and oenologist who just won the 2016 award for the world’s best Syrah and who teaches at Changins on the side.

“In the end, winemaking is an art. It requires creative people, people who are really motivated.”

Alain Schwarzenbach from Zurich approached Jasmin Schmid in 2015 about working part-time with the group. She was already juggling several roles through her work with Swiss Wine Connection and the Mémoire des Vins Suisses, organizing events, handling media relations, planning tasting events. She was young, like the group, although her soft Raphaelite “Small Cowper Madonna” looks

hide determination and sharp thinking. “Now I’m responsible for organizing whatever they need to have organized,” she laughs. “They are young – and that means it’s always a bit chaotic. They’re running wineries and making wine and some of them are starting families and so on. I don’t make wine, but with my passion for wine, I want to promote Swiss wine: I just want people to know about Swiss wines, to know that there are great Swiss wines out there, to get to know these young people.”

A current venture is to work with restaurants and wine bars willing to rotate their wines, for example for three months, as open wines. This is proving to be a good sales booster and way to get name recognition for a winery, says Jasmin. Organizing events that will put them in the public eye is a priority, and the JSNW has been initiating new projects every year. Next year they will have their first public wine tasting where the whole group is present and they will also be the guest of honour at Festivins in Fribourg.

Today “terroir” is all the rage, but tomorrow? – how will they adapt their selling techniques? For this as well as the wines, the word is still out, but the networking under-40s are creating a thirst for more detailed news of what we’ll be drinking in the future.



Photo: Gian-Battista von Tscharnier

General Assembly of JSNW  
at Schloss Reichenau in 2016

FACTS ABOUT JSNW

**Foundation**  
Society since 2010

**Founding Members**  
Pasquale Chiapparini, Tom Litwan,  
Ralf Oberer

**Number of Members**  
33 (2016)

**Membres of the Comittee**  
Mathias Bechtel, Bechtel-Weine  
(President); Susi Steiger-Wehrli,  
Wehrli Weinbau AG (Vice-Pre-  
sident); Alain Schwarzenbach,  
Schwarzenbach Weinbau; Fabrice  
Simonet, Le Petit Château

**Secretary General**  
Jasmin Schmid

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EVENTS OF JSNW

**Junge Schweiz – Neue Winzer  
The Wine Tasting**  
Thursday, March 16th 2017  
Wirtschaft Neumarkt, Zurich  
www.jsnw.ch

EVENTS WITH MEMBRES  
OF JSNW

**Mémoire & Friends 2016**  
29.08.2016, Kongresshaus Zurich  
www.memoire-and-friends.ch

**Festivins 2016**  
19.11.–20.11.2016, Belfaux Fribourg  
www.festivins.ch

**Expovina Primavera 2017**  
30.03.–06.04.2017, Puls 5 Zürich  
www.expovina.ch