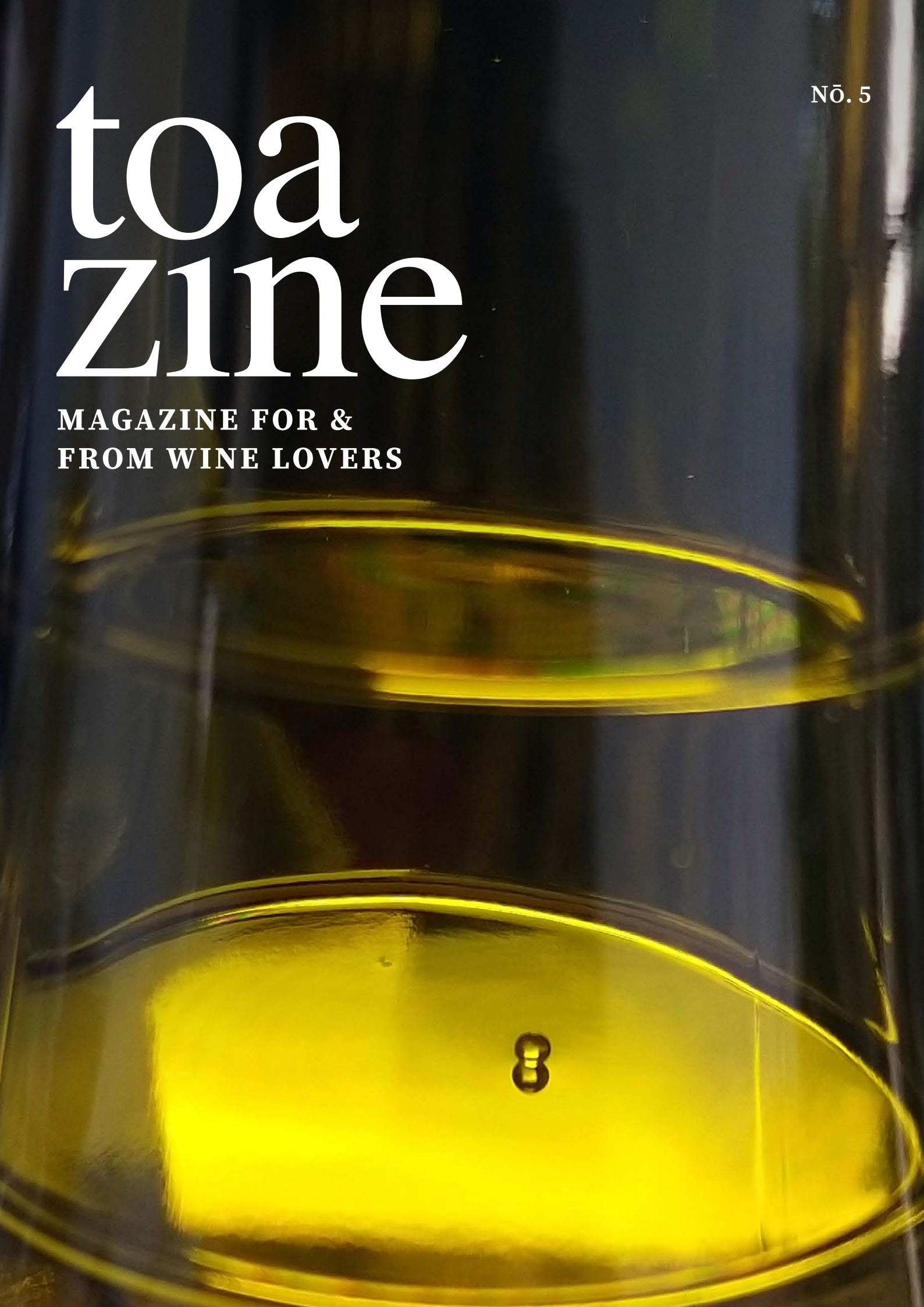


Nº. 5

toa zine

**MAGAZINE FOR &
FROM WINE LOVERS**





TOazine No.5

Welcome to Toazine No. 5! As usual, we cover various aspect of wine-growing and winemaking and focus on the people who lead the way – in the Austrian winelands and elsewhere. When it comes to the identity of Austrian wines, “cool climate” is one of the most discussed topics. Despite the climate change (see our interview with biodynamic grower Karl Fritsch), it is still possible and actually very important to reflect the uniqueness of the conditions we deal with in this country. “Cool”, easy to drink yet expressive wines are a consumer’s favorite and the mindful growers are very well capable of producing them (see the “Red Cool” article).



Another – highly disputed – topic is the acceptance and prevention of wine faults (see the “Winethinker” in this edition and the interview with Kreso Petrekovic). How “clean” do honest wines need to be? Does volatile acidity contribute to the character of a wine? As usual, the answers to those and many other questions are rarely yes or no, black or white. Wine is a living product made by humans, therefore, diversity and differentiation will always be a part of it. Have a look and feel free to tell us what you think!

Enjoy reading!
Yours TOA team

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A QUESTION OF TOLERANCE

Mice, horse stables, Camembert: you can find many actually strange aromas in wines, especially in those vinified in a “natural” way. Whether this is seen as a fault or as a contribution to the complexity of the taste depends on the perception of the observer. The solution: trust your own palate.

It was shortly after I started my career in the wine world. I went to a tasting of California icons (did that term actually exist 25 years ago?) and among all these great wines, a pirate was served. For the most part, the much more experienced attendees around me went into raptures after smelling it for the first time: "Ahh, that must be the one!" "It's the one, right?" "Definitely, only one smells like that!" So I carefully took a whiff and immediately thought I'd have to change industries again. They're all crazy, it's repulsive!

