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# Hungary's Szekszárd region – on the up



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HUNGARY

RED WINE

KADARKA

BLAUFRÄNKISCH



*Producers here have quietly been building their own distinctive wine styles and vision. Above, Péter Vida's vineyard of centenarian 'bonsai' Kadarka vines.*

A jeep tour with winemaker Péter Vida and his son Péter Vida Jr (Hungarians love to give several generations the same name) around the twisting narrow lanes of Szekszárd was a fun, if rather hair-raising, way of experiencing this southern Hungarian region's terroir up close. About an hour and a half by car south of



Typical, deep deposits of loess in Szekszárd

Much of Hungary's Duna (or great plain) region once lay beneath the ancient Pannonian Sea. Today, looking at the landscape, it's not hard to imagine the winds

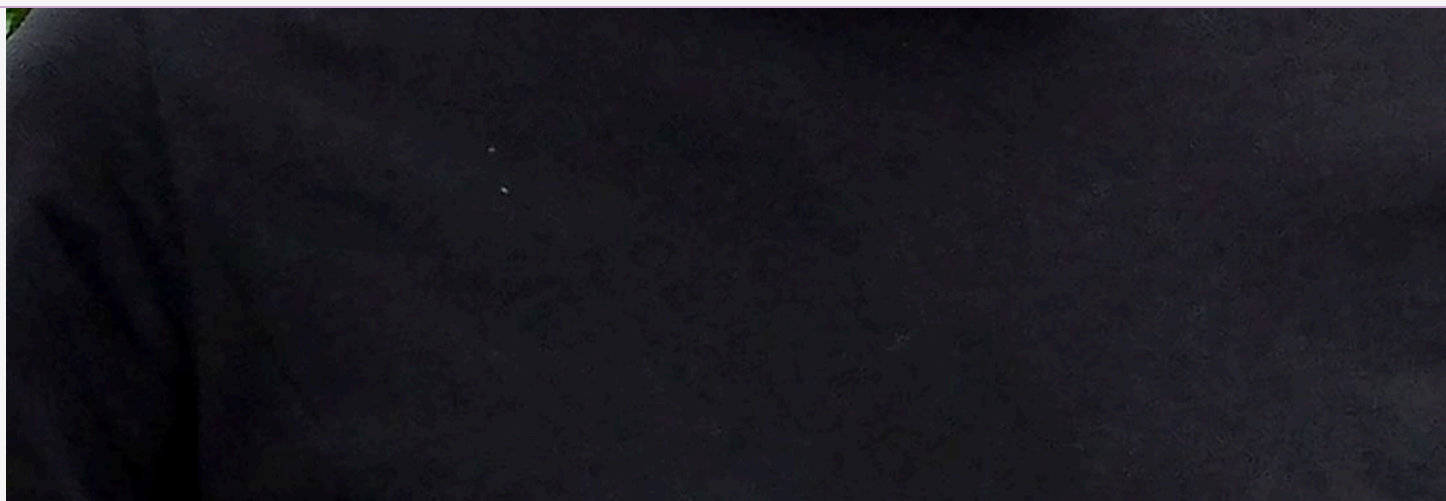
the western edge of today's Szekszárd wine region. It must have taken millennia as the loess can reach 30 m (98 ft) deep, and it's this loess, interspersed with outcrops of red clay and microscopic particles of seabed limestone, that is a key influence on the region's wines. It erodes easily so terraces are common to protect the soils, and narrow, one-way concrete tracks serve as both access roads and drainage to funnel flood waters away – when it rains, it pours.



Vineyards terraced against erosion in Szekszárd

Practice tells us the opposite. We believe that loess wines do not need particularly long aging to show their best. Also, from the vine's perspective, loess is a loosely packed soil with great water retention capacity which can help us in future.' He adds that it is well-aerated, 'and that is vital for healthy soil life and great for vine roots'.





Péter Vida Jr

The valleys and ravines mostly open to the east or south-east, facing towards the Danube and the great plain, and are more or less sheltered from morning sun and warm winds depending on side of slope and elevation, which averages 165 m (541 ft). This creates lots of different mesoclimates and recently there's been strong development of single-vineyard wines that showcase these differences.

But first, a little background ...

## A long vine-growing history

Grapes have been grown here since at least Roman times, shown by carvings on a Roman sarcophagus uncovered in the 19th century. Grape-growing was mentioned in writing around 1061, recording that King Béla issued royal grants for three vineyards. Later, Serbs fleeing Turkish invasions may have brought the red-wine culture of the

In the early 18th century, tax breaks were offered to growers, attracting both Hungarians and Swabian Germans to the region, and several families trace their roots back to this time.

Phylloxera, of course, brought huge devastation, followed by the impact of two world wars and communism with its emphasis on high volume.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, in the new private era, Szekszárd began by following the lead of its southern neighbour Villány, pursuing high ripeness and power above all else (I recall an early visit when a winemaker showed me with pride a barrel sample of Cabernet Franc at 17.5% alcohol). But now it has gradually developed its own direction, with focus on local grapes in a refined, supple style.



A typical Szekszárd view across vineyards

Today vineyards cover 2,136 ha (5,278 acres) of which red varieties form the majority (82%). This is led by Kékfrankos (Hungary is the world's biggest grower of this Central European variety, better known as Blaufränkisch) then Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Kadarka. Whites cover under 400 ha (988 acres), led by Chardonnay, Olaszrizling and Királyleányka.

