

2022 Heimann & Fiai Szekszárd Bikavér

Szekszárd, Hungary

The 2018 vintage marked the beginning of a dual Heimann family approach. Heimann and Fiai (Heimann and Sons) and Heimann Családi (Heimann Family). The Heimann family has been pioneering in bringing many clones of Kadarka back to life from the verge of extinction during Communism. Once covered over 60,000 hectares in Hungary, Kadarka was less than 400 hectares in the early 1990s. In addition to Kadarka research and planting, Zoltán Sr. and his wife Ágnes had also built an impressive business centered around Bordeaux varieties, some Viognier, and even a little Sagrantino. With 20+ years of lessons learned about which clones work best and where they should be planted, it's finally become time for Heimann & Fiai to focus exclusively on Kadarka and Kékfrankos. Along with conversion to organic farming, the winemaking also reflects a different approach geared towards freshness and aromatics. Multiple passes for picking, using more whole clusters, open vat fermentation, less extraction, and moving the wine manually in lieu of pumps.

VINEYARDS

The Szekszárd appellation was originally established by the Celts, flourished under the Romans and survived Turkish occupation. Then Serbians, pushed north by the Turks, brought the Kadarka grape with them. Where the Serbians brought a key red grape, the Swabians brought superior winemaking skills. Their influence is still felt today. Case in point, the Heimann family is intensely proud of their Swabian roots and have been making wine here since 1758. The appellation used to be almost entirely white wine but Kékfrankos and a variety of Bordeaux varieties have taken firmly to the region. They survived under Communism while many of the native white and red grapes did not fair so well, namely Kadarka. Heimann farms roughly 23 hectares spread over the Baranya, Porkoláb and Iván Valleys in addition to some rare hillside plantings on Bati. The soil is overwhelmingly loess in Szekszárd, but you can also find Terra Rosa if you get deep enough. Approaching the appellation from the Great Plain, you first hit the River Danube and then the first hills are Szekszárd. It's a fairly dramatic change in the landscape and an obvious place for multiple exposures. Currently most plantings are Kékfrankos with smaller amounts of Merlot, Cab Franc, Tannat, Sagrantino (from Umbria!) and now more than ever re-plantings of Kadarka are underway.

WINE MAKING

All fermentation are spontaneous, zero fining, coarsely filtered if at all, and a minimal use of SO₂ at bottling. They are also aging wines in clay in addition to Hungarian oak and stainless steel.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

One of the few wines known from Hungary apart from Tokaj in classic wine literature is Bull's Blood, aka Bikavér. Whether you subscribe to the legend of soldiers fortifying themselves with the dark wines from Eger which Ottoman troops mistook as drinking the blood from bulls, or soldiers once again fortifying themselves in Szekszárd against, you guessed it, Ottoman troops invading in 1552, the brand has survived quite a bit. Fun mythologies to be sure, but difficult to link to any imperial truths. There is however a famous poem from 1846 by János Garay entitled "Szekszárdi Borda," which noted how dark, spicy and rich the wines from Szekszárd were. Regardless, this part of Southern Hungary does have a rich palette of reds to paint with. This also marks our very first Bikavér from anywhere because most are super international in style, and designed for tourists seeking big, over extracted and oaked reds. For instance, the minimum Kékfrankos is 45% by law, Heimann upped theirs to 65%. There is a little Merlot, Syrah and Cab Franc to help balance things out, but a lot of the spice, aromatics and acidity come from the Kadarka. Hand harvested, whole cluster pressed. fermented spontaneously, and aged in large oak barrels, this is a big red that doesn't require a nap afterwards.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Szekszárd (SekSard)

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 65% Kékfrankos, 5% Kadarka, 30% Syrah/Merlot/Cabernet Franc

CLIMATE: Cool continental with dry warm summers

SOILS: Mainly loess with Terra Rossa

MACERATION & AGING: Whole cluster pressed. fermented spontaneously, and aged in large oak barrels

ALCOHOL: 13.3%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 2 g/l

ACIDITY: 5.6 g/l



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