

2021 réka.koncz Óra

Barabás, Bükk, Hungary

This is one of those series of connections and leaps of faith that make the wine world worth it. I had seen these wines popping up here and there in Copenhagen and then a contact I have in Hungary said he visited and was blown away. I sent the typical info@ email and as it turns out, Annamária was heading to California with her husband Sven in a few short months. Catherine and I ended up taking them around to meet and taste with Evan at Ruth Lewandowski, Tracey at Donkey and Goat, Ryan and Megan at Rhyme, and Duncan and Nathan at Arnot-Roberts. It was surreal to host a winemaker in CA with no real idea about their wines but instead just who they are. Annamária is both soft spoken and careful with her words, a nice counterpoint to the headstrong and risk heavy nature of her viticulture and winemaking. She had her academic start with a degree in Horticultural Engineering in Debrecen (Hungary) and then a Masters in Agriculture (microbiology/yeast evaluation) in Copenhagen, Denmark. After a series of internships (Slovenia, Italy, France) and living in the natural wine centric community in Copenhagen, she realized she had something really special right where she grew up. Her hometown is called Vásárosnamény near the Ukrainian border in eastern Hungary. She came back to purchase 3 hectares of old vines about 20 minutes northeast near the village of Barabás. Since her first release in 2016, she is the only commercial (and certainly exported) producer in a once highly regarded but currently forgotten region. Technically a part of the Bükk region, the climate and soils are more akin to nearby Tokaj which is about a 1.5 hours drive due west.



VINEYARDS

In 2019 we decided to make the drive over from Tokaj. It was surreal to walk up a long dirt road with thick forests on both sides, but also see stakes and dilapidated old vines growing in the thick woods as well – completely consumed after decades of neglect. After passing a derelict press house, we finally made it up to her parcels. 40-100 year old vines of Királyleányka, Hárslevelű, Sárga Muskotály (yellow muscat), Rajnai Rizling (Rhine Riesling) and Furmint. Many with 6-10 foot arms sprawling out with multiple birds nests burrowed in. The place is buzzing with birds, bugs, and even some openings to badger dens. As you walk around you eventually end up at an obelisk with the colors of the Hungarian flag. This is the border with Ukraine and within eyesight, you can also see occupied guard towers on the next few hills over. The biological and geopolitical diversity here is palpable. The soil here is intensely volcanic. Vitreous rhyolite lava, perlite (similar to Tarcal in Tokaj), and plagioclase rhyolite (high in silicate) form most of the layers. Closer to the surface it's dominated by loamy loess. The wines are not lacking in aromatics or acidity and are perfect for handling both sparkling production as well as mild to more intense skin maceration.

WINE MAKING

As for winemaking, she has a wooden basket press and mostly larger 1000L top plastic fermenters and a few pristine used barrels she purchased from Tokaji Hétszölő. Grapes are usually destemmed, foot crushing is standard, and punchdowns are the main techniques. Wines are typically fermented and aged in plastic until bottling.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

Sourced from 45-50 year old vines revived by Annamária and her parents, 50% of the Királyleányka, Rhine Riesling, Hárslevelű and Furmint were fermented whole cluster in an egg shaped fermenter. The other half was destemmed and macerated for 7 days with punchdowns twice a day. The two parts were blended in July 2022 and bottled in August. Deeply structured, full of life and rustic in the best possible way. The fruit comes from what she calls the “long vineyard,” in that it's only a few narrow rows that curve up the hill towards the forest.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Barabás, Bükk

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 70% Királyleányka, 20% Rhein Riesling, 5% Furmint, 5% Hárslevelű

CLIMATE: Continental

SOILS: rhyolite, andesite, dacite and tuffs

MACERATION & AGING: 50% of the Királyleányka, Rhine Riesling, Hárslevelű and Furmint were fermented whole cluster. The other half was destemmed and macerated for 7 days with punchdowns twice a day.

ALCOHOL: 12.2%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 0.7 g/l

ACIDITY: 5.2 g/l



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