## Kadarka – more than a Pinot Noir look-alike

The tale of this intriguing grape variety is deeply intertwined with the story of the Szekszárd region. It probably arrived with Serbs fleeing the Ottoman advance and

reliable yields, and today Hungary grows just 261 ha (645 acres), of which 28% are in Szekszárd. Its Bulgarian name Gamza, which means ‘capricious’, tells you about its nature – late-ripening, thin-skinned and prone to rot. According to one winemaker it literally ‘melts off the vines in a day’ if fungal disease sets in. A decade or so ago Kadarka seemed set to disappear – in addition to being tricky to grow, no one could sell its pale, often thin, reds in the face of the fashion for big, bold international grapes. But today, it is finding favour and friends again for its airy, scented, red-berry-fruited and fresher styles, often notably spicy, that suit today’s tastes.

András Takler (Takler Winery) confirms that it has become one of the region’s most saleable varieties, and that people see it as something special, unlike Kékfrankos. It’s sometimes described as the Pinot Noir of the east, but it has so much more about it, especially since the development of several new clones from old vines. Producer Péter Vida was a believer in Kadarka from his early days, and 25 years ago, he bought a 1-ha plot planted in 1920 and has nurtured its 10,000 vines ever since, when everyone else thought he was crazy. These amazing vines are so wizened some Japanese visitors described them as like bonsai trees and the name stuck for the wine made from these veteran plants.





Centenarian Kadarka vine

This was also the site for a research project from the University of Pécs, which selected cuttings from 17 old vines, then whittled these down to seven selections for further research, which eventually became new clones they made available to winemakers.

Winemaking approaches for Kadarka vary, perhaps because it is work in progress finding the best way to express its charms. András Takler wants to focus on the variety's spiciness, leaving the fruit for just one week on skins and ageing the wine in a mix of large third- and fourth-fill oak barrels and [Flexcubes](#). Zoltán Heimann Jr treats Kadarka more like Pinot Noir and uses around 20–30% whole bunches and semi-carbonic fermentation in small open-top vats before running the young wine into 1,000-litre barrels to age for six months. Vida has gone for 12-hl terracotta amphora to ferment the ethereal old-vine Bonsai fruit, while Eszterbauer chooses stainless steel to showcase purity of fruit. So there is no single recipe.

## Bikavér and Kékfrankos

regions allowed to produce this PDO blended red wine (the other is Eger in Hungary's north-east). In both regions, Bikavér must be based on Kékfrankos as its core, fleshed out by a list of mostly international varieties, and in Szekszárd, Kadarka must make up at least 5% of the blend to add its spice and aromas.

Most producers here see Bikavér as a medium-bodied blend without obvious oak (though it must be aged for 12 months in wood) and with fresh acidity; the belief is that it should be a wine of its place, not its grape varieties. Ferenc Takler deserves credit for persuading his neighbours to make Bikavér as a quality wine, not a blend of the dregs.

In Hungary, sadly Kékfrankos is still regarded by many as a workhorse grape linked to the past, but there are lots of good reasons to support it today, not least thanks to its bright cherry and berry-fruited style, with vibrant acidity. It rarely has a problem with high alcohol, and it has amazing ability to be a sponge for terroir – it's easy to see clear differences between plots as producers increasingly showcase their best vineyards in single-vineyard bottlings.

## The Szekszárd bottle story

Undoubtedly, a change of winemaking generations and arrival of newcomers from outside have helped play a key part in developing an unusual spirit of cooperation in this region. One joint project has been the development of a special embossed bottle. It was introduced in 2014 specifically for varietal wines made from Kadarka or Kékfrankos and for Bikavér. (Jancis will be relieved that it's not too heavy, weighing in at 525 g (18.5 oz) and there's even a lighter screwcap version, too.) 'Our inspiration

added, 'It took lots of arguing and discussions, but it's been a good tool for helping us to learn to work together. The bottle group tastes together every month and all wines that use the bottle must be tasted, and approved, by other members of the group. There's an agreed direction in that all the members want to keep the alcohol moderate and seek more elegance, less oak and fresher styles, going in a distinctly different direction to the other red wine region of southern Hungary'. Péter Vida Jr agrees, noting that the region's wines have, 'a softer tannin structure, and more often these are elegant and joyful rather than big "dinosaurs" with high alcohol, big tannins'. Today there are 30 wineries who contribute to regional marketing efforts and 19 that use the special bottle. It's certainly welcome to see producers working together and thinking hard about creating their own identity and style.

## Szekszárd's changing of the guard

Many of the new generation in Szekszárd have worked in different industries or trained abroad before returning to their family roots in wine and often speak other languages (almost no one who isn't born there speaks Hungarian, one of the hardest languages in the world).

Csilla Sebestyén is one example – she trained as sommelier in Scotland working at Gleneagles and with two-Michelin-starred Restaurant Andrew Fairlie before turning to importing wine and then the family business. Unlike most, this is not a family winery built on inherited land or generations of grape-growers, but a business started 25 years ago with her brother Csaba, who makes the wine.