That was how the manure pile smelled at my grandma's farm. Those people noticed dung and slurry and they were freaking out with excitement. Someone at the table was wrong.

Later, I had several more chances to taste this wine, which was Château Montrose 1990, and then I went into raptures myself. What a great wine! The hint of *Brettanomyces* is what made it so unmistakably great! A few years later, I tried to convince those around me of the genius of Château Montus Reserve 1995 from Madiran. I could not understand why my wife told me to feel free to drink this “livestock wastewater” all by myself....

What had happened? Obviously, my perception had changed. With increasing tasting experience, my personal taste had also developed, and apparently my thresholds of acceptance had increased in the process. What I had perceived as

undrinkable a couple of years before, I later regarded as additional complexity. In the meantime, I had become quite tolerant when it comes to Brett in red wines. Once, a sommelier in the Jura served me a wine that I found to be flat out faulty. But since he had noticed that I am from the industry, I gave the wine a chance and paired to the roast duck, it actually tasted pretty good!

TOUGH TASTING

Natural Wines, vinification in amphorae and other hard to control methods which leave the must up to the forces of fermentation have put to test the tolerance of the wine industry. Some people were known to find at least one fault in almost every single wine, for others, the “new wine world” was a salvation and the only right way to make wines. In the process, volatile acidity, mousiness and all kinds of oxidation provided plenty of issues for discussion.

Obviously, it's nice to have elaborate talks on our favourite topic but the arguments quickly turned into a war of ideologies. Instead of “this tasted good to me” versus “this does not taste good”, we heard people say “all natural wines are great” versus “this is all faulty and undrinkable”.

Both claims were wrong back then and they are still wrong today. Vineyard management and handling in the cellar are not the only factors that determine the quality of a wine. Many times, they simply define the style which you can like or dislike. As we all know, taste is a pretty personal thing.

Nevertheless, let's embrace the reality: all of us (ok, at least the more open-minded and flexible people in the industry) have become accustomed to

the new styles and have more or less learned to deal with them. The somms will agree that many customers now do tolerate higher levels of volatility and tannins in the wines. This is certainly a result of many wines being macerated or skin fermented and being added lower levels of sulphites. A certain “earthiness” is nowadays also more readily accepted than it was 20 years ago.

Sulphur is one of the most fought over topics of all. This reliable and important preservative and fining agent has been stigmatized as being unnatural and not entitled to be around wine. Those who refrain from its use run a higher risk of wine faults. In order to harvest perfectly healthy grapes, they have to work their vineyards with maximum precision and care, that's a fact.

Here, too, a certain ideological overload is at play. In Austria, some 30 years ago, producers started to make clean and technically flawless wines on a regular basis. However, the following generation strived to go their own way and refrain from too many interventions. In doing so, they once again took higher risks, which their ancestors had prevented thanks to a lot of technology and chemicals. After all, is wine not simply grape juice that has been prevented from becoming vinegar?

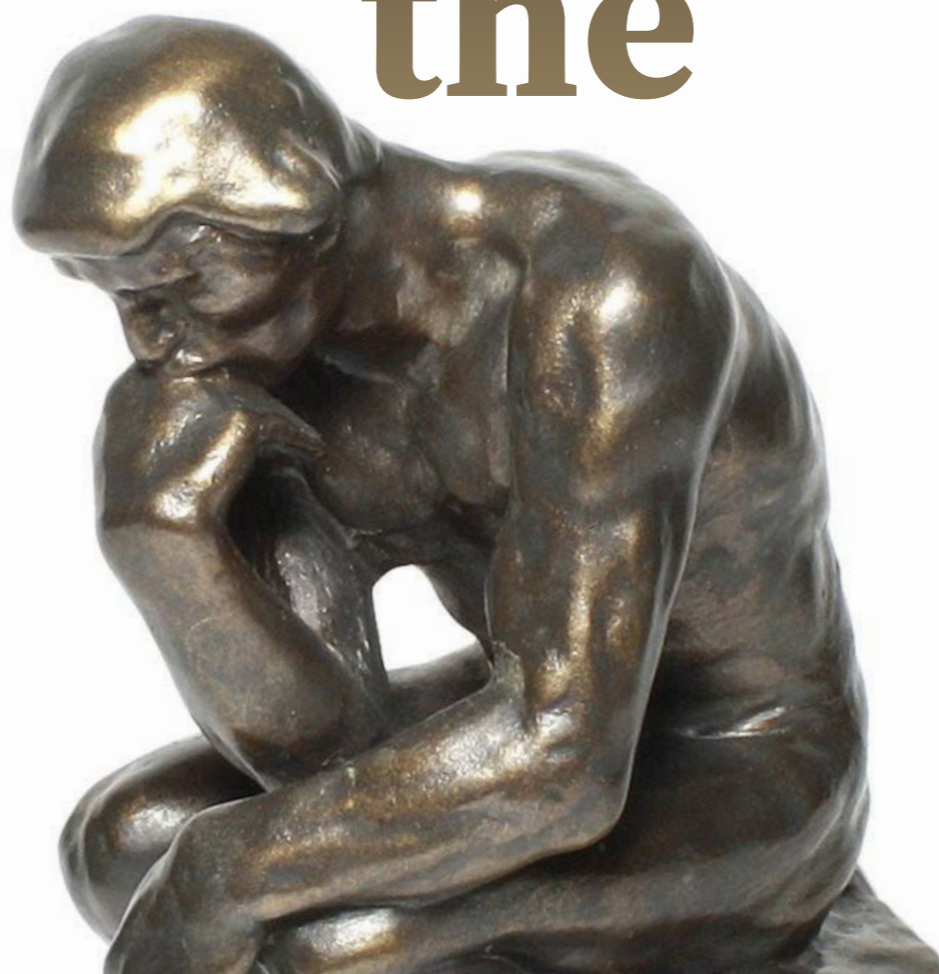
Sometimes, however, the wine people's patience is tested by wines not being approachable at certain stages. I recall a winegrower describing as the “ultimate expression of terroir” a smell that all tasters unequivocally labelled as tainted by cork (TCA). There's a limit to tolerance, I thought, only to see the very same wine shine brightly several weeks later. It's one of those mysteries of wine which make sure an entire profession (those of us trying to explain wine) have something to live off...

