

2019 Bott Frigyes Muzsla Cuvée

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, Hárstlevelű (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 premium estate white blend. Muzsla is the name of the hill where the vineyards look down onto the Danube and 2019 is only the second vintage. It's only the second vintage because the family needed time to evolve from the zero skin contact filtered wines that defined their earlier years and the unfiltered and more macerated wines they've been making in recent years. Early on Frigyes considered the more reductive lineup as "terroir" driven wines and his more macerated and oxidative lineup as more of the "soul" of the property. The Muzsla bridges this divide. Like the vast majority of their wines, this is made using the Hamburger method: three layers of foot trodden, whole cluster and whole berry fermented in open vats. The Muzsla spent 6 days in this hamburger method followed by 18 months in neutral oak barrels on the lees. Only racked once before bottling, then bottled unfiltered with a small (25ppm) addition of SO₂. There's weight, texture and freshness from the whole clusters, more chiseled acid driven elements from the whole berries, and given the aging time, it all comes together seamlessly. Some sips feel like a skin contact wine, some like stainless steel reductive winemaking, but the color, texture and aromatics give this wine a firm Goldilocks status in the Bott Frigyes lineup.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Južnoslovenská

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 50% Riesling, 25% Sauvignon Blanc, 25% Pinot Blanc

CLIMATE: Continental (hot summers & cold winters)

SOILS: clay on top of volcanic bedrock

MACERATION & AGING: 6 days in Bott Frigyes' hamburger method then 18 months in neutral oak barrels on the lees.

ALCOHOL: 13%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 2 g/l

ACIDITY: 7 g/l



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