The Heimann family – Zoltán Jr, Ágnes and Zoltán Sr

In contrast, Zoltán Heimann Jr has recently taken on the role of managing director at the eponymous 23-ha (57-acre) estate, a family business that can trace its roots back to 1758 – the first local record of the family name in a marriage certificate. Zoli, as he is usually known, is a fierce advocate for the environment, cycling or taking the train everywhere and picking up litter as he goes. He's persuaded his parents that organic viticulture is the way to go, and they released the estate's first organic wines in 2023. His social media moniker is Kadarka Man – which shows where his heart lies – and he's also started an offshoot called Heimann & Fiai for lower-intervention single-vineyard wines. He's installed eight Italian amphorae and 7.5-tonne concrete tanks – which he says were easier to ship from Padova than to transport up the hill here.



Péter Vida Sr

Péter Vida winery is another multigenerational family set-up – Péter Sr is still very much involved, and you can see that his heart lies in the vineyard. His favourite spot is at the top of Virág-Hegy (Flower Hill) gazing over his vines as the sun rises and crosses the valley slopes. His son Péter Jr came back in 2010 from studies in business

been her handiwork. Péter Jr says, ‘I have every respect for her and I’m proud of her – it means a lot to me that we are working together as a team. In our winery, we say that 80% of everything is decided in the vineyard – and to this day, my father, at 70, is responsible for the most important part. We have the remaining 20% and are trying hard not to ruin it.’

Ferenc Takler has been joined by his two sons: András is responsible for sales and marketing while Ferenc Jr is the winemaker. They farm 81 ha (200 acres) of vines and run a comfortable hotel among the vines, too.

All in all, times may not be easy for premium red wines, but the ingredients are all there in Szekszárd for a bright future. Its focus on local varieties and elegant wines that suit today’s drinking preferences and a landscape that should be able to cope with climate change are supported by winemakers working effectively together, rebuilding their wine history for and by a new generation.

The following 47 tasting notes are ordered alphabetically by producer (sur)name but you can change this.

Select sorting option ▼

Eszterbauer, Nagypám Kadarka 2024 Szekszárd

15.5/20

RED

Pretty, diaphanous dark pink. Primary strawberry and raspberry-cordial nose. A twist of spice. Fresh and fruity. Very youthful, crunchy and herby, with redcurrant and cherry flavours. Light body and tannins – try it chilled. (CG)

Alcohol: 13%   Drink: 2025 – 2027   Price: £10.50 (2023) The Wine Society

### Eszterbauer, Tanyamacska Kékfrankos 2024 Szekszárd

16.5/20

RED

*The name means ‘farm cat’. Aged for one month in Flexcube.*

Purple black. Very primary bilberry and damson aromas – pure fruit. Vibrant and youthful. Great fruit purity, with lots of blackcurrant, cranberry and a hint of cloves, too. A very drinkable, lighter style of young Kékfrankos. (CG)

Alcohol: 13.5%   Drink: 2025 – 2028   Price: £9.95 The Wine Society

### Eszterbauer, Tüke Bikavér 2022 Szekszárd

16/20

RED

*Regional blend, with the current owner’s great-grandfather on the label. 12 months in oak. Screwcap.*

Dark black-red, with aromas of damsons, elderberry, coffee, bramble and a touch of forest floor. Plummy and robust, but also fresh, with grainy tannins. (CG)

Alcohol: 14%   Drink: 2025 – 2028

### Eszterbauer, Báró Steiner Prémium Bikavér 2023 Szekszárd

17/20

RED

*French and Hungarian oak barrels.*

Complex and savoury on the nose, with dark chocolate, sloe, damson and cassis, overlaid by subtle oak. Good concentration and harmony. Bramble and black plum. A firm texture expressing the typical Kékfrankos core of bright acidity. (CG)

Alcohol: 14.5%   Drink: 2025 – 2030

### Eszterbauer, P.7 Kadarka 2024 Szekszárd

17.5/20

RED

*Only 1,000 bottles made from 7 selected clones planted in 2010 on Palánki-hegy.*

*Stainless steel only.*

Clear, inviting light pink-red. The rather ethereal nose expresses wild raspberries and a delicate scent of rosewater. Then, there's lovely purity on the palate, with vivid acidity and juicy wild raspberry and strawberry fruit and a hint of spice. A charming wine with fine acids and graceful tannins (CG)

Alcohol: 13.5%   Drink: 2025 – 2028

### Eszterbauer, Fuxli Siller 2024 Szekszárd

15.5/20

RED

*51% Merlot, 42% Kékfrankos, 7% Zweigelt.*

Vivid lipstick pink, almost red, in the not-quite-rosé style that is popular locally but not elsewhere. It's generously fresh and fruity with crushed cherry, raspberry and cranberry notes. Uncomplicated and fun. (CG)

Alcohol: 11.6%   Drink: 2025

RED

*67% Kékfrankos, 33% Kadarka. 5 months' ageing in concrete vats.*

Dark, translucent pink – rather than red – wine. Pretty and bright, fresh raspberry nose with a touch of rose water. Fresh and juicy. Light-bodied, strawberry and spice notes, with a hint of sour cherry and light tannins. An easy, joyful summery wine.

