

2018 Losonci Skin-Contact Olaszrizling

Matra, Hungary

Bálint Losonci entered the wine business as a writer for the wine magazine *Borbarát* under László Alkonyi. He was exposed to a whole world of Hungarian wines in the late 1990s that was just waking up after Communism. He then apprenticed under Gábor Karner (whom he found via *Borbarát*), and joined a few other minded small producers who believed in the future potential of the Mátra appellation. Hungary's Mátra appellation is quietly the second largest in the country (7500+ hectares), but has been dominated by just a few larger industrial players – perhaps a bit of a Soviet cooperative era hangover. The typical vine density is designed for large tractors and there's a disturbing amount of Müller-Thurgau and Chasselas geared more for table grape yields than wine. He and others greatly increased vine density, planted native grapes, moved to organic farming, and drastically reduced yields. In the cellar, the main tenants are native fermentation and no other additions other than SO₂. Given the wines typical of the area, all of this was somewhat unheard of on a commercial level. He continues to experiment and push himself, but what remains constant is his unwavering community oriented mindset and desire to put Mátra back on the wine map. His vineyards and wines reflect this drive, ambition and generosity.

VINEYARDS

Roughly 8 hectares are spread across the villages of Gyöngyöspata, Gyöngyöstarján and Nagyréde (single vineyards include Gereg, Tamás-hegy, Sárosberek, Peres, Virág-domb, Oroszi, and Lógi). The first thing Bálint did was plant in between the existing rows (pre Communist era vine density), retrained the vines to drop yield to maximum 1 kilo per plant, and transitioned to organic farming. Focusing on Kékfrankos, Magyarfrankos (cross between Muscat Bouschet and Kékfrankos), Pinot Noir, Furmint, Turan, Rhine Riesling, Szürkebarát, and Hárslevelű, he also grows a little Chasselas for good measure. Our current wines are mostly from the Gerag vineyard where he often doesn't spray anything of any kind all year. It's the right exposure and is protected from harsh weather on all sides with the tallest mountains in the country. The Gerag is also defined by andesite (volcanic), tons of iron/red clay, and chalk about 40cm beneath. Many underground springs give life to the hillside as well. He's also planting pre phylloxera grapes like Purcsin and Tihany Kék among other international grapes geared towards tackling impending climate change.

WINE MAKING

Most wines are open vat fermented with native yeast before being pressed off into oak for aging. Most of the whites see extended skin contact whereas the reds are often less so. The PH is naturally very low (total acids usually between 7-8 g/l post malolactic), so acidity is not an issue and the wines are very stable. The only addition is SO₂ at bottling and wines are bottled unfiltered.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

This comes from an extremely cool, windy and rocky (a former geyser), andesite riddled 50-year old vineyard that's super poor in nitrogen but rich in minerals. It's been completely unsprayed since 2014. The Mátra is dominated by Kékestető, Hungary's tallest mountain at just 3300 feet. This blocks the coldest most damaging weather and creates near constant wind. Coupled with great water management in the soil, the disease pressure is remarkably low here. After 5 weeks of maceration and barreled down to Hungary oak it's only 12% alcohol, dry, and while super layered and rich, the aromas aren't drowned out by oxidative notes. This is not generic orange wine and can be open for easily over a week with no issues.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Matra

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Olaszrizling

CLIMATE: Continental

SOILS: Andesite (volcanic), iron/red clay and chalk

MACERATION & AGING: 5 weeks maceration, barreled in old Hungarian oak barrels

ALCOHOL: 13%



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