LIVE AND LET LIVE

People are different and everyone has their own taste - not only in wine or food, just think of music. The reasons for this are both individual and cultural. In many parts of the world, offal dishes and insects are more popular than in Europe. Are they better or worse because of that? Such a claim would be more than arrogant. Everyone sets his own limits and it indeed is difficult to find a consensus, as everyone has different experiences, a different taste and thresholds. However, as we are used to in wine and in this column, the idea is to live and let live. There are countless wines in the world and everyone will find something they like. Even if others don't like it...

the .thinker wine

On the other hand, there are wines that show great depth on the palate but offend the nose with smells of tar and sulphur, for days and in open bottles. Do consumers and critics really have to show endless understanding and patience towards all those wines just because they're going through difficult times? This rather resembles metaphysics and religion (“redemption through suffering”), not wine. Do you allow me to say it? Sulphur taint, it's a wine fault.



A Talk with Kreso Petrekovic

Kreso Petrekovic is a household name in the “natural wine” community. A vibrant, always outspoken personality, this former musician crossed the pond 2 decades ago and is now one of the reasons New Yorkers get to drink fantastic wines from Central Europe. Let’s take a dive into Kreso’s mind!



Kreso, please tell us about how you came into the wine biz.

I was raised in a wine region in Slovenia and my dad had a little winery, so already at 13, I was interested in wine and enjoyed that restaurant culture wine is part of. I came to the US, to L.A., when I was 20, playing music at the time. At the age of 23, I moved on to N.Y. and started to work in restaurants a couple of years later. Mind, nobody wanted to hire me, with this strange name of mine, it was awful. However, at my age, I knew so much more about wine than 99% of the people. In 2006, someone came up to me and told me about a guy selling Croatian wine, so they offered me work as a sales rep/ambassador. It was really tough at that time – nobody knew about these wines, recession hit, it was brutal.

In 2008, we had a small group of rather unknown importers and we combined to rent a space to save costs. That’s where I met Zev Rovine. This guy was different, he had different wines and I was already interested in organic, natural, non-conventional wines. That was how we started working together. In 2010, things started to really change: we abandoned our classic portfolio and brought in some new (now established and iconic)

natural producers, mostly from France. At first, we were like: “Who is ever gonna buy this?” 14 years later, you have to be on the list to buy these wines!

Around 4-5 years ago, I started to grow my own portfolio with producers from Central Europe. It was the right time to do it and we simply took it to another level. There’s huge interest for these wines now – just think of relatively cool climate regions like Burgenland or Slovakia, where you can source whites with good acidity and which are much more affordable than many French wines in this segment.

Your focus is on low-intervention wines from family growers. How did the awareness in NY develop over the years?

“Natural”, non-conventional wines have really taken off in the last 6-7 years. Almost every new restaurant that is going to open will have natural wines on the list. Chefs have also realized: “I’m cooking with natural ingredients, and I want wines that fit”. Those big elitist “Sommelier wines” from classical French and Italian regions (Barolo, Bordeaux, etc.) had kind of blocked the market for a long time. This has changed because chefs are now more in control than ever. They

don’t care how big an importer is, they want to have their mentality reflected on their wine list. The greatest restaurants in the world now have these wines. The Instagram culture with people posting what they drink also helped: “What are these guys pouring, where can I get this?”, everybody thought. Naturally, this had positive effects for the retail game as well.

What’s also interesting is that the end consumer was the one pushing more the restaurant culture as people were buying the wines in retail (or getting to drink them abroad) and later could not find

them on the restaurant wine lists. So after being asked a 100 times, the somms and chefs would have to do something about it. It took a while but now, we have a new, young generation of buyers. We have to adapt to what they want, we are like a fashion. Nobody wants to wear a suit from 20 years ago. We have to make and offer the wines for the upcoming generation – also keeping in mind nature and climate change, obviously! This new generation has embraced and is in love with this playful, cheerful way of bringing the wines to a new level of culture. Wine used to be very tiring, old-man style, sleepy and it didn’t have an appeal to the young audience. It’s gotten fancy and cool now are we’re contributing to this positive movement.

Low-intervention wines may require explanations and education – how do you guide your customers?

Many consumers are extremely well educated today when it comes to wine. We even see a next step in the development of the natural wine market – the collector’s market. We have not seen this before but these wines are now becoming part of the collector’s community. Some wines (that are 25-30 € ex cellar) are now reaching prices of up to € 1,000 among the collectors because of the demand. Crazy! Imagine that people from the big finance groups are not taking their clients to steak houses anymore. They go to places like The Four Horsemen because they wanna be cool, wanna show their client around! People are getting more and more educated and once they get into this community, for some, money is no factor.

Do you see any trends in your market when it comes to wine styles?

