

2020 Barta Furmint Egy Kis

Tokaj, Hungary

Founded in 2013, we first visited Barta back in 2015 because we had learned that they had brought the famed Öreg Király Dűlő (Old King Vineyard) back to life and restored a 16th century cellar in the town of Mád. At first I was a little leery because the Barta family has no roots in Tokaj, viticulture, or winemaking, but were wealthy outsiders making a big investment. Upon meeting Károly Barta, hearing about his long-term vision, discovering the people he had brought on board to carry this all out, it was clear that the investment was not some sort of ego trip, but an all encompassing investment in and for Tokaj. Driving towards the village of Mád, it's impossible to miss the Öreg Király Dűlő. It's the highest altitude, steepest hillside, and most distinctly terraced vineyard in Tokaj. First mentioned in 1285, a 1st class site from the 1737 Classification, it was tragically fallow from the 1960s until 2004. There's also written evidence from 1664 that the iconic Rákóczi family, then the rulers of Transylvania, farmed this vineyard. Needless to say, this vineyard has pedigree, was never farmed industrially, and has been resurrected with organic farming and painstaking mending of the terraces. Lastly, Frank Dietrich (founder of Blue Danube Wine Company) and I were also inducted into the Confrérie de Tokaj at the Barta Estate in Mád. The honor of being included in such company and the formal ceremony that followed are among my favorite memories from Tokaj. As I alluded to above, Károly Barta doesn't come from a winemaking or viticulture family. That said, he has surrounded himself with those that do and given them incredible agency and resources. The vineyard manager is János Hajdú, who is also the winemaker at Bodrog Borműhely, another one of our Tokaji estates. In the cellar he hired Attila Homonna whose wines we don't represent, but who we greatly respect and admire. Attila finished his run after the 2015 vintage (consulted a little bit on the 2016s) and handed over the reigns to Vivien Újvári. Vivien came from the Grof Degenfeld Winery in Tokaj and like Attila, continues to focus on minimal intervention and organic farming.



VINEYARDS

Carved into volcanic red clay and rhyolite-tuff, work began on resurrecting the terraces and replanting in 2003. Three years later, 10 hectares of stake trained vines and the terrace system were completely restored. While most of the site is dedicated to Furmint, there is also Hárslevelű, Sárga Muskotály, and Kövérszőlő. Farming is organic and due to the forest behind it, wild boars and starlings are the major threats to be managed.

The winemaking follows suite from the viticulture. Since they were given a vineyard that had never seen industrial chemicals ever, so shall it be in the cellar. All fermentations are spontaneous and nothing else is added apart from SO₂. The 2015 Furmint was fermented and aged 9 months in 500L Hungarian Oak in the 16th Century cellar beneath the estate. It was bottled in August of 2016.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

"Kis" literally translates to small, but the sentiment is that while it's the younger sibling to the older vine and barrel fermented versions, it's not dumbed down either. All of the fruit comes from the famed terraced Öreg Király Dűlő, but from the younger cordon trained vines. It's also picked early without botrytis and 90% fermented in stainless steel and the rest in oak. Just a few short months on the lees, it was racked off the lees in February without going through malolactic fermentation. A particularly cold winter killed off most of the pathogens and everything was looking super healthy just after flowering. Then the rains came. Their village of Mád was fortunate not to get the brunt of it, but cover crops and grass shot up aggressively and a lot of vineyard labor followed. Nevertheless, this elongated growing season and colder climate resulted in long acidity and freshness.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Tokaj

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Furmint

CLIMATE: Cool Continental

MACERATION & AGING: 10 per cent of the juice was fermented in oak barrels, the rest in a steel tank.

ALCOHOL: 12%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 8 g/l

ACIDITY: 6.7 g/l



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