

2023 Črnko Méthode Traditionelle

Štajerska, Slovenia

The Črnko farm is located on the eastern side of Slovenia, north of Maribor and just south of the Austrian border. It is a breath taking environment of endless rolling green hills lined with vineyards that stretch the length of the horizon. Until 1918 this area was known as Lower Styria (formally Austria) and had been for many centuries. Grapes have also been cultivated here for over 2,000 years in addition to famed aromatic hop fields and ethereal pumpkin seed oil; a real treat with the local wines. The rich agricultural diversity of these Slovenian Hills owes itself to fertile soils and the unique convergence of Continental, Alpine and Mediterranean climates. In large part it is the balance between these climates that make the wines of Slovenia so regional and so interesting. The bulk of Črnko's production is divided between their line of single varietal premium bottlings and the easy drinking house cuvee Jareninčan. Small amounts of sweet wine and a sparkling wine called "Oceanus" that is aged 250 feet under the Adriatic are also produced. Not surprisingly, Silvo Črnko beams with happiness and so do his wines.



VINEYARDS

The two south/south west facing vineyards the Črnko family farms are planted to a specific form of marl. 16 million of years ago the region was part of the Pannonian Sea and exploding with life. Today it is 2.5 miles thick of sedimentary soil. It looks a lot like slate but is brittle and silty to the touch. This unique soil is common to the famed vineyards of Brda, on the western side of Slovenia bordering Italy and lends the same mineral complexity to the wines; especially the whites. Jareninski Vrh is the hill the Črnko farm lies at the base of. Behind it 3.5 hectares total of Yellow Muscat, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Muscat Ottonel, Laski (Italian) Riesling, Riesling and Pinot Gris rise quickly to about 400 meter above sea level. The vineyard is pretty and steep. Even Silvo Črnko, who grows the grapes and makes the wine, gets winded during a stroll. Half a mile away is the equally steep vineyard Slatinek; 2.5 hectares of Yellow Muscat, Mueller-Thurgau, Sauvignon Blanc, Laski Riesling and Gewurztraminer.

WINE MAKING

Only estate fruit is used. Hand harvested by family and friends into small plastic bins that are then transported to the winery by tractor. Harvest is split between the best selection of grapes used to make the single variety wines. The remainder of the juice finds its way into Jareninčan. For the Jareninčan most grapes are co-fermented but others (usually the aromatic) are blended in after fermentation. Single variety wines rest briefly on the lees.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

One of the many joys of visiting the Črnko family is opening up a bottle of Oceanus. Started in 2009, Silvo was the first in the EU to age his sparkling wines in the ocean. More specifically, for five years sixty feet down in the Bay of Piran. Constant temperature, the tides did the riddling, and famously, there's no oxygen. Tamara, Silvo's daughter, was the driving force behind this project. A well seasoned and passionate diver, this was a way to keep her active in the family winery and do something really special. Unfortunately, due to the bottles being covered in sea creatures, we cannot import them. While we still hope to get some Oceanus in stock someday, but now at least we have a baby version for the very first time while we wait. 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Blanc, they are fermented separately and then blended in the early Spring. Second fermentation started in March 2023 followed by two years racked and riddled on the lees. No liquor, extra brut, and non disgorged, meaning a "Col Fondo" style where the fine lees are integrated into the wine. Cloudy, richer texture, but with traditional method size bubbles. It's a twener between the yeastiness in a Pét-nat, but with the age and refinement of a traditional method.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

PRODUCER: Črnko (Chair-n-koe)

APPELLATION: Štajerska

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Blanc

CLIMATE: Continental, Alpine Influenced

SOILS: Marl

MACERATION & AGING: No liquor, extra brut, and non disgorged

ALCOHOL: 12.5%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 3.4 g/l

ACIDITY: 6.27 g/l



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