A big trend obviously is “orange wine”. These wines used to be pushed by the sommeliers but rather the “classic” range such as wines from Collio (Gravner, Radikon...). Then we had a second wave when the consumers were

finding out about these wines by themselves. Now you see skin contact whites in every single place, poured by the glass and basically impossible to keep in stock at a certain price point.

And what about Austria?

The natural wine movement in Austria is something remarkable. It really changed the path of sales, put the Austrian wine on a level it has never been before. I have been to many tastings organized by the official bodies, for classic wineries and pushing them with lots of money – I’m talking about millions probably being invested in the US-market, for years and years. But when the natural wines came in, like Preisinger for example, these guys came in and swooped the world, not only the US. This has really elevated the understanding and the demand, the iconicism of Austrian wines to a different level. Maybe it’s not that much wine in volume but there is huge respect now.

What’s your take on wine faults? Volatile acidity or mousiness – how high is your threshold of acceptance?

I think that wines, first of all, no matter what they are, have to be good, delicious. Pursuing this path, you can have faults, yes. But these faults should not be the primary factor in your wine. That’s not part of my mission, that’s not the mission of the wineries I want to work with. Of course, there is no absolute beauty in wine because beauty is counter-balanced by faults. So in a certain degree, you have to have them, it’s like having a soul. Wine without volatile acidity, it’s not wine, it’s juice. However, I don’t want the fruit to be dominated by VA. With natural wine, we’re trying to focus on fruit more than anything, not the oak, not tannin, not power but what the terroir has to say. Faults like mousiness or VA can happen in certain years and everybody is trying to avoid them. I definitely do not want to import wines that are mousy and I can say that our portfolio is a “clean” natural book – we

work with people who would not allow themselves to produce wines that are mousy or full of VA.

There are many reasons for faults in wines (hygiene, high pH, not doing the right things at the right time...) but sometimes it’s simply because you have chosen the wrong path for what that wine wants to be! Just take “orange wine” in some places: macerating wines with very low acidity and high pH-levels which will potentially result in mouse. And a lot of people are doing that because it’s a trend and they wanna get sales!

I really believe that natural wines are an upgrade of classicism. They upon up more, they are not stripped down with heavy amounts of sulphur and filtering so you’re getting the core of the wine to be a lot better. You’re drinking more substance, you’re drinking the extract and that is the message from the vineyard to your mouth.

What do you think about official certifications?

I think the organic label is really important. Also on the wholesale level, the way the wine is understood, the organic certification definitely helps. People can identify it quickly, it’s a very easy thing to do, they read the label and know, “Yes, this is what I want.” I believe it matters if somebody has the organic or biodynamic label. You realize that some growers go the extra step – of course, some can do it, others not.

Some growers are proud of not adding any SO₂. Would you and why?

I’m not dogmatic with anything, you know. I think sulphur is an incredibly important thing in wine and the wine would not produce sulphur if it didn’t need it to protect itself. Adding sulphur (on a homeopathic level) also depends on what you’re trying to achieve as a winemaker – what your message is. If you’re aiming for a wine that is to be

drunk early, that is light, fresh, fruity and inexpensive with high acidity, it's not really necessary to sulphur it. In my winery in the north, the wines are "on their feet", alive, they don't need sulphur, adding it would make them fall asleep. But in the south, the wines have more power, they are bigger and if I put in a little bit of sulphur, there's absolutely no difference in the wine, it's like adding a dash of salt into a lot of water. The wine absorbs it and it also needs it because of many factors like longer fermentations, protecting them to go clean, more tannin, etc. To me, it's really how you understand what you're doing. It's really stupid to make wines without sulphur in places where it's not possible... It should not be about following trends when it comes to SO₂.

Everybody speaks about it but many of the best growers are not allowed to use it due to law restrictions. What do you think about the importance of origin?

This is not really of importance for us – also thanks to the early French natural pioneers who had stepped out of the appellations. Just you think of a producer who uses all sorts of stuff (enzymes & imported yeast, herbicides and pesticides, maybe all of this from China or God knows from where), did all sorts of filtering and put in all kinds of chemicals and he got the appellation. And those who only used what's there, they did not get the AOC. So they left the system. I don't care about the appellation on any of my wines. I know where the wines come from, I tell the story which is very important. You know, nobody comes in and asks: "Do you have Burgenland?". People are looking for the producer! The clients are different now, they ask for certain styles: "Do you have any chillable red?" So I give them Blaufränkisch, which they can chill and go to the park.

Please pick 2 wines from the TOA family and tell us why you like them in particular.

I love Flora! There's something in that wine, maybe the way Michael Gindl ticks, there's so much energy in this one! It's been one of my favourite wines in the last year. But I also like the Buteo 12, I think it's done incredibly well.



Karl Fritsch

„Biodynamics is enthusiasm, life & confidence.“

Austrian wine boasts many types of producers, vintners, wineries. Regardless of origin, they differ in size, philosophy and reputation. The family-owned and operated business is still the dominant type, although the average size has increased significantly in the last couple of decades. There are many pretty small businesses, some medium sized ones and only a couple of really huge players. The proportion of organic and biodynamic wineries is extraordinary – in fact, Austria is leading the world when it comes to relative percentage. What about styles and tastes? You will find many, obviously, from “classic” to “low-intervention”, sometimes both and sometimes in between. In the last decade or so, the best growers have put an ever-growing emphasis on their vineyards, their soil and vines. No matter the style one is aiming for, healthy vines are the condition sine que non, the backbone of genuine, unmasked quality. One of these growers is Karl Fritsch.

