

2023 Demeter Zoltán Szamorodni Eszter

Tokaj, Hungary

Zoltán's one-man cellar rests inside a historic house built in 1790 just a few blocks from where the Bodrog and Tisza Rivers meet in the town of Tokaj. He's fully committed to his own race against time to rediscover the terroir of Tokaj as well as the firm belief that Tokaj is one of the most important wine cultures in the world. After working abroad in Napa (Stags Leap), Beaune to study viticulture and enology, as well as larger estates in Tokaj, he has arguably the most experience making dry Tokaj wines in Hungary next to István Szepsy, whom together are responsible for the success of the Királyudvar brand. As of 2008 Zoltán now focuses entirely on his own 9 single vineyards spread over 7 hectares: Szerelmi vineyard in Tokaj, Veres and Becsek vineyards in Mád, Holdvölgy and Újhegy vineyards in Rátka and the Kakas and Lapis vineyards in Bodrogkeresztúr. A champion of the of the present and future of the region he is working to see that the laws governing the production of the wine respect tradition and the good taste of those who consume Tokaji. His selection of dry, Főbor (Original Hungarian word for Szamorodni), and Aszú are broadly considered benchmarks. They clearly reflect the complex geology of their site, the character of their varieties and Zoltán's intensive cerebral nature. Multifaceted, crystalline, and enduring. According to Zoltán, "Wine is not the sound it is the instrument".

VINEYARDS

All of the single vineyards are 40 years and older and classified as First Growths. Eszter is sourced from 30-60 year old vineyards in both Bodrog-keresztúr and Mád villages just north and northwest of Mt Tokaj. Soils range from Loess to heavy clay to stony volcanic. Pesticides are not used, no fertilizer, some still plowed by horse, and sulfur only when absolutely needed is sprayed by hand. Zoltán spends an inordinate amount of time in the vineyards and is one part student while admitting to a certain amount of magic that's unique to Tokaj.

WINE MAKING

The entire winery is designed to be run by one man. Every hose, tool, pump, valve, and drain has an exact place and purpose. It's also part gallery with a road kill snake fashioned into a "DZ" in a frame, glassware hung in the shape of cross beneath a Crucifix, and a baby grand piano rescued from the trash suspended by wires hangs directly over the only coach. Concerning the actual winemaking, almost everything ferments in steel tank, ambient yeasts are preferred but commercial yeasts are employed when needed to get the wine fully dry. All aging takes place in old oak barrels. Some Furmint also ferments and ages in oak.



NOTES & PAIRINGS

In 2009 Zoltán's daughter was born and he quickly named this wine after her. The inaugural vintage will easily last until she's old enough to drink it. Szamorodni, meaning both botrytis and fresh grapes harvested and fermented together achieves enough sugar to be a 5 Puttonyos Aszú, but due to the method and aging is less oxidative and more refreshing. A blend of Furmint and Hárslevelű from the volcanic Holdvölgy, Lapis and Veres vineyards, it's suitable as a dessert wine, but better used as a sweet wine to pair with just about anything umami, fatty and pungent. There's also a tea-like bitterness resulting from healthy and thick skins. This texture and feeling is what sets Tokaj apart from many other sweet wines. It's not sweet for sweets sake, there's a balancing act of acid, alcohol and bitterness as well. And if you look through the bottle to the back side of the back label you can make out a very telling quotation from Theodore Hesburgh, "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother."

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

PRODUCER: Demeter Zoltán

APPELLATION: Tokaj

GRAPE COMPOSITION: Furmint, Hárslevelű

CLIMATE: Cool Continental

SOILS: Volcanic

MACERATION & AGING: Stainless steel

ALCOHOL: 11.4%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 137.4 g/l



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