

2020 Bott Frigyes Olaszrizling

Južnoslovenská, Slovakia

After WWI, Hungary lost around 71% of its territory to Romania, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia (Slovakia), Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia) and Austria. Over 3 million ethnic Hungarians found themselves outside of Hungary with significant outcome on the grapes and traditions that never stopped or are now coming back to life beyond the present day borders of Hungary. On the southern slopes of the Mužsla Hills in Slovakia surrounded by the river Garam, Danube and the Ipoly rivers, is one such example: Bott Frigyes. Even the neighboring village of Béla is where Judit and József Bodó of Bott Pince began their winemaking career (ethnically Hungarian but born in Slovakia) before moving to Tokaj. Long story short, a whole bunch of things all came together with Bott Frigyes coupled with great farming, honest winemaking, and delicious wines.



VINEYARDS

Bott and his son Frici cultivate 10 hectares of vineyards next to the River Garam, at 250 metres above sea level. They are growing Furmint, Hárslevelű (Lipovina in Slovakia), Juhfark, Kékfrankos, Kadarka (cuttings are incidentally from Balla Géza in Romania who is also ethnically Hungarian), Tramini, Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Sárfahér and Olaszrizling. The soil is clay on top of volcanic bedrock, which is also rich in limestone and minerals.

WINE MAKING

The winemaking is certainly structured in terms of technique, although all fermentations are native, there's zero temperature control, longer lees aging, natural settling, all oak barrel (some amphora), and bottling unfinned and unfiltered with a small amount of SO₂ at bottling as the only addition. For the reds, they do use the "Hamburger" method which is essentially alternating layers of whole cluster (foot stomped), topped with whole cluster, then topped with a destemmed and hand crushed layer. This achieves a semi-carbonic quality to the wines without developing too much of the banana or bubble gum often associated with carbonic. For the skin contact whites, it's often no more than a week, and they are careful to keep it worked over to prevent VA and other flaws. The winemaking overall is tied to tradition but with a nod to modern hygiene in the cellar.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

The front label of the 2020 Olaszrizling pretty much sums it up. It's what I would draw if I were playing Pictionary. Heading north from Budapest you'll pass the massive Basilica of Esztergom along the shores of the Danube. Once you pass over the Danube and enter Slovakia you'll hit the Hron River (Garam in Hungarian, Gran in German) making its way down from the Tatra Mountains. Continuing West along the Danube you'll soon come to the southern slopes of the Muzsla hills and then up around 250 meters you'll see the iconic Tree in the middle of their 10 hectares of vineyards. Olaszrizling shows great fidelity to place, and this wine makes it crystal clear where you are. Volcanic clay and rich in limestone, this is 1/3 whole bunch pressed, 1/3 hamburger method (open vat fermented in three layers: foot trodden, whole clusters, and destemmed), and 1/3 whole berries in amphora. Everything was blended and then barrel aged for 8 months. This has all of the benefits of some extra maceration and whole berry fermentation with none of the pitfalls.



ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Južnoslovenská

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Olaszrizling

CLIMATE: Continental (hot summers & cold winters)

SOILS: Clay on top of volcanic bedrock

MACERATION & AGING: 1/3 whole bunch pressed, 1/3 hamburger method (open vat fermented in three layers: foot trodden, whole clusters, and destemmed), and 1/3 whole berries in amphora.

ALCOHOL: 13.5%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 1.5 g/l

ACIDITY: 6.5 g/l

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