

2019 Maurer Kadarka 1880

Subotica, Serbia

When we first visited Oszkár Maurer in 2015, he only had a few wines to show. Since then, we've witnessed plans like expanding his production into the Fruška Gora, redefining what many of these nearly forgotten grapes taste like, while always keeping a close eye on the traditions of both his grandparents and the region's 2000+ years of documented winemaking history. His aesthetic and philosophy are starting to permeate everything above and beyond the vineyards and cellar. The Maurer family has been producing wine for four generations. It was during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the 19th century that they moved from Salzburg to the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary. They now farm 15 acres of land. 6 hectares in the Serbian wine region of Szabadka directly south of the Hungarian-Serbian border, and another 10 acres in the Fruška Gora mountain district in Syrmia, Serbia, located 40 miles away from Belgrade and bordered by the Danube River to the north.

VINEYARDS

Technically Maurer is in the Subotičko – Horgoškoj region in northern Serbia, formerly a part of Hungary's Csongrád up until 1920. The population is mostly Hungarian and viticulture knows no borders. Names of grapes and places are therefore constantly changing from Serbian to Hungarian and vice-versa. Oszkár farms about 6 hectares here including the oldest known Kadarka vineyard in the world planted in 1880 in addition to other plantings in 1912 and older plots of Kövidinka from 1925. Other plantings include grapes like Olaszrizling, Slankamenka, Ezerjő, Kadarka and Kékfrankos and few international varieties including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir. Oszkár also has 9 hectares in the Srem region further south. Hungarians called this area Szerém, the Croats Srijem (part of it spills into Croatia), and the Romans Syrmia. The main feature, apart from the Danube River, is the Fruška Gora Mountain. Once an island in the Pannonian Sea, the soil is volcanic with a marine layer. Some call it the "holy mountain" or "Serbian Athos" because of its 30 monasteries or so of which 16 still stand today. There is something special about this place where winegrowing is documented back to the 1200s. Planting in broad strokes, the Subotičko is largely defined by sandy soils and old vines, and the Szerémség by volcanic soils heavily influenced by the Danube River. Everything is farmed organically with zero absorbable chemicals. High density stake trained vines are the most typical and cover crops are natural. Everything is worked by hand or with the help of horses. Harvest is managed with local labor and the help of family and friends.

WINE MAKING

Everything is handpicked in small bins and all fermentations are spontaneous (primary and secondary). The use of older oak, small and large format is paramount. There are no additives to any of the wines apart from SO₂ at bottling for select wines. Maurer basically has two tiers: Rege and Maurer. The Rege wines have low SO₂ (25-40ppm) and the Maurer line is zero compromise with zero additions of any kind. Wines are typically only racked once before bottling and everything is bottled unfiltered.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

This is an extreme vintage and according to Oszkár the most successful of the past 15 years. Only 200g per vine and heavily selected thereafter. The 1880 vineyard is also the oldest known vineyard of Kadarka in the world. Planted in Pannonian sand, bush trained, and surrounded by fruit trees, they look like old hands reaching out of quicksand. Only farmed by human and horse. Similar to the 1912 planting, this site has undergone generations of massale selection that has resulted in very thick skins which is rare for Kadarka. According to Oszkár, it needs to be constantly tweaked and worked on like a high performance race car. There's also a little Vadfekete in the vineyard (botrytis resistant and dark berry) as well. Fermented with native yeast in open vat, barreled down to old Hungarian oak, and bottled unfiltered. This wine has intense concentration of flavor, advanced texture for its age and is still somehow 11.7% alcohol. This is markedly more expensive, but only made in select vintages and is the pride and joy of the estate.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

APPELLATION: Subotica

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Kadarka

CLIMATE: Mild and temperate

SOILS: Sand

MACERATION & AGING: Fermented with native yeast in open vat, barreled down to old Hungarian oak.

ALCOHOL: 11.7%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 0.51 g/l

ACIDITY: 5.91 g/l



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