(CG)

Alcohol: 11.5%   Drink: 2025

### Heimann & Fiai Kadarka 2023 Szekszárd

18/20

RED

*Selected clones. 25% whole bunches, semi-carbonic fermentation in small open-top vats. Free-run wine only. Aged 6 months in 1,000-litre used oak.*

Crimson-pink, with inviting, luscious raspberry and red-mulberry notes – whistle clean. Juicy, bright and vibrant to taste, with raspberry and crunchy redcurrant acidity, a mineral backbone and vibrant finish. (CG)

Alcohol: 12%   Drink: 2024 – 2027

### Heimann & Fiai, Bikavér 2022 Szekszárd

16.5/20

RED

*Kékfrankos with Kadarka, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Sagrantino.*

Summer pudding in a glass, with juicy bilberry and raspberry on the palate. Nicely vivid, with a twist of white pepper and supple tannins. (CG)

Drink: 2024 – 2030

RED

*12-year-old vines. Austrian A41 clone. Spontaneous fermentation, 25% whole bunch, fermented in concrete, then aged in used 1,000-litre oak.*

See-through ruby red. Gentle cherry-skin and red-plum bouquet, with a touch of Earl Grey tea and cedarwood. Easy-going style with red-plum and black-tea notes – great varietal purity. (CG)

Alcohol: 13.5%   Drink: 2024 – 2028

### Heimann & Fiai, Bati Kereszt Kékfrankos 2021 Szekszárd

17.5 +/20

RED

*Vineyard selection from a plot at 287 m of elevation.*

More intensely coloured, with black-plum and damson fruit, dried cherry plus a hint of black tea, tobacco leaf and a light twist of spice. Really good Kékfrankos expression with juicy red fruit, a touch of thyme and nice grip from savoury, textured tannins. (CG)

Alcohol: 13.5%   Drink: 2025 – 2032   Price: £25 (2020) The Good Wine Shop

### Heimann & Fiai, Szívem Kékfrankos 2020 Szekszárd

18.5/20

RED

*From a plot within the Baranya Valley with 60-year-old vines (original plant material from Villány). Spontaneous fermentation, 25% whole bunch, fermented in concrete, then aged in used 1,000-litre oak.*

The darkest of the Heimann & Fiai vineyard selections. Black mulberry, damson and

lingering finish. Impressive stuff with depth but grace at the same time. (CG)

Drink: 2024 – 2032

### Heimann, Barbár 2020 Szekszárd

18/20

RED

*37% Cabernet Franc, 28% Merlot, 24% Tannat, 11% Kékfrankos. The flagship red of Heimann, mostly from the Porkoláb Valley vineyard. 12 months in 3-, 5- and 10-hectolitre barrels, mostly second and third fill, with 15% in new oak.*

Translucent blood red. Fine and still youthful on the nose. Harmonious and inviting, with layers of bramble, cherry, plum and blueberry, and lovely oak integration. It's a bold, concentrated wine with masses of crushed mulberry and loganberry fruit, supported on a framework of elegant tannins and a fresh, vivid core. (CG)

Drink: 2026 – 2035

### Káldi, Chérie Zöldvelteli 2024 Szekszárd

15.5/20

WHITE

*Zöldvelteli is Grüner Veltliner. A new small estate with just 2 ha. Screwcap.*

Delicate aromas of green melon and lime zest lead on to a refreshing and nicely drinkable, light-bodied but pretty, summery wine. (CG)

Alcohol: 12%    Drink: 2025 – 2026

### Káldi, Le Kek Superior 2022 Szekszárd

15.5/20

RED

oak on the nose are followed by vivid, crunchy red fruit and easy, polished tannins. (CG)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2028

### Lajver, Limited Edition Kékfrankos 2021 Szekszárd

17/20

RED

*A selection from better plots and better barrels. 14 months' ageing in oak.*

Showing some real complexity on the nose, with hints of tobacco and cocoa nib, with juicy black plum, loganberry and a hint of vanilla. To taste, it's fresh and vivid, with sour cherry, summer berry and a touch of black tea, and grainy tannins. (CG)

Alcohol: 14% Drink: 2025 – 2028

### Lajver, Signum Prémium Bikavér 2021 Szekszárd

16 +/20

RED

*65% Kékfrankos with Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Kadarka. Aged 14 months in barrel.*

A deep, purple-toned wine. Lots of bright summer-berry and bramble fruit with distinct oak overtones. Fresh and still youthful on the palate – juicy red-fruit and cranberry notes, with nicely textured tannins. Has keeping potential. (CG)

Alcohol: 14% Drink: 2025 – 2030

### Lajver, Signum Prémium Bikavér 2020 Szekszárd

17/20

RED

(CG)

Alcohol: 14%   Drink: 2024 – 2028   Price: £19 Best of Hungary

### Lajver, Infinity Cuvée 2020 Szekszárd

17/20

RED

*60% Cabernet Franc, 20% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon.*

Mulberry, bilberry and raspberry-leaf aromas lead on to a generous, plush palate, with bramble and damson notes, some Cabernet Sauvignon backbone and grip on the finish. Has promise for ageing. (CG)

Alcohol: 14%   Drink: 2025 – 2032

### Schieber, Trilógia Kadarka 2024 Szekszárd

15.5/20

RED

*Stainless-steel tanks only.*

Delicate, redcurrant-scented, light pink-red. Crisp and refreshing, with pretty and pure fruit. Simple and appealing summer drinking – would work served chilled. (CG)