Karl Fritsch (Junior) took over the reins of his already well-regarded estate in 1999 and it was only a couple of years later (in 2006) that he decided to embark on a journey towards the wholistic circle of biodynamic farming. Being one of the founding members of the respect-BIO-DYN group, Karl truly believes not only in the importance of terroir (origin,

varieties, soil, microclimate, human factor) but that biodynamic cultivation integrating cosmic influences is crucial so to reach its highest expression. Fritsch’s biodyn “toolkit” is state of the art: home-made compost to ensure sustainable growth, dynamized 500 & 501 in order to harmonize growth and ripening cycles considering lunar phases. He encourages biodiversity (plants, animals, beneficial insects but also parasites) in the vineyards to counterbalance monoculture and cares for his vines by applying teas and extracts to keep the vines vital and strengthen their immune system.

The Fritsch portfolio is composed of typical Wagram whites such as Grüner Veltliner, Roter Veltliner and Riesling but Karl also masters expressive reds (Pinot Noir, Zweigelt). From easy drinking, entry-level wines up to exceptional single vineyard gems (Schlossberg, Mordthal...), they all offer unmasked typicity, great freshness and potential. Karl Fritsch also proudly vinifies a couple of hands-off, low-intervention wines (Purist, Materia Prima). He does not consider them to be a niche product, they are simply a different stylistic expression of his wholistic approach to vines and wines.

We interviewed the Fritsch team to get a first-hand insight on their way of working and current developments.

Traditional, innovative, classic or avant-garde – people in the wine industry like to categorize. Where do you see your place?

For us, a differentiation between “traditional” wine styles and biodynamic approaches does not really make sense. Biodynamic viticulture is not reserved for “natural wines”, its main focus is the vineyard. It is crucial to keep our soils healthy in order to reach physiological ripeness as early as possible so we can harvest perfect grapes. In doing so, we are able to vinify elegant wines full of character which reflect their terroir. There is a lot at stake because we need the next generations to work with vital, living soils. That’s our most important duty.

You have been pursuing the biodynamic way for many years. Do you think all growers should take that path?

We would appreciate it, absolutely. It would be a great step forward to see bigger, connected winegrowing areas being worked at least organically, not only singular, dispersed plots. We all know that it’s far from beneficial if your direct neighbor treats his land using all types of chemicals...

The world of wine is changing rapidly. How did the Fritsch estate develop in the last decade?

When it comes to our wines, we have seen the alcohol levels decreasing on a regular basis. The wines have also become more expressive, and they picture their terroir even better than before. We have also adapted our way of dealing with warm, dry vintages as they have become more and more frequent. We have trust in our biodynamic way of working: we know that we can harvest the grapes at an early point of time without getting any unripe, “green” flavors.

Next to a „classic“ portfolio of monovarietal and mostly single vineyard-based wines, you also produce what many like to call “natural” wines. How do your buyers embrace these two styles? Does the Schlossberg guy als buy Materia Prima?

What we see on a daily basis is that there are without any doubt consumers who are open to both ranges. Let’s not

forget that biodynamics, after all, is not a way of cultivating your land meant for skin fermented wines or Pet Nats only. It is rather the fundament for all wines. Which style of wine you’re aiming at and how you’re going to process the (healthy) fruit is a decision you take in



the cellar. In any case, the partners we are working with do not limit themselves to one style (classic or “natural”), they are interested in both!

Let’s talk about climate change. What are we to expect in the future and how do you prepare the estate for things to come?

It’s going to be a challenge, that’s for sure. From our point of view, the biggest challenge is not necessarily going to be the rise in temperature but extreme weather events such as torrential rain, storms and hail. They are affecting the vineyards more and more. We try to protect them by adjusting the canopy, for example. We defoliate the areas exposed to the East and thus the morning sun and keep the western side in the shade. We work on expanding our knowledge and skills when it comes to cover crops and soil cultivation, also by exchanging advice with other winegrowers. We are confident that we are on the right track and never stop learning. Climate change is also an issue regarding our grape varieties

as Grüner Veltliner does not really like the heat. There are interesting varieties such as Chenin blanc or other whites used in Southern France for instance, which are said to cope with the heat very well. Who knows, maybe one day we’re going to give it a try in a small vineyard plot...



The Herb Witch Project

Litha – Summer Solstice – Turning Point

The summer solstice is the astronomical beginning of summer. At this moment, we witness the longest day and the shortest night of the year in the northern hemisphere. It is also a significant turning point in the cycle of the year – from now on, the days will be shorter and the nights longer again, the second half of the year begins. We also experience an energetic turnaround, a time of reflection when powers are peaking, life is at its fullest and the light at its brightest. The sun, the earth and of course all life are in a state of abundance and strength.

The sun is powerful and intense, she drives the unfolding of nature. Those days filled with light give people, animals and plants an incredible vitality. Everything grows, blossoms and thrives, the abundance of colors and shapes is enormous. At the time of the summer solstice, you will mostly see plants with yellow blossoms but also many blue ones. Their colors show us how they relate to the sky, which shines primarily in those colors at this moment of time. Red is another strong and powerful summer color displayed in ripe fruits such as cherries, strawberries, raspberries and red currants.

Many valuable medicinal plants also bloom at the summer solstice and can be harvested at the peak of the sun. It's

when St. John's wort, arnica, inula, marigolds and many other sun herbs give us their fullest power.

The old Celts worshipped the highest solar power (God) and fertility (Goddess). During *Litha*, the two deities reached the peak of their powers. On the longest and brightest day of the year, people honored the light by lighting large solstice fires, which formed the center of their celebrations. In the Alpine regions, the fires are still lit high up on the mountains as the connection to the divine has always been particularly strong there. These fires are visible from afar and their light is said to bless the entire land. Originally, the solstice fires were made with nine kinds of sacred wood, which were piled up in particular order.

