

2023 Bóka Birtok Kadarka

Tolna, Hungary

Sometimes you find yourself in a small village in southwestern Hungary talking about the vibrational memory of water pioneered by a Japanese writer and how a true wine of harmony forms hexagonal crystals at a molecular level. Take a quick pause for some homemade deer salami and another sip of Kadarka, and you're likely at the Bóka Winery. András has studied the writings of Emoto Masaru, who argues that human vibrations, be they emotions, intent or sound, change the molecular structure of water. If these vibrations are good, symmetrical crystals form. If negative, the molecular structure becomes chaotic, broken, and no crystals form. As András Bóka puts it, "When vibration ceases, life ceases. Wine is organized into an orderly form when it is a living substance. Drinking living wine enlivens and uplifts. This is the only way a crystal is formed." Is it pseudoscience or akin to the Honeymoon Effect or even the current supply chain? That cheap rosé you drank gazing at a sunset with somebody you love was maybe a shit bottle of wine but the collective good vibrations made it taste amazing on a molecular level. Wines often taste off and disjointed for the first 3-4 weeks after they arrive into port after being stuck in a dark container. Maybe not exactly crystal positive. Regardless, this notion drives how they work in the vineyards and in the cellar. If structure is life affirming, then why destroy it with additives and filtering? This is the guiding light of their natural wine philosophy. They also have lineage in this area as well. Their family first purchased 5 hectares in 1903 and even ran their own pub and guest rooms through the 20s and 30s. After WWII, they were reduced to just .3 hectares. Like countless others, it was simply taken away by the state. The official restart didn't happen until 2012 when András, his wife and children, grandmother, and brother Zoltán decided to bring it back to life. After a 15 year learning curve, the first commercial vintage was 2020.



VINEYARDS

They farm without chemicals (herbicides, insecticides, absorbable fungicides and other carriers). Instead, there's an emphasis on orange oil, teas and lacto preparations. They also use Marco Simonit's "gentle pruning" technique along with 30-40 cover crops. Certified organic in 2024, they spray 3-4 times on average. Building immunity is paramount. And while they do grow a range of grapes like Kékfrankos, Zenit, Királyelányka, Rieslingssilvani, Chardonnay, Olaszrizling, Merlot, and Szürkebarát, Kadarka is foundational and accounts for around 75% of their total production.

WINE MAKING

They are working with 2 clones of Kadarka: the P9 "Fűszeres" (spicy) Kadarka and the Jakab/Olasz Kadarka (clone 167). They started with the P9 which has tight clusters, thin skins, uneven ripening, and is prone to powdery and downy mildew. P9 came out of the University of Pécs in the 1960s during the COOP era. Despite smelling amazing when successfully harvested, it was a failure for industrial winemaking. Even András admits that over a 15 year period they had 3-4 100% healthy picks. That said, they love it and started to train it higher (140cm), better farming led to more nitrogen and looser clusters, and given its uneven ripening, has killer acidity which is ideal for rosé and sparkling. The Jakab, or Olasz Kadarka has much thicker skins, darker fruit, homogenous ripening, is far less disease prone, and is ideal for pushing ripeness. Their grandfather also had some planted back in the 1960s before P9 was introduced. When we first tasted the 2020, 2021, and 2022, additional layers of the Kadarka onion were peeled back. We've tasted many other clones like P111, P123, P115, P131, P147, and the older 1880 and 1912 plantings from Maurer just to name a few, but this is something very different and exciting.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

This 100% Jakab/Olasz Kadarka was hand picked in September, spent 6 days on the skins, one daily punchdown, and was fermented in open vats. Pressed and aged in stainless steel without filtration or any additions. The tannins here are something we don't find in another Kadarka in our portfolio, and yet it's fully in balance with the wine. The 2020 spent 12 days skins, the 2021 spent 8 days skins, and the 2022 spent 6 days. Perhaps they've found the sweet spot again in the 2023. Light in body, not shy on acid and with a firm grip, this makes us want to return for another lunch of grey cattle and juniper berry pörkölt cooked over an open fire bogrács.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Tolna

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Kadarka

CLIMATE: Continental with dry warm summers

SOILS: Loess and clay

MACERATION & AGING: 6 days on the skins, pressed and aged in stainless steel without filtration or any additions

ALCOHOL: 11.85%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 1.2 g/l

ACIDITY: 4.8 g/l



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