

2023 Káli-Kövek Karmazsin

Balaton-felvidék, Hungary

In the Balaton Uplands, the village of Köveskál sits more or less at the center of the Káli Basin, surrounded by Basalt buttes, thick forests (Linden, Oak, Sumac), and rich rolling farmland littered with spiral-shaped horned Racka sheep, wooly Magalica pigs, and iconic Grey Cattle. There is a palpable and vibrant biodiversity here. Starting in 2006, Gyula Szabó decided to continue what his grandparents and father did in the same family house but instead take it commercial starting in 2009 with just 1.5 hectares. At first glance, Gyula is an imposing figure somewhere between a rugby player and barbarian warrior. His handshake did not disappoint and he immediately proved to be an incredibly warm, funny and thoughtful man. With Iron Maiden playing in the background he also let us know that he learned English mostly from watching 'Beavis and Butthead' and 'South Park.' Immediate approval. He was also keen to inform us that the Mediterranean like influences from the lake coupled with volcanic tuff soils riddled with basalt fragments, rich clay and dense brown soils have been yielding high quality wines here since the Romans. Focusing on Olaszrizling, the Káli-Kövek wines are among the most densely, bright, aromatic and mineral we've found in the Uplands of Lake Balaton.



VINEYARDS

The Káli Basin is the result of the Pannonian sea slowly receding about 4 million years ago. Thick layers of marine sediment were then covered with volcanic activity most strikingly by the basalt lava columns that define the skyline. There is also dolomite limestone, brown forest loam, red sandstone and clay that fill in around the basalt. All of Gyula's vineyards are farmed without pesticides or herbicides and SO2 is sprayed by hand when needed. The proximity to the 50 mile long lake does increase the humidity, but it's more a buffer against extreme weather more than a major risk of mold or frost (even in 2016). The Köveskál Olaszrizling is grown in the 45 year old Töltés Dűlő (vineyard) on Fekete-hegy (hill). The soil is mostly volcanic tuff with basalt fragments and the vines are mid-wire Cordon trained. The Rezeda Olaszrizling on the other hand is a blend of 4 sites including Fekete-hegy, Hegyestű, Tagyon-hegy and Szent György-hegy with an emphasis on basalt and clay. Vine age ranges from 20-45 years old.

Wines then age between 6-9 months before bottling. Since the Rezeda comes from four sites, harvesting occurs between mid September and mid October and are then blended together.

WINE MAKING

All wines are hand harvested and hand sorted. Using a well conditioned 40 year old press, the mostly free run juice is fermented in used 500L and 225L Hungarian Zemplén Oak barrels. There is little to no press fraction that goes into these wines. Fermentation is always spontaneous for both primary and secondary.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

This comes from the volcanic basaltic tuff soils of the Dörgicse vineyard in the Balatonfüred-Csopak region along the northern shore of Lake Balaton. The name translates to "Crimson" which covers both the color and the way we get a little flushed with color – crimsoned. It's mostly Kékfrankos with a small amount of Cabernet Blanc. As with the barrel fermented free run only whites from Gyula, this of course has a few weeks of maceration, but acidity, levity and aromatics hint at the same kind of freshness. This is ripe volcanic lakeside fruit that despite being refreshing and light, still has grip, length, and color.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Balaton-felvidék

GRAPE COMPOSITION: Kékfrankos, Cabernet Blanc

CLIMATE: Sub-Mediterranean

SOILS: Volcanic Basaltic Tuff

MACERATION & AGING: Barrel fermented, a few weeks of maceration.

ALCOHOL: 13%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 1 g/l

ACIDITY: 5.4 g/l



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