Also, fireballs or firewheels were rolled from the mountain slopes representing the power of the waning sun. For this purpose, wheels were covered with straw, lit and rolled down the slopes. As they rolled down, the fire gradually died out. This symbolized the weakening sunlight.

So-called solstice wreaths or solstice herb bunches were also tied from various flowering, fragrant herbs and blossoms. These were then hung in the stable or above the house door to

protect against evil spirits and demons. The binding has always been a magical act and was often performed for protective purposes.

Spirals are the most important symbols of both solstices. They symbolize the significant turning point marked by these celebrations - the beginning and at the same time the end which again is a new beginning. The spiral is perpetual, it is always in motion and never stands still. It is the symbol of change. When we concentrate on the spiral, we often recognize the path that leads to ourselves. The spiral is therefore a sign of the inner conversion of man, his spiritual and physical renewal. When we enter the spiral, we let go of the past. Approaching the center, we sense the turning point and the connection with the divine levels of all being. Leaving the spiral is a symbol of the step into the new. The right-turning spiral is a symbol of creation as everything unfolds from a given point while the left-turning spiral is a symbol of the return to unity. The path leads us from the outside into the inside and thus back to our own center, to our origin.

At the summer solstice, "sun plants" and plants with the sun's "signature" have always been of great importance. The best known is certainly St. John's wort.

It literally stores the sunlight and banishes gloomy winter depression when applied as a tea, incense or tincture. Its red oil is seen as a transformation of the sunlight: it supports our soul in the dark season and helps us to maintain a sunny state of mind. It is equally effective against depression and nervous disorders. It blooms most beautifully around the summer solstice when it also develops its highest healing power. Traditionally, the herb is collected between the solstice (June 21) and St. John's Day (June 24). When the sun reaches its highest point on June 21, the longest day of the year, St. John's wort spreads all its strength and power. Healers then collect it and make teas, elixirs or oil.

Sun plants are all plants that resemble small suns and usually display yellow or orange flower colors. Among them marigolds, arnica, sunflowers, inula, St. John's wort and many others. They are always related to our soul. They bring back the light, brighten up our minds and remove negative feelings such as anger, resentment and aggression. On the energetic level, sun herbs provide a strengthening influence - they straighten up, give courage and strength, they make us self-confident and self-assured. What's more, yellow flowering sun herbs have always been considered very strong protective plants. Their yellow light unfolds a beautiful and positive power dispelling all negative influences.

Mullein is one of the most striking sun plants, sometimes growing over 2 meters high. It has an incredibly powerful effect on us. Like many other plants with the sun's signature, it helps us to walk through life upright and proud. At the summer solstice it was used as a "thunder candle", warding off thunder and lightning unlike any other plant.

The marigold, also called "yellow sun" or "sun bride", is dedicated to the goddess Freya and is still used today as a medicinal plant. It is also called "the flower that never wilts" as it blooms throughout the summer. A plant that so strongly represents the power of light and sun naturally has a particularly high significance at the summer solstice. It is included in every solstice herb bouquet or wreath. Marigold ointments prepared at the summer solstice are twice as healing. To this day, marigold is one of the most popular medicinal plants, especially when it comes to wound care - it has anti-inflammatory, wound-healing, antibacterial and contracting properties.

LUGHNASADH – CELEBRATIONS OF HARVEST AND BREAD

The Celtic festival of *Lughnasadh* is the first harvest festival in the annual cycle. The year is well under way, it is high summer and the life force sees another energetic peak. The days are still long and all life is marked by great abundance, lightness and summer joy.



In former times, the energetic climax of this season was shaped by the ripening of the grain and its harvest. The month of August is therefore the season of the reapers who moves over the land with her sickle and cuts the grain. They celebrated the annual festival of Lughnasadh and the magic of harvesting the grain and herbs. For in addition to the ripe grain, it was above all the medicinal plants that were highly revered at this festival, collected in rituals, bound into herb bunches and processed for the upcoming winter.

At Lughnasadh, the god Lugh was worshipped as the embodiment of the shining god of the sun who gave people his blessing. The name Lugh means "the bright one" or "the shining one". In honor of his foster mother "Tailtiu", Lugh introduced the festival of Lughnasadh. At that time, Tailtiu was worshipped as a great goddess, the goddess of the earth and agriculture. On behalf of the god of the sun and grain, Lugh slowly loses his strength in August. While he was strong and radiant at Litha in June, he is now gradually getting weaker in order to retire completely in the belly of his mother earth during the fall.

The dying of the male deity always symbolizes the dying of the vegetation. Knowing that the seeds for the coming year have long since been formed and that the wheel of life keeps turning despite death, people celebrated the male god at Lughnasadh, who sacrifices himself for mankind.

The reaper was also worshipped at this festival. She represented the aspect of the female deity, who slowly changed from the red fertile goddess into the black, old and wise goddess. At Lughnasadh, she had the task of crossing the land with her sickle and performing

the deathly cut to the grain. In doing so, she set the right time for harvesting. She had the strength to cut and thus ensured the survival of the people. The first bread of the year was baked in her honor and sacrificed to the greater good.

Thus, Lughnasadh was the festival of abundance, harvest, grain and worship of the fertile mother earth and her male companion, who sacrificed himself in the approaching autumn, loving mankind, feeling responsible for it and ensuring the continuation of life.

Lughnasadh was a celebration that symbolized the cycle of life and the connection between death and life in a very special way. The harvested fruits allowed us to survive the winter. The seeds were formed and everyone knew that despite the approaching death of nature, life will reawaken in the spring. It is an eternal cycle of sowing, growing, flowering, fruiting, harvesting and passing away.