Alcohol:      Drink: 2025 –      Price: £12.95 (2022) N D John Wine Merchants, £14.29 (2022)  
12.5%      2027      VINO FANDANGO

### Schieber, Trilógia Kékfrankos 2022 Szekszárd

16/20

RED

of smoky tea and subtle vanilla overtones. Fresh red cherry and herby fruit. Grainy tannins showing typical varietal character. (CG)

Alcohol: 13%      Drink: 2025 – 2027      Price: £12.95 (2020) N D John Wine Merchants, £13.90 Field & Fawcett

### Sebestyén Kadarka 2023 Szekszárd

16/20

RED

*Part old vines, part new clones. Screwcap.*

Very pale red, almost deep pink. Inviting aromas of strawberry, summer-berry cordial and a twist of white pepper. Gentle, juicy and fruity to taste, with hints of cranberry and raspberry, fresh acidity and very gentle, easy tannins. Pop it in the fridge for a summer day. (CG)

Alcohol: 11%      Drink: 2025 – 2026      Price: £17 Woodwinters

### Sebestyén, Görögszó Kadarka 2022 Szekszárd

16.5/20

RED

*Virgin harvest of 6 new clones. Fermented in open tanks with punchdowns. Aged for six months in tank.*

Crimson pink and super-bright, translucent. It's led by crushed raspberry and summer-pudding fruit notes with a sprinkling of rose petals. There's juicy, pure red-cherry and raspberry flavours, with lively acidity. Appealing but on the lighter side as the vines are so young. (CG)

Alcohol: 11%      Drink: 2024 – 2028

RED

*52% Kékfrankos, 18% Cabernet Franc, 17% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Kadarka. 4- to 60-year-old vines located in Iván Valley, Porkoláb Valley, Bencze, Görögszó. Aged for 24 months in new and used 5-hl oak barrels. Screwcap.*

Mid-ruby wine, with masses of damson, sloe and bramble aromas overlaid with a hint of espresso coffee and dark chocolate. Approachable, smooth and sleek, with dried-cherry fruit, a distinct hint of sweet spice and a typical fresh core. (CG)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2028

### Sebestyén, Iván Bikavér 2019 Szekszárd

17.5/20

RED

*46% Kékfrankos, 16% Merlot, 14% Kadarka, 12% Cabernet Franc, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon. From the Iván-völgy vineyard. Loess soils, 40-year-old vines. 2019 was the first release of single-vineyard Bikavér for the winery. Aged for 22 months in 500-litre French and Hungarian oak barrels.*

Inviting aromas of dark chocolate and blackberry. Youthful still, with hints of thyme and rosemary. Lovely, vivid fruit – juicy, too, with generous black-cherry notes and harmonious, silky tannins. Definitely in the direction of burgundy not bordeaux. (CG)

Drink: 2024 – 2030 Price: £31 Woodwinters

### Sebestyén, Görögszó Bikavér 2019 Szekszárd

17 +/20

RED

A wilder wine with more spice and sandalwood, cedar and graphite on the nose. Dense and powerful on the palate – concentrated damson and sloe fruit, but it's all about structure and power, so give it time. (CG)

Drink: 2027 – 2032

### Sebestyén, Porkoláb-Völgyi Cabernet Franc 2018 Szekszárd

16.5/20

RED

*Single-vineyard Cabernet Franc, fermented in open tanks and aged in new 500-litre barrels of Hungarian and Austrian oak.*

Mid-garnet wine that's maturing nicely. Distinctly varietal on the nose, with loganberry, cedar, sandalwood and raspberry-leaf notes. Supple, understated, elegant version of Cabernet Franc. (CG)

Alcohol: 14%   Drink: 2025 – 2027   Price: £31 Woodwinters

### Szeleshát, Bikavér 2019 Szekszárd

15 +/20

RED

*Kékfrankos, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Kadarka. 12 months in 4,000-litre oak barrels.*

Light ruby-garnet wine, with hints of cedar, balsam, black tea, cherry skin and tobacco. It's noticeably ripe, balanced by the freshness of Kékfrankos, with fine-grained tannins. (CG)

Alcohol: 15%   Drink: 2025 – 2027

*40% Cabernet Franc, 40% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. 12 months in oak.*

Complex cedar/cigar-box tertiary notes, plus black fruit and spice. Big, bold and rich wine, still in good shape, with plenty of damson/sloe fruit and robust but grainy tannins. (CG)

Alcohol: 14.5%   Drink: 2025 – 2027

### Takler Királyleányka 2023 Szekszárd

16/20

WHITE

*50% 50-year-old vines, 50% young vines. Controlled fermentation in stainless steel, 5 months on lees.*

Nice purity of varietal expression, with cut pear and light touches of jasmine on the nose. The palate shows the typical fruit-salad and grapefruit-pith character of this Transylvanian grape variety. (CG)

Alcohol: 12.5%   Drink: 2024 – 2026   Price: £14.50 (2022) Woodwinters

### Takler, Örökség Kadarka 2021 Szekszárd

16/20

RED

*Örökség means 'heritage'. A mix of the spicy P9 clone, plus new clones. One week on skins. Aged one-third in Flexcubes and two-thirds in large used oak*

Diaphanous, light ruby. Red fruit, spice and a touch of black tea. The palate is fresh, with poached strawberry, sweet spice, beetroot, a fresh core and gentle tannins (CG)

