

2020 Negotians Vinarius Plavac

Island of Korčula, Croatia

This is a partnership between a roaming evangelist for organic farming and low intervention winemaking seeking out growers in his native Croatia. He then bottles their wines, figures out the packaging, and finally looks for partners like us. These are small productions that if not for this arrangement, would only be possible to drink at the dinner table of the grower in question. In many ways this is nothing new. Romans were purchasing wine from the Dalmatian islands like Korčula and bringing them back to Rome. These merchants were called Negotians Vinarius. One of these growers is Petar Marinović, now 70 years old. For the past twenty plus years, Petar has been raising goats, making olive oil, and growing a variety of fruits and vegetables along with a few Plavac Mali and Pošip vines the Island of Korčula. Before meeting Marko Kovač in 2019, his wines have never been commercially bottled but kept in tank for home consumption and the extra grapes sold to the local COOP. Marko Kovač, founder of Karakterre, the largest natural wine fair dedicated to Central and Eastern Europe (and a rare time where huge swaths of our portfolio are all under one roof together) first met the family in 2019 and was taken by the farming and wines. They worked harvest together, solidified their relationship, and now we are extremely happy to be bringing in the inaugural Pošip and Plavac Mali of this joint venture.

VINEYARDS

With just over one hectare located below the village of Smokvica, the vines are treated with sulfur, copper when necessary, milk and algae. The vineyards are bustling with life, cover crops, and have over two decades of built up immunity and as many inputs as the island allows. Most of their neighbors still think they are a little backyard and or ill advised to farm in this way. Even when other growers inquire about switching to organic farming there's a choir of experts saying that it's basically impossible on Korčula - too much disease pressure and the native grapes won't survive. Petar is one of these amazing hold outs that we are grateful to have found with Marko's help.

WINE MAKING

The Pošip and Plavac Mali are both macerated for 2-3 days in the garage/cellar beneath Petar's mother's home. Open vat and gently foot trodden, the grapes are then pressed in an old wooden basket press by hand, fermented in tank and aged one year in tank. All fermentations are spontaneous, no temperature control, and no additions of any kind except a small amount of sulfur at bottling. All wines are bottled unfinned and unfiltered from tank by hand. The only real difference in terms of Marko's involvement is a smaller addition of sulfur. The goal is to someday perhaps get to zero additions, but not at the expense of the wine or drastically changing the style (extended maceration, sparkling etc...) as a means to that end. Gradual and meaningful change while maintaining the health of the land is the goal.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

Production of this wine does not exceed a pallet. Normally when we see young Plavac Mali we ask for something else to drink. The small berries (Mali=small), thick skins, heavy oak treatments, and too much residual sugar often make these typically big reds that need age. There are of course exceptions (see Miloš), but those wines are still best with age. Marko suspects there are some other hidden grapes at work. Maybe Vranac? Who knows, but the acidity that balances out the grip, ripeness and drive of Plavac makes this wine a refreshing blast from Dalmatia. Made basically the same way as the Pošip - 3 days skin maceration, basket pressed, tank fermented and aged. This is a rarely seen version of the most planted red grape in the country.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Island of Korčula

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Plavac Mali (Plah-vatz Molly)

CLIMATE: Mediterranean

SOILS: Rich red, sandy and rocky soil

MACERATION & AGING: 3 days skin maceration, basket pressed, tank fermented and aged.

ALCOHOL: 14%



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