During this magical time of the Marian feast days, the herb women used to collect herbs with the biggest healing powers as these unfolded their triple power during this period of time. Provisions were made for the autumn and the house remedy kit was filled. Herbalists collected all the important medicinal herbs they needed for the autumn and the hard winter months. They tied a herb bouquet with all important herbs and the center of which was formed by the mullein, they dried tea herbs and prepared different elixirs.

At that time, women's herbs were also very important as they strengthened the power of women. Lady's mantle is one of the most important "women's plants", as its name suggests. It is an important protective plant for women and has a positive effect on many female illnesses. That is why it is used for almost all women's teas and women-specific elixirs. What is so special about this plant is that you can find a drop of liquid in its leaf calyx early in the morning. There are many myths surrounding this drop

and it was always considered a magic remedy. It also used to be applied by women as an elixir of beauty. Later, the plant was given the name Alchemilla, which derives from "alchemy". The alchemists tried to extract gold from that dewdrop, which they called "heavenly water". Meanwhile, it is known that it is not collected dew, but actually a liquid (the so-called gutation drop) that is actively secreted by the plant itself. This drop was also sacred to the Druids, as it served them for ritual purifications and was integrated into various other rituals.

Red clover is another important women's plant and should be part of every women's tea. Its balancing effect is especially beneficial during the menopause. The yarrow is also considered a special herb. Its crushed leaves are a great cure for open wounds, to arrest bleeding and support healing. It is a plant of the light, which is why its flower essence can even purify our aura.

The sickle is the symbol of the Lughnasadh festival and even today, it has a symbolic meaning. It is used during Lughnasadh as a cutting tool that not only cuts the grain, but also removes old issues, entanglements, diseases and other unwanted things. It has the exact shape of the waning moon and thus represents waning, severing and releasing powers. As a cutting tool, it has always been considered sacred, magical and very powerful. The reaper also gives us the power to let things go, things that stand in our way, limit us or prevent us from embracing our powers. With the sickle, we celebrate at Lughnasadh the rituals of letting go, cutting through and setting boundaries so we can again benefit from our strength.

Well then! Leave the house, observe the living animal world, look at the colorful flowers of the summer and enjoy its fruits! Enjoy the ripe grain processed into fresh bread and connect with the power of the sun and the reaper. Have a nice rest of the summer!

Yours Birgit



RED COOL COOL COOL

The world of wine is changing fast. Old clichés and narratives are not valid any longer as a new generation of wine consumers embraces wine as an easy-going companion to their lifestyles. Many factors come into play here; for instance, wine has become a part of urban culture and is not regarded as an elitist, old-fashioned object anymore. Health awareness, climate change and the value of sustainable consumer goods are becoming more and more important. The good vintners are trying to adapt to these new challenges and farming practices and also to satisfy the consumer's desire for lower alcohol wines, a huge trend nowadays.

DRINKABILITY

Fresh white wines with good acidity and moderate alcohol levels have gained a lot of popularity among customers in the last decades - and rightly so. Fruit-driven, refreshing wines are less tiring and can be enjoyed either on their own or with light food styles (think vegetarian, vegan or similar) that are ever trendier in these days. In the last couple of years, customers started to ask for equally chillable red wines that could serve as light-footed food companions; not too tannic, not overly powerful and focused on a joyful fruit expression. Such wines do not need the notorious “room temperature”, in the contrary! They can and should be chilled down to 10-12 °C so they will reach some 14°C in the glass. This way the tannins are perceived as smoother and the fruit is enhanced – exactly what consumers are looking for in these wine styles.

LIGHT RED OR DARK PINK?

These light-in-style, cool reds offer another competitive edge as the color of a red wine is not irrelevant to consumers (the eyes want to be pleased), just think of the current Rosé craze. The length of maceration, the method of pressing and the varietal set the tone. Austria's red varietals are highly suitable for light-footed reds as Zweigelt, Blaufränkisch or St. Laurent do not showcase particularly thick skins and furthermore have the benefit of fresh red berry fruit and good acidity, especially for the latter two. Thanks to short time macerations and fermentations of a couple of days (as opposed to weeks or even months for old school Cabs, Nebbiolos etc.) it is up to the wine drinker to decide whether he or she's having a red or rosé. But why the hell not? Johannes Zillinger's Numen rosé or Johannes Trapl's Uni6 do not differ greatly from a light Zweigelt or Pinot Noir, speaking of color, of course. At some point, there's no point in categorizing according to color, provided the wine is balanced and fulfills the expectations.

THE VINEYARD RECIPE

Speaking of balance, it is by far the most crucial and at the same time most difficult feat to achieve when it comes to cool reds. The climate is one reason and one of the most challenging ones since draught periods and heat spikes have since long kicked in in Austria's formerly cool, “northern” regions (also see our interview with Fritsch in this edition). Picking early is often not a choice anymore but a necessity as the start of the growing seasons is taking place more and more early on an almost yearly basis. Picking unripe grapes is not the way to do it, obviously, so timely picking can take place in October as well, depending on vintage and variety. Sustainable farming methods do offer a way out as you can see (and taste) in numerous more or less red wines from dedicated winegrowers. They take care of their soils (biodiversity, cover crops, mulching, etc.) and vines (strengthening the plants, canopy management) so to prevent dehydration, sunburn and thus uneven or insufficient ripeness and most important – allow the grapes to reach phenolic ripeness early. The growers have also understood that sugar levels do not necessarily correspond to ripeness. Indeed, you can pick fully ripe red grapes at potential 10% vol./alc. provided you know what you're doing and when you're doing it. All in all, producing good low-alc reds is not an automatic, it is indeed a great accomplishment!

