

2024 Káli-Kövek Rizling

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

If you're riding your bike through the many villages that dot the northern shores of Lake Balaton, you're going to end up stopping and enjoying what locals call a fröccs (frur-tch). We would say spritz, but the mixture of carbonated mineral water in wine is deeply sutured into Hungarian culture. This is partly because Hungary's Ányos Jedlik is credited with inventing the industrial production of soda water in the 1820s. Hungary is the 5th largest producer of mineral water in the EU, and has the highest consumption of any member state. The vines are also drinking this volcanic mineral rich water. This 50/50 blend of Olaszrizling and Rajnai (Rhine) "Rizling," is hand picked, a blend of free run and direct pressed, and then spontaneously fermented in inox. Lighter than the Rezeda, this is as fresh as Balaton whites get. Salty, aromatic, and if you're up for it, add a dash of hard sparkling mineral water.



ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Balaton-felvidék

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 50% Olaszrizling, 50% Riesling

CLIMATE: Sub-Mediterranean

SOILS: Basalt

MACERATION & AGING: Blend of free run and direct pressed, and then spontaneously fermented in inox

ALCOHOL: 13.2%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 2.1 g/l

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PO Box 1270 | Los Altos, California 94023 | USA

www.DanchAndGranger.com

info@DanchAndGranger.com