

2017 Brkić Čitlučka Žilavka

Čitluk, Bosnia Herzegovina

Southern Herzegovina was once a distinguished wine-growing country. More than 2,000 years ago, Illyrians cultivated grapes and cereals in the inland mountain valleys. After the arrival of the Turks, wine production decreased and eventually perished, but by the end of the 19th century, local wine producers started exporting their wines to Western Europe and wine became an important source of income to the region. Nowadays, thanks to a temperate Mediterranean climate, and soils rich in Karst limestone providing distinct flavors and minerality to the wines, Herzegovina wine producers are pushing for the international recognition of the indigenous grape varieties Žilavka and Blatina. In the late 70s, Pasko Brkić planted vineyards in Čitluk—a wine district located just south of Mostar in southern Bosnia and Herzegovina—at 800-1,300 feet above sea level and opened a modern wine cellar. After his father's death, Josip Brkić took over the domain to focus primarily on the native Žilavka and Blatina. Looking for the right balance between acidity, tannins, and texture, he converted the vineyards and cellar to biodynamic practices. Josip didn't always work organically. He fell in love with organic practices 15 years ago after attending a Wine Expo in Italy dedicated to organic wines. There he discovered that making wine was more than making a product: it was making something alive. From that point on, he couldn't make any compromise and would only produce organic or not at all.

VINEYARDS

Initially, when Josip stopped using chemicals, the vineyard suffered from shock, like a drug addict being detoxified. But diseases have to be accepted to allow the vines to grow stronger. Thanks to organic farming, the vineyard is a special place, not just an ordinary piece of land. It's a place of dedication, a place that demands respect, attention, love, knowledge and passionate work. It is farmed to let nature be in control, which is harder and more risky. The berries are smaller, the yield is lower, but this is necessary to let the wine express itself.

WINE MAKING

For Josip, harvest is the time when the grapes leave their mother the vine and move to the cellar, a magical place where producing a new wine is like giving birth to a new life. Through his winemaking strongly influenced by bio-dynamic practices, the wine's natural components have to be preserved as much as possible. Gravity is used in order to avoid pumps. The grapes are pressed on rubber rollers to avoid damaging the stalks and seeds. Made with natural yeasts and aged in large local Bosnian oak barrels, the wines are not filtered to retain their lees.



NOTES & PAIRINGS

The indigenous white Žilavka (zhee-lav-ka) is ideally suited to the Mediterranean climate and limestone plateaus of Čitluk where it has been grown for over a 1000 years. Utilizing organic and biodynamic principals and the lunar calendar, Josip Brkić satisfies his responsibilities to land and family and his desire to make wines of terroir. Fermented with native yeast, aged briefly on the lees and bottled unfiltered. This effortless, pear and tarragon scented Žilavka is a combination of organic fruit from vineyards he owns and others that he contracts.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

PRODUCER: Brkić (Bur-kitch)
APPELLATION: Čitluk
VINTAGE: 2017
GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Žilavka (zhee-lav-ka)
CLIMATE: Mediterranean
SOILS: Limestone
EXPOSURE: Western
MACERATION & AGING: Stainless steel, spontaneous fermentation, and three months on the lees before bottling



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