Drink: 2024 – 2027

*Mainly old-vine fruit, with restricted yields, from Szenta Hill, Gurovica and Decsi Hill vineyards. 18 months in 500-litre Hungarian and French oak.*

Glowing mid-ruby wine with aromas of red plum, dried cherry, smoky lapsang souchong tea and a pinch of clove spice. To taste, it's a very pure expression of the grape, with notes of morello cherry, rose hip, black tea, bright acidity and supple tannins. (CG)

Drink: 2025 – 2028   Price: £20 Woodwinters

### Takler, Örökség Prémium Bikavér 2021 Szekszárd

17 +/20

RED

*50% Kékfrankos, 15% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Kadarka, 5% Syrah. 14 months' ageing in second- and third-fill 500-litre Hungarian oak barrels.*

Dark ruby, with aromas of cocoa nib, bramble and sloe, well-integrated vanilla and a touch of spice. To taste, there's rich, dark fruit backed by a vibrant core of freshness. A harmonious blend with refined tannins and good length, then a bit of grip that suggests it will keep a few years. (CG)

Alcohol: 14%   Drink: 2025 – 2028

### Takler, Szenta-Hegyi Kékfrankos 2020 Szekszárd

17.5/20

RED

*East-south-east-facing slope. 8- to 9-year-old vines. One-third aged in second-fill Hungarian oak.*

vivid, juicy summer-berry fruit notes, well-handled tannins and good keeping potential. (CG)

Alcohol: 14% Drink: 2024 – 2032

### Takler, Gurovicai Kékfrankos 2020 Szekszárd

17 +/20

RED

*A warmer site that always gives higher extract. First mentioned in 1650. 14 months in used French and Hungarian oak.*

Lots of spice and dark-berry fruit on the nose, followed by plenty of strawberry, bilberry and morello cherry flavours, supported by fresh, vivid acidity. Still youthful, with nice length. (CG)

Alcohol: 14% Drink: 2024 – 2032 Price: £26 Woodwinters

### Takler, Görögszói Cabernet Sauvignon 2020 Szekszárd

17.5/20

RED

*Ferenc Takler's favourite wine, but it's hard to sell international grapes from Szekszárd. Single vineyard on red clay at 200 m. Aged 18 months in oak.*

Amazing cassis and black-fruit bouquet with a subtle hint of sweet oak but well integrated. Intense and concentrated fruit but really pure Cabernet Sauvignon expression. Ripe but not jammy, and with underlying freshness and a touch of typical Cabernet grip. Needs time, but has a lot of promise. (CG)

Alcohol: 15% Drink: 2027 – 2032

*A small family winery with 11 ha. From two plots: one plot is 12-year-old vines with 6 clones, fermented in stainless-steel tanks; the other plot 18-year-old vines, hand-punched in open tanks, pressed after 12 days.*

Almost dark rosé in colour. Delicate aromas of wild strawberry and rose water, with summer berries and lightly spicy flavours. Light-bodied but nicely drinkable. (CG)

Alcohol: 11.7% Drink: 2024 – 2027

### Tüske, Menek Kékfrankos 2019 Szekszárd

15.5/20

RED

*22- and 37-year-old vines. Aged 18 months in oak, a mix of new and used 12-hl Hungarian oak barrels.*

Tobacco, forest fruit and woodsmoke, with dried-cherry aromas. A more traditional style of wine with forest fruit and undergrowth, and a touch of rusticity on the finish. (CG)

Alcohol: 14.5% Drink: 2024 – 2027

### Vesztergombi, St László Prémium Bikavér 2021 Szekszárd

16/20

RED

*24 months in 300- and 500-litre oak.*

Dark plum and sloe aromas with notes of tobacco, bitter chocolate and starting to show signs of maturity. To taste, it's generous, with lots of plum, damson and sour-cherry fruit – ripe but also a fresh backbone, with some ageing potential, too. (CG)

Alcohol: 14% Drink: 2025 – 2032

RED

*Single-vineyard selection. 24 months in oak. Organic practices in the vineyard.*

Deep black-red in the glass. Very savoury with a wild edge on the nose. Complex black fruit, too. The palate has good varietal intensity with herby dried cherry and strawberry, grainy, polished tannins and balanced acidity. (CG)

Alcohol: 14%   Drink: 2025 – 2032

### Vida Péter, Hidaspetre Rosé Kékfrankos Prémium 2023 Szekszárd

16/20

ROSE

*6 months' ageing on lees.*

Mid pink with salmon tones. Strawberry and ripe peach on the nose. Bright and vinous, with plenty of crunchy redcurrant and morello-cherry fruit. (CG)

Alcohol: 12.5%   Drink: 2025

### Vida Péter, Petit Bonsai Kadarka 2023 Szekszárd

17/20

RED

*Produced from young vines from cuttings from the old Bonsai vineyard. A few days' cold soak, 6 months in stainless-steel tanks. Screwcap.*

Bright pink-red. Scented, floral – blackberry flower and crushed-raspberry fruit aromas. The palate is light, bright and juicy. Very approachable, with raspberry fruit and light, chalky tannins. (CG)

Alcohol: 12%   Drink: 2025 – 2027

RED

*Vines planted in 1920s. Fermented in 1,200-litre amphorae. 6 months' ageing in amphorae. Unfined.*

