

2024 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, Hárslevelű (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 unfinned 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

Muzsla is the name of the hill where the vineyards look down onto the Danube. These were also the historical vineyards of the Esztergom Basilica which now resides in Hungary (the largest Church in the country). Frigyes's argument here is that despite these grapes being quite pungent on their own, this terroir supersedes those characteristics. This 2024 is more Riesling heavy, but it's rarely that hard to find Sauvignon Blanc if it's present either. The mixture of light maceration with whole clusters, plenty of juice to manage oxidation and volatility, and then some riper destemmed berries make this more like a refreshing tea than a classic white blend. Some sips feel like a skin contact wine and some hint at a reductive stainless steel like fermentation. Regardless, the Muzsla and Frigyes's style are dominant over the grapes. The sum of all these parts give this wine a firm Goldilocks status in the Bott Frigyes lineup.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Južnoslovenská

GRAPE COMPOSITION: Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Blanc

CLIMATE: Continental (hot summers & cold winters)

SOILS: clay on top of volcanic bedrock

MACERATION & AGING: Mix of light maceration with whole clusters and ripe destemmed berries.

ALCOHOL: 13.5%



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