

2024 Bott Frigyes Kékfrankos

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, Hárslévelű (Lipovina in Slovakia), Juhfark, Kékfrankos, Kadarka (cuttings are incidentally from Balla Géza in Romania who is also ethnically Hungarian), Tramini, 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 unfined 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

During our 2023 visit, it became clear to Frigyes that the flagship grapes of the estate should be Furmint and Kékfrankos. The Kadarka, Olaszrizling, Tramini, Muzsla Cuvée, Pinot Noir and Juhfark aren't going away, but in terms of a hierarchy from village to cru to grand cru, Furmint and Kékfrankos is the aim. And as he moves into more maceration, zero filtering, and longer elevage, he's being extra careful not to have these elements obscure a sense of place. The village level (Muzsla) is mostly from the volcanic/limestone and younger vines, the Cru (Béla) is from richer clay and loess, and the grand cru (Faricka) is from volcanic/limestone and the oldest vines. Their farming yields smaller and thicker skinned berries year after year. To avoid being overly tannic, this wine is made with the Hamburger method (foot trodden juice + whole cluster + hand destemmed) for 2 weeks with as little movement as possible. It's then barreled down aged in Hungarian oak for 10 months and bottled unfined and unfiltered with a small amount of SO2 only at bottling. As Frigyes sums it up, Kékfrankos is "The main message from our region."



ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Južnoslovenská

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Kékfrankos

CLIMATE: Continental (hot summers & cold winters)

SOILS: clay on top of volcanic bedrock

MACERATION & AGING: Processed with the Hamburger method (foot trodden high juice + whole cluster + hand destemmed) for 2 weeks. Aged in Hungarian oak for 10 months

ALCOHOL: 14%

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