A touch more depth of colour but still translucent pink-red. There's a lovely, inviting, ethereal nose, with rose petal, raspberry and morello-cherry hints. Beautifully precise fruit, delicate but also intense, with real finesse and a long, lingering finish backed by very fine, grainy tannins. (CG)

Alcohol: 12.5%   Drink: 2025 – 2030

### Vida Péter, Idyll Bikavér 2022 Szekszárd

16/20

RED

*60% Kékfrankos, 20% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc, 8% Kadarka, 3% Syrah. 50% stainless-steel tanks, 50% large oak. Screwcap.*

A youthful, berry-fruited and inviting nose. The palate is fruit-forward, with juicy berries and cherries and a grainy, chalky edge to the tannins. Appealing entry-point Bikavér designed to be a by-the-glass wine and does exactly that. (CG)

Alcohol: 13%   Drink: 2025 – 2027

### Vida Péter, Hidaspetre Kékfrankos Prémium 2021 Szekszárd

17/20

RED

*13-year-old vines from 2 plots in a single vineyard. 5 days' cold soak. Aged in used 300-litre and new 500-litre Hungarian oak for 15 months.*

Translucent ruby wine with fine red-cherry and black-plum fruit interwoven with a touch of cocoa and tobacco and well-integrated oak. The palate is very typical, sleek

Alcohol: 13.5%   Drink: 2025 – 2030

### Vida Péter, Valles Prémium Bikavér 2020 Szekszárd

17.5/20

RED

*50% Kékfrankos, 25% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 5% Kadarka. 5 days' cold soak, 2 weeks' fermentation. 70% aged in 1,000- to 1,500-litre oak, 30% in 300- to 500-litre Hungarian oak for 18 months.*

Glowing ruby wine, with a complex bouquet of cassis, rose hip and goji berries overlaid by hints of tobacco and dried cherry. To taste, it's sleek and harmonious, with complex bramble fruit, chocolate and kirsch hints. Super integration and harmony, and a refined, long finish. Has ageing potential. (CG)

Alcohol: 13.5%   Drink: 2025 – 2030

### Vida Péter, Löss 2020 Szekszárd

16.5 +/20

RED

*70% Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc, 25% Kékfrankos, 5% Carmenère. Named for the loess soil. 24 months in new and used oak.*

Dense dark-ruby wine, with plenty of blackcurrant, blackberry, harmonious oak and a touch of undergrowth. Good fruit weight backed by cherry and tea-leaf notes and the vivid freshness of Kékfrankos. A classy but still-youthful blend – give it time. (CG)

