

2018 Vinarija Škegro Krš Orange Žilavka

Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the less understood, least travelled and has the smallest representation in our portfolio. Like in many wine regions in Central and Eastern Europe, with borders now open, the younger generations are flocking to the big cities or abroad. The Škegro family is no exception to this trend. That said, in 2005 vineyards and olive trees were planted and the pull has become stronger and stronger every year. These are the kinds of investments that keep the families connected, traditions alive, and on a purely selfish level, allow us to drink delicious wines that cannot be produced anywhere else. If there's a red line that connects the whole family it's soccer. Bariša was coached by the late Josip Katalinski Škija who played professionally at home and abroad and gained hero status for scoring the pivotal goal that got the Yugoslav national team into the 1974 FIFA World Cup. Bariša's father Mirko also played for NK Ljubuški (local club) and is now the assembly chair for the team. There's immense pride in the quality of players that come from this little village that have gone on to make a name for themselves in the greater world. The philosophy is exactly the same in the winery and in the vineyards. Škegro is one of very few wineries in all of Herzegovina that sells the majority of its wines abroad. A point of pride that ties this all together is that professional soccer player Mario Stanić comes to the cellar to buy the skin contact Žilavka. Stanić scored Croatia's first-ever World Cup goal.



VINEYARDS

Vineyards were planted in 2005 in the small village of Radišići in the southwestern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their 2 hectares of south facing terraced vineyards are cut into the hillside at around 130-150 meters. The soil is deep calcareous marl along with unforgiving layers of sandstone and flint. Less than an hour from the Croatian coastline, the climate is Mediterranean with screaming hot summers and mild winters. Along with fig, citrus, and pomegranate trees, they also produce some exceptional olive oil from 300 trees consisting of Oblica, Pendolino, Casaliva, Lastovka, Levantinka, Leccino and Cipressino olives, originally planted by Bariša's grandfather (who also adorns the Žilavka label). Planted in the vineyard and elsewhere, they help mediate erosion of the rocky soils. The olives and grapes have a symbiotic relationship and help create a garden of pollinizers. As for the farming, vines are trellised, cover crops are natural although sometimes they will plant oats, granola and or barley in the winter. Manure or organic fertilizer is applied when needed along with copper and sulfur. They do not use herbicides or pesticides. As the vines have become more established after years of drought conditions, they are moving towards organic certification. At only 2 hectares, everything is done by hand.

WINE MAKING

All grapes are hand picked and more or less split between whole cluster pressing and whole berry pressing. Maceration mainly takes place in open plastic vats and some in stainless steel. All fermentations are spontaneous and the only addition is SO₂ if at all. Malo, settling and aging are typically in 225L neutral oak and stainless steel. All wines are bottled unfiltered.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

The amber color belies the energy and brightness of this grape. There's some DNA evidence to suggest it's related to Glera, but we've also heard -- without hard evidence -- that it's related to Furmint. To be fair, it is late ripening, has super compact bunches, and is prone to botrytis. It's also not a fragile wine. Žilavka is one of the few native whites that can weather the hot, dry and unforgiving Herzegovinian growing season without dropping acidity. Žilavka translates as both deep rooted and veiny (you can varicose like veins on the berries when ripe). And this 2018 is ripe. It's actually quite soft in terms of tannins nor is it hot in any way (12.5%). Spontaneously fermented in open vats, it's then on the skins for around 15-20 days, barreled down to 225L neutral oak for 6-8 months (no lees stirring), then bottled unfiltered with zero additions of any kind. This is a rare treat from the Balkans. Only 997 bottles were produced.



ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Mostar

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Žilavka (zhee-lav-ka)

CLIMATE: Mediterranean, hot summers and mild winters

SOILS: Deep calcareous marl along with layers of sandstone and flint.

MACERATION & AGING: Spontaneously fermented in open vats, on the skins for around 15-20 days, then in 225L neutral oak barrels for 6-8 months

ALCOHOL: 12.5%

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