

2024 Edgar Brutler Gisela

Crișana, Romania

Transylvania has always been a bit of white whale for us. This is where horse carts often outnumber cars and self-sufficient agriculture is the norm. Literally translating to "beyond the forest," it also has an unbroken winegrowing tradition going back at least 2000+ years. It's a surreal place where the language is Balkan Romance, the food is Hungarian with some key distinctions, and where the imprints of both the Middle Ages and Communism are frozen in time. Edgar Brutler's family was a part of the Swabian migration to Transylvania and arrived in the 1850s from Stuttgart. Edgar originally started down a musical path then studied oenology at Geisenheim. As Edgar puts it, "I was born there, my family lived there, my family worked these vineyards and walked this roads and paths." Working old vine field blends, and making wines based on smelling, tasting, and feeling rather than numbers and analytics are Edgar's focus. Music still plays a big part in his life and an image of sound board levels adorn the label of the Grünsitz.



VINEYARDS

The village of Beltiug is in Satu Mare County in the Crișana region. This northwestern corner of Romania has a temperate continental climate, surprisingly warm for what we think of as Northern Romania. The soil is really thick loam (20-30 meters) and plantings date back as far as 1926 and as recent as last year. Edgar's grandfather planted their original 4 hectares. The traditional grapes of the area are Fetească Regală/Königliche Mädchentraube, Fetească Albă, Welschriesling, Mustoasa de Măderat, Furmint, Kékfrankos/Blafränkisch, and their signature grape of Grünsitz. He has new plantings of Baras and Juhfark in the works. There are a number of unidentifiable grapes in the older field blends as well. Farming is without herbicides, chemical-synthetic sprays and mineral fertilizers. Spacing is 1 meter so everything is labor intensive and must be done by hand.

WINE MAKING

Given his formal education at Geisenheim and working at larger more technical wineries, Edgar has a firm grasp of the science and the predetermined recipes needed for those kinds of wines. It's also incredibly useful information when stripping everything away and has allowed him to open up his mind, take risks, and activate the same part of his brain that brings him joy from music. Except for his pét-nat where he measures density to ensure bottles aren't exploding, he's not picking, pressing or doing anything based on the numbers. All wines are spontaneously fermented in a 200 year old cellar, unfiltered, and the only addition is SO₂ (10-20ppm) at bottling and many are without any additions at all. He's also adamant about the control and feedback from using a basket press. Especially for the Grünsitz where a long and high pressure pressing is essential in managing the tannins and extraction. There's no cell phone reception or internet in the cellar. Deep and quiet.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

This might be the longest write up for a wine we will only have a few cases of, but it anecdotally sums so much up about this family. In short, this wine is dedicated to a chicken. The Brutler family keeps many chickens, but this one was routinely attacked by the others. Perhaps they were jealous of her sweet character. In any case Edgar's mother took the chicken into the home with the dogs and she became a fixture next to his father in the garden and on a chair at the dining table. Sadly, she likely ate from the dog bowl, got sick and died prematurely. According to Edgar, "my Dad gets tears in his eyes when we speak about her." On the wine front, all of the fruit comes from a site planted in the 1970s by his father's family that was near death not too long ago. In 2019 they only got enough fruit for one 225L barrel. After years of compost, precise pruning and handwork, it's now back to full strength and we are lucky enough to get some. The co-fermented field blend is mostly comprised of Fetească Regală, Grüner Veltliner, Italian Riesling, a few Muskatel, a block of Mustoasă de Măderat and some red grapes like Portugieser, Kadarka, and Blafränkisch. Very similar to the Wieso?Nicht! in terms of red and white grapes, but where the latter goes ultimately in a red wine direction, the Gisela is more of a Rosé. Everything was crushed with stems, pressed, and then fermented and aged in one 500L and another 300L oak barrel.



ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Crișana

GRAPE COMPOSITION: Field Blend red & white

CLIMATE: Continental (hot summers & cold winters)

SOILS: Clay, loam

MACERATION & AGING: All grapes crushed with stems, pressed, and then fermented and aged in one 500L and another 300L oak barrel

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