

2018 Grál Borpince Kadarka

Tolna, Hungary

Zalán Mucsi is a 3rd generation winemaker from the Great Plains (Alföld). He originally had his sights set on Szekszárd. Along the way he married Barbara in her small hometown of Gyöng in the Tolna region. After getting to know Gyöng better and looking around a bit, he soon fell in love with the Pelzberg vineyard. Much like two betrothals in one year, they took their wedding money and purchased a few hectares on the Pelzberg hill along with a cellar originally built in 1880. Similar to Szekszárd (which Tolna was a part of until 1997), it has deep Swabian roots, loess, clay and limestone soils, but is 1-2 degrees cooler.



VINEYARDS

Using zero absorbable chemicals like herbicides and pesticides, everything has been farmed organically from the very beginning. The vineyard health and increasing immunity are both managed by orange oil, copper, sulfur and biodiversity. For many years the production was one hundred to three hundred bottles and all sold locally, so getting certification was not a priority. Given growing exports and adding some vines, they are now in transition and getting certification in the coming years. Zalán has a great sense of humility toward nature and uses the vineyard to recharge and decompress despite the labor involved. He has a very gentle, nurturing, and thoughtful disposition. It's not surprising that the 4th generation is following suit and already working towards taking over when the time comes. As Zalán puts it, the whole process should, "bring out the best in myself and in my wines."

WINE MAKING

The winemaking is mostly all open vat fermented, manual punchdowns, all basket pressed, and most secondary fermentation and aging is usually in barrel. All fermentations are spontaneous without any temperature control. Wines are moved by gravity and pumps and are bottled unfiltered with a small sulfur addition. While there's some new experimentation with carbonic fermentation, the 2018 Kadarka and 2017 Kékfrankos are refreshingly old school and well executed.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

Kadarka is how we found Grál in the first place despite being perhaps better known in Hungary for Kékfrankos. The 2018 spent 17 days on the skins in open vat with manual punchdowns. Secondary fermentation was split between 1/3 in tank and 2/3 in 1000L neutral oak barrels for 10 months. Blended and bottled unfiltered with a small addition of sulfur. The slighter cooler climate compared to Szekszárd is evident here. Thicker skins, a longer ripening period, and the aromatics and acidity are all a little turned up. The bottle age also helps bring this all together. This vintage also conjures up older olfactory memories of first encountering Kadarka. And while we of course enjoy the carbonic, whole cluster, amphora, and botrytized versions of Kadarka, this is from an earlier era of vats, basket presses and large barrels.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Tolna

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Kadarka

CLIMATE: Cool continental with dry warm summers

SOILS: Clay, loess and limestone

MACERATION & AGING: 17 days on the skins in open vat with manual punchdowns. Secondary fermentation was split between 1/3 in tank and 2/3 in 1000L neutral oak barrels for 10 months.

ALCOHOL: 10.9%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 1.1 g/l

ACIDITY: 6.8 g/l



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