VINIFICATION

Once you brought in healthy, balanced grapes, the vinification is no rocket science. Obviously, it's important to preserve the fresh fruit character and not to have an excessive tannin load, so quick, gentle pressing and quick fermentations will be your methods of choice. Carbonic or semi-carbonic elements can be another great thing in order to enhance liveliness (and add different aromatics). Usually, these reds will then be aged in steel tanks and/or large used oak, for 6-10 months, maybe a bit longer, depending on the variety and the style the grower is aiming at. The need for fining, filtration or more than homeopathic SO₂ levels will be limited – these cheerful wines should and will be drunk in their youth. Let's get re(a)dy and check out some juicy examples...



WACHTER-WIESLER HANDGEMENGE ROT 2019

The small-is-beautiful region of Southern Burgenland is known for Blaufränkisch above all but as in all of Austria, many growers do cultivate some plots of Zweigelt. Christoph Wachter uses both grapes to compose his popular red *Handgemenge* (see Toazine No. 4 for the meaning of this fun word). A mix of younger and older vines (5-25 years)

grown on iron-rich clay and green slate soils in Deutsch-Schützen and Eisenberg is picked by hand, fermented for 7-12 days and subsequently aged for 12 months in traditional oak barrels of different sizes (500 – 3000 L). Taste? Blaufränkisch lends structure and acidity, Zweigelt some nice cherry fruit. Casual drinking at its best.

Alcohol: 12,5%
Picked: mid September

A lot of Zweigelt is grown all over Austria's wine regions and obviously, you can see all sorts of styles. Michael's approach of a wholistic, biodyn cultivation yields genuine, unadulterated wines which speak of their soils, climate and the grower's touch. For his *Nanu*, Michael prefers Zweigelt's original name “Rotburger”. There's not much similarity

to “classic” Zweigelts anyway, as *Nanu* shows an unusual earthy spiciness with great acidity. The handpicked grapes are fermented with 50% stems in amphorae, remain there for 6 months before being racked into 500 – 1000 L oak barrels for another 10 months. Unfined, unfiltered, highly individual and fun to drink.

Alcohol: 11,6%
Picked: on various occasions
throughout October



MICHAEL GINDL NANU 2019



CHRISTOPH HOCH HOLLENBURGER ROT NV

A cool red wine (actually any wine) does not need to be a single vintage wine. Christoph Hoch is a skillful master of blends and is always looking for freshness and drinkability at low alcohol levels. His home region Hollenburg is perfect for cool climate wines such as his superbly refreshing *Hollenburger Rot*. Zweigelt and Blauer Portugieser are picked usually at the beginning of

Alcohol: 9,5%
Picked: beginning of September

GRUBER RÖSCHITZ ST. LAURENT GALGENBERG 2018

St. Laurent is a superstar when it comes to light reds. This varietal stops producing sugar after reaching ripeness all by itself, thus naturally limiting alcohol levels to 12-12,5%. Like its relatives from the Pinot Noir family, it displays soft tannins and the typical fruit character is dominated by red berries with some

forest-like earthy notes. The Gruber family's approach to this Austrian classic: timely picking at perfect ripeness, fermentation in open vats for 6 days, immediately pressed thereupon and finally aged for 8 months in old barriques, very little SO₂.

Alcohol: 12,2%
Picked: end of September

September, macerated for a rather short time and subsequently aged in used barriques and Austrian oak barrels ranging from 500 – 1000 L. Only a tiny amount of 10-15 mg of SO₂ is added before bottling, no fining nor filtration. If you're looking for a fruity, soft-tannin, bright-color red to be served at max. 14° C, this one should be your choice!



HOCHDEUTSCH WEIN ALPINE HERBS RED

Julie never stops. Pushing quality. Developing new concepts. Working hard. After successfully establishing her botanical sparklings, she is about to launch two new, equally fascinating products: the *alpine herbs* series. Home-grown, biodyn farmed plants are carefully dried and brewed to a tea which is later blended with freshly fermenting

wine must. As opposed to the botanical sparklings, the alpine herbs range is still, meaning that the blend finishes fermentation before being bottled (without any additives, of course!). The red edition's botanicals are rosehips and lavender which contribute to a bone-dry, cheerful experience. Not your usual cool red but nonetheless something truly singular.

Alcohol: 7%
Picked: lavender in June,
rosehip in September

ERICH MACHHERNDL PULP FICTION RED XII 2019

The Wachau is obviously a cool climate white wine region, sure. However, most of the vintners do cultivate red varieties as well, Zweigelt being the go-to grape. Erich is a special guy and thus likes unusual grapes, such as Syrah and uses it for his out-of-the-box *Pulp Fiction* series. The number XII from 2019 is a stunning example of a northern-style,

light-footed red: it is fermented in a stainless steel overflow tank and punched down twice a day. After 6-10 weeks the juice is racked without pressing into old 300 L barriques. Aged for 8-10 months, the wine is bottled unfiltered and unsulphured. Superb acidity, lavender, cinnamon, you shouldn't ask for more.

Alcohol: 11,7%
Picked: mid October





MARTIN OBENAUS
MO ROT 2020

Another blend which uses Blauer Portugieser is Martin's Mo Rot. This central European variety has long been in discredit (the old story of bad treatment and excessive yields) but is in fact a great grape for cool reds. Blended with Zweigelt in this super-charming Obenaus red, it showcases soft tannins and nice freshness, while the Zweigelt adds appealing cherry fruit.

