

2023 Bott Frigyes Kadarka

Južnoslovenská, Slovakia

After WWI, Hungary lost around 71% of its territory to Romania, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia (Slovakia), Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia) and Austria. Over 3 million ethnic Hungarians found themselves outside of Hungary with significant outcome on the grapes and traditions that never stopped or are now coming back to life beyond the present day borders of Hungary. On the southern slopes of the Mužsla Hills in Slovakia surrounded by the river Garam, Danube and the Ipoly rivers, is one such example: Bott Frigyes. Even the neighboring village of Béla is where Judit and József Bodó of Bott Pince began their winemaking career (ethnically Hungarian but born in Slovakia) before moving to Tokaj. Long story short, a whole bunch of things all came together with Bott Frigyes coupled with great farming, honest winemaking, and delicious wines.

VINEYARDS

Bott and his son Frici cultivate 10 hectares of vineyards next to the River Garam, at 250 metres above sea level. They are growing Furmint, Hárslevelű (Lipovina in Slovakia), Juhfark, Kékfrankos, Kadarka (cuttings are incidentally from Balla Géza in Romania who is also ethnically Hungarian), Traminer, Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Sárfahér and Olaszrizling. The soil is clay on top of volcanic bedrock, which is also rich in limestone and minerals.

WINE MAKING

The winemaking is certainly structured in terms of technique, although all fermentations are native, there's zero temperature control, longer lees aging, natural settling, all oak barrel (some amphora), and bottling unfiltered and unfiltered with a small amount of SO₂ at bottling as the only addition. For the reds, they do use the "Hamburger" method which is essentially alternating layers of whole cluster (foot stomped), topped with whole cluster, then topped with a destemmed and hand crushed layer. This achieves a semi-carbonic quality to the wines without developing too much of the banana or bubble gum often associated with carbonic. For the skin contact whites, it's often no more than a week, and they are careful to keep it worked over to prevent VA and other flaws. The winemaking overall is tied to tradition but with a nod to modern hygiene in the cellar.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

This is the most dark fruited and botrytis free Kadarka in the portfolio. Still late ripening and thin skinned, but half was left whole cluster on the skins for nearly a month. There's no dominant or immediate enzymatic/carbonic quality despite the weight and color leading you to think so. The skin contact leeches out the spice and tea. It's easy to see how a Kadarka like this would be a required blending component in Bikavér (Bull's Blood). One half was fermented as whole bunches on the skins but the other half was destemmed. Both fermented separately for 3-4 weeks in open vats. Both lots were then combined in 500L oak barrels and aged 9 months on the lees. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. If there were a scented candle for Central European reds, Kadarka like this would be the North Star.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Južnoslovenská

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Kadarka

CLIMATE: Continental (hot summers & cold winters)

SOILS: clay on top of volcanic bedrock

MACERATION & AGING: Half was left whole cluster on the skins for nearly a month, half was destemmed. Both fermented separately for 3-4 weeks in open vats

ALCOHOL: 12.6%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 1.8 g/l

ACIDITY: 6.53 g/l



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