

2020 Sziegl Kadarka Herreberg

Hajós-Baja, Hungary

About 3 hours south and just east of the Danube River is the village Hajós. More importantly, about 3 km outside of town is the Hajósi Pincefalu (the cellar village of Hajós). With deep Swabian roots dating back to the 1700s, there are over 1200 cellars dug into the hillsides. Driving through the Pincefalu is like a cellar theme park with sandy vineyards on top and narrow streets and cellar doors below. While this area was of course dealt the typical Hungarian historical blow after the world wars and Communism, the older sandy vineyards were left alone due to the risk of heavy Soviet tractors collapsing the vast cellar system. Here we meet Petra and Balázs Sziegl. Balázs studied viticulture and wrote a thesis on Kadarka. He is focused on the vineyards, a ton of clonal research, and preserving the older vines. Petra studied winemaking and is principally in the cellar. A young couple, new baby, and juggling a winery just founded in 2012, brand new plantings of 5, and farming a total of around 5 hectares entirely themselves. On our last visit we shared a proper Bajai Halászlé (Fisherman's soup) made with only 5 ingredients: water, paprika, onions, fish, and pasta. It's one of those dishes that is super unique, delicious and highlighted how versatile, vibrant and equally honest these wines are.



VINEYARDS

The sand is almost ubiquitous here, and there are many forested areas buffering in all directions. Increasing and maintaining vine density is also key. Training ranges from goblet, to head to cordon depending on the location, clone and age of the vines. There are old fruit trees in the middle of the vineyards and often other crops nearby as well. They till when needed, but otherwise prefer to have the cover crops manage vigor. The Herreberg vineyard is 15 ha total, and Sziegl has around 3.5 ha. Their plantings here are mostly Kadarka (5 clones plus old vine material), Kékfrankos, Zweigelt and Kövidinka. Where the sand is particularly thick, they plant cover crops, otherwise they mow the natural growth. This vineyard was once noted as a "grand cru" by the top families in the region. The Hársfás-út vineyard is near Érsekhalma (15 min drive from Hajós) with a deep layer of hard packed loess and clay. It's a rare anomaly amongst all of the sand. Roughly 4 hectares of Cserszegi Füzères, Olaszrizling, Rajnai Rizling, Traminer, and Hárslevelű were planted here in 1981.

WINE MAKING

With a traditional cellar it follows that the winemaking follow suite. Grapes are hand harvested, reds are often destemmed, whites are often whole cluster and let to soak at uncontrolled temperatures as long as possible, and everything ferments with native yeasts. Most everything continues fermenting and aging in 500ml Hungarian oak. Almost all wines are unfiltered, unfinned, and the only addition is a little SO2 at bottling.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

Kadarka is what brought us to visit the Sziegl family in the first place. They have a .08 hectare plot of 100+ year old Kadarka (a few other grapes peppered in here and there) called the Kolostordomb. It's one of those places where it immediately hits you that it's special. The head trained vines in pure sand grow parallel to the tops of the cellar house roofs with cellars directly underfoot. Only 250-300 bottles are produced a year. You need to visit in order to drink them. This is the fruit that also inspired other plantings in the 12 year old Herreberg vineyard which are in turn yielding delicious wines. The 2020 was broken into two harvest dates 7 days apart. The first was fermented semi carbonic in open vat and the second was whole-berry fermented in open vat as well. After 7 days of maceration for both, they were barreled down to Hungarian oak apart from 15% going to tank. Blended and bottled without any additions the following summer. This is yet another example of one of the most compelling red grapes coming back to life from Central Europe.



ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Hajós-Baja

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Kadarka

CLIMATE: Continental

SOILS: Loess and sand

MACERATION & AGING: Half fermented semi carbonic, half whole-berry both in open vats. 85% aged in used oak barrels, 15% in tank.

ALCOHOL: 11.8%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 0.6 g/l

ACIDITY: 6 g/l

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