

THE FUTURE OF FURMINT AND OLASZRIZLING IN HUNGARY: WAR OR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

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1.) Motivation: Furmint and Olaszrizling are two white grape varieties having very deep imprints on the mind of Hungarian people. With the few similarities they share and the lot of differences they show to the wine world nowadays they deserve the attention of wine writers, scientists and wine lovers alike. The situation of the sweet wine market all over the world is well known, and Tokaji is, unfortunately not an exception to this. Moreover, even the best aszús face an inferiority complex vis-a-vis Sauternes, although their values are not justifying this. It is not easy to convince the wine world either. Top quality dry Furmint (and Hárslevelű) is a ten-fifteen years old phenomenon, and known exclusively for aficionados, although they could compete with the best whites of the world. The best Olaszrizlings have tentatively the same values as Furmint but this variety has inferiority complex even vis-à-vis Furmint...Both varieties can produce excellent terroir wine, but the Hungarian growers, winemakers are making only the first steps on a very long way.

2.) Objective: The objective of this thesis is to deploy the values, versatility, advantages and the possible handicaps of these two varieties and argue in favour of both, as we are deeply convinced that on the long run Furmint and Olaszrizling have their role to play as emblematic whites of the Carpathian basin.

3.) Methodology: Much has been written about the history of the Hungarian viticulture and winemaking, but nowadays historians try to correct errors found in literature of the past, based sometimes on legends... DNA profilings of the recent years overwrite whole sections of university textbooks (long ago outdated anyway). As the present thesis embraces subjects of high actuality, with the exception of some excellent books, I could rely only on interviews, articles printed in Hungarian wine magazines (BORIGO, VinCE) or mainly published on internet sites (portals), such as Vínoport, Borászbortál and Művelt alkoholista (intellectual alcoholic...). Personnel communications during the last years' "field studies" and tastings with Hungarian growers and winemakers (ambitious youngsters and "stars" alike) gave me useful information regarding the two varieties, viticultural and winemaking practices. Invaluable source were for me conversations with dr. Gabriella Mészáros and dr. Gábor Rohály, wine experts and wine writers, who since 1991 educate generations of vintners, winemakers, sommeliers, wine lovers at Borkollégium. Regular thematic and systematic tastings at Borkollégium headed by Gabriella Mészáros and those organised by VinCE Magazine, the first Csopak Codex official tasting as well as the thematic vintage show "Furmint February" armoured me with the necessary knowledge on "practical level" as well.

4.) Content

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Section 5 – Conclusion

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Bibliography

The System of Quality and Origin Protection in Mád (whole text)

5.) Conclusion: Naturally, there is no war but a competition between the two varieties. Furmint is considerably ahead but the match is not fully over yet. Both varieties are capable to yield high quality, well balanced wines of good acidity reflecting also their terroir. As dry wine, comparable to the great whites of the world (Burgundy, Chenin, Rieslings), both varieties are in their infancy. Furmint of a handful of winemakers convinced already wine writers and aficionados around the world, these wines found their way to the top gastronomy. A good beginning. Olaszrizling is far even from this. Though the best samples show promising result and persuaded the author of the present essay at least. In the case of both varieties growers, winemakers, government officials and wine writers have a lot to do to achieve the desired result. As Furmint and Olaszring occupy around 10.000 ha, 1/6 of Hungary's vineyard, it is worth to invest to improve further their quality. Will they mean for us in a few years what Riesling and Grüner Wetliner mean for Austria?