

2022 Domaine Bükk Litro Libre

Bükk, Hungary

Norbi Borbely is a rare hybrid. Hungarian born and raised, he also went to UCSC and founded a bakery in Santa Cruz called Chimney Bread that he ran for over 9 years. His language and cultural fluency between the two countries has been much appreciated and a valuable door opener for us. He's also just a gregarious character that manifests community and togetherness wherever he goes. Beyond good farming and delicious wines, he is emblematic of what the wine trade is fundamentally about. In 2020, Norbi and his wife Judit founded Hunvino Inc., focusing their efforts on their home and winery in the hills of the Bükk region, just a few hours drive east from Budapest in the direction of Tokaj. Bükk is a lesser known appellation despite having some remarkable history. Before phylloxera it had about 17,000 hectares of first class vineyards. Today it has less than 900 ha. From the top of their vineyards you can clearly see Tokaj Hill and there's even a village called Kistokaj (little Tokaj) just a 10 minutes drive away. In other words, this area has all the building blocks to be really special, they just need people to do something with it.

VINEYARDS

They currently own nearly 4 hectares split between two vineyards (Pittyén and Körtés) planted in the late 1970s and early 1980s near the village Nyékládháza. Most grapes are Zenit with a lesser amount of Pinot Blanc along with a little Kékfrankos and Medina coming to fruition this year as well. All vineyard work is done manually by the family and a few Romani families and minorities who are in need and well skilled. There's a nearby gravel mine and lake that adds humidity and a helpful microclimate to their deep heavy yellow and gray clay, marl, and pannonian sea sediment. As of 2023, they stopped spraying elemental sulfur and copper. To help mediate this, Norbi made his own lacto ferment sprays from herbs growing right behind the winery. Using wild garlic, chili, chives, yarrow, nettle, tansy, milk thistle, horsetail, worm wood, and horseradish (all antibacterial) in concert with aerobic compost (vermicompost, algae, molasses), they have both healed and added immunity across the board. Other than that, cover crops are native, but they try to focus their efforts on flowering plants that support the bees and manually remove those that don't. They turn over the soil in early Spring and sometimes in mid summer since it can often be quite hot and dry.

WINE MAKING

The winemaking is fairly straightforward. Hand harvested grapes are destemmed, and since they are super tannic, the only maceration needed is in the press. After two days of settling, everything was racked to tank for native fermentation. The tanks are also outside all year. No temp control. The thermal density and climate are enough.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

Coming from the relatively flat Pittyén vineyard as you walk up from the winery, this liter is 100% Zenit. Like most of the "Z" grapes in Hungary - Zefír, Zeus, Zéta, and Zengő, they are all crossings created in the early 1950s by the prolific Hungarian viticulturist Dr. Ferenc Király. Zenit is a crossing between Bouvier x Ezerjő. The Bouvier is frost resistant, thick skinned and aromatic while the Ezerjő brings a lot of acidity and sweet herbaceousness. Both are prone and do well with botrytis. The 2022 also had a light dusting of Botrytis which not only helped mediate the tannins, but also added more acidity and made the aromatics even more layered. The liters were bottled unfined and unfiltered with a small addition of sulfur. The label is of their two sons foot-stomping the grapes with great satisfaction. While not a crutch they lean on to make the sale, autism awareness is super important to them since their eldest son Bendegúz is autistic. A percentage of all sales goes to the Autism Foundation.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Bükk

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Zenit

CLIMATE: Continental (hot summers & cold winters)

SOILS: deep heavy yellow and gray clay, marl and Pannonian sea sediment

MACERATION & AGING: After two days of settling, everything was racked to tank for native fermentation. The tanks are outside all year with no temperature control

ALCOHOL: 13.5%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 0.6 g/l

ACIDITY: 5.6 g/l



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