

Volcanic wines of Somlo Hill, Hungary Terroir, varieties and innovation

Abstract

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Motivation for choosing the topic and objectives

I was born in Veszprem county, and as a child my parents took me on many road trips and hiking tours to and around the Somlo Hill. I was always looking for the special bell-shaped hill excitedly and was very happy when saw it appear in the distance. On each and every trips I felt like I was in a fairy tale; climbing up between the patchwork-like small plot of lands and vineyards, small houses and agricultural buildings until we reached the dark grey basalt columns and a great view to the yellow and green fields around the hill. Since then over the years I have lived in many countries and learned a lot about other wine regions but still have a unique connection to the tiny area of Great-Somlo.

By choosing this region I allowed myself to dig deeper in geology, history, tradition and legends of the hill, and to talk to winemakers at small and large wineries to understand their philosophies.

Methodology

To get different point of views on the region I chose a small, only 1.5 hectare artisan winery, and one of the biggest ones in the region with 50+ hectares. One only works quietly for the national market with one distributor, the other is well-known all over the wine-world thanks to its world class sparkling wines.

Before the interviews I have created a few points which were crucial for me to know for my thesis, although during the discussions I let the topics to change organically,

by this allowing to understand the winemakers and their work from a more personal point of view.

At both places I have learned in-depth knowledge about their heritage, tradition and innovation, and also their vision for the future.

Fortunate for me, one of the gentlemen I have interviewed has been studying the region's traditions and folk related legends for many years, and was able to share stories with me what I could not have known about any other way as they can be found in books difficult to access, either due to their geographical location or their rarity.

Content

The content is divided into four main parts, plus the conclusion. In, and after the *Introduction*, the region's geography and geology is discussed under the *Geological perspective* title, as these are crucial to understand regarding the uniqueness of the area. In part 3, the *Unique grapes on unique terroir*, come the better and lesser-known varieties, from Juhfark and Furmint to the nearly forgotten ones like Goher and Sarfeher - discussed in detail.

Part 4, *Producers - perspective and philosophy*, is all about the wineries, their traditions, grape growing and winemaking techniques.

In the conclusion I have summarised the thesis, also have included a few possible innovations for the region which could make this part of the country better-known for the locals and foreigners too.

Conclusion

Through this research and interviews I have learned and now clearly understand the past, present and possible future of the smallest and, at the same time, one of the greatest wine regions of Hungary.

Seeing the local winemakers' passion towards the industry, their heritage and quality wines made me realise what a huge potential lies in the small region of Somlo Hill.