Alcohol: 14%   Drink: 2027 – 2032



HUNGARY

RED WINE

KADARKA

BLAUFRÄNKISCH



DR CAROLINE GILBY MW

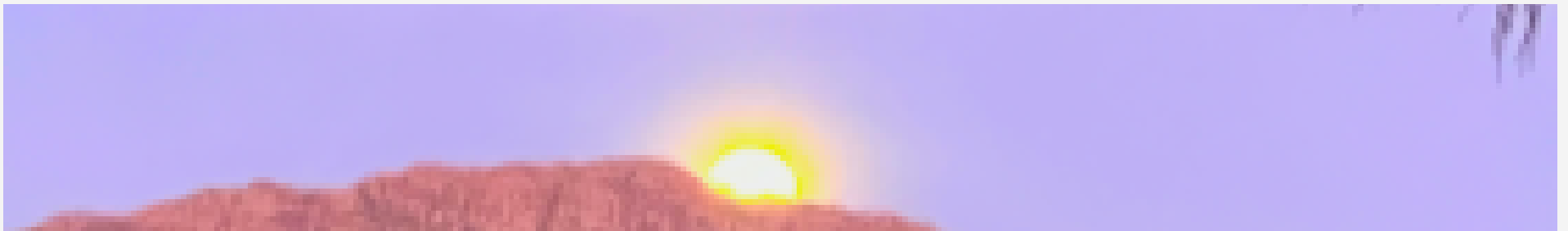
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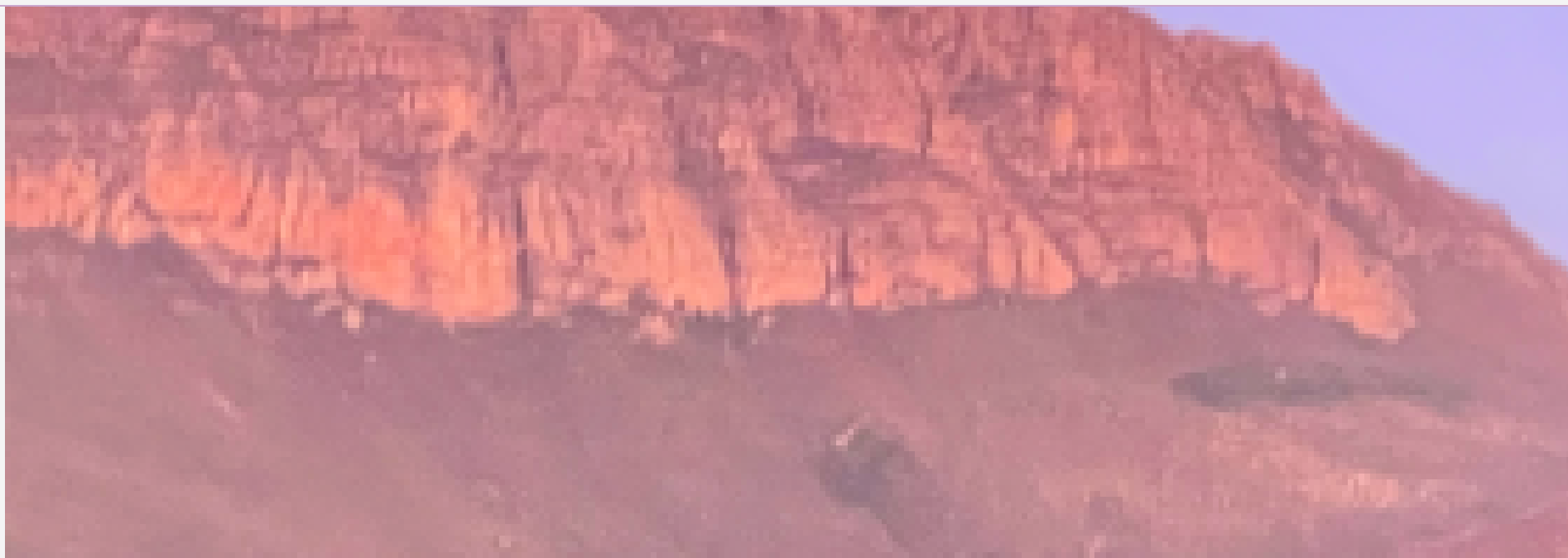
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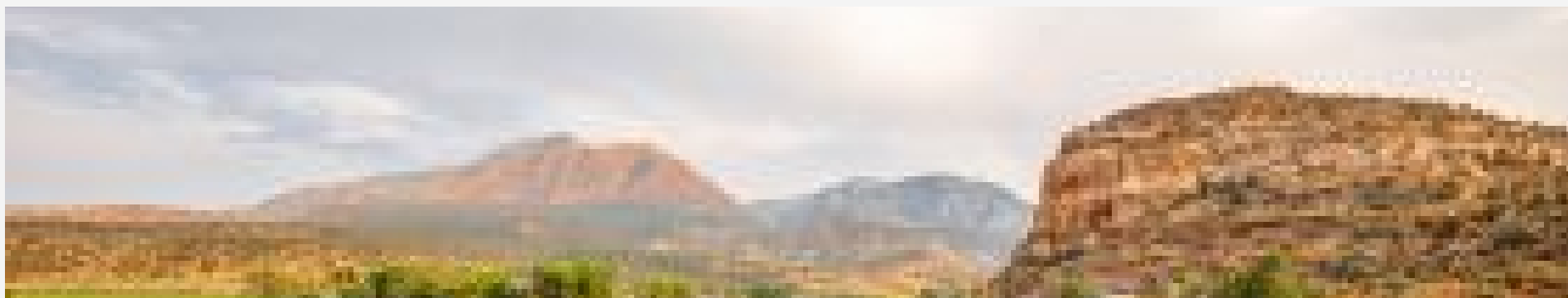




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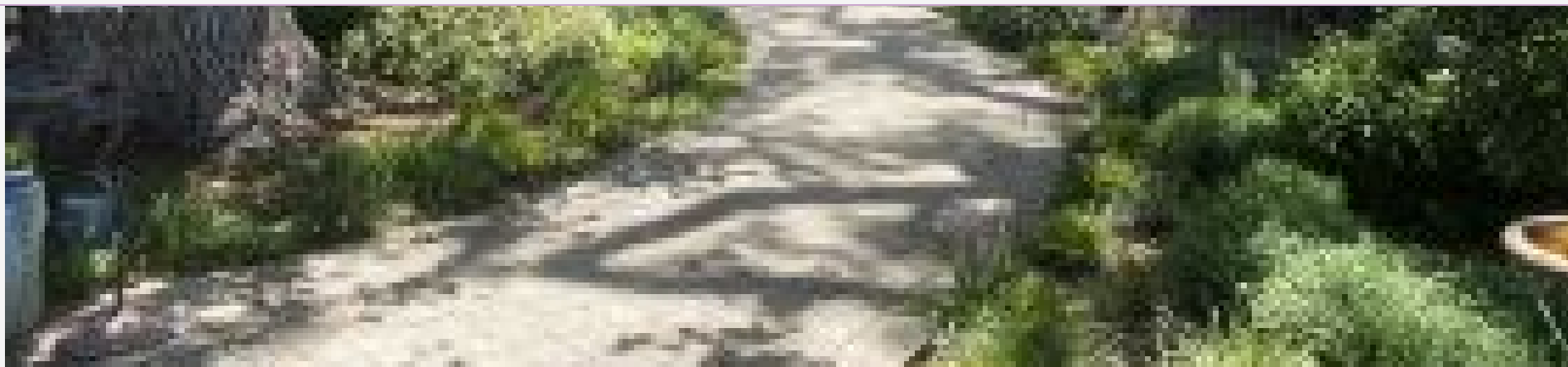


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**Mylonas Retsina**

A revitalising summer essential at picnic-friendly prices. Above, Savatiano master Stamatis Mylonas. From \$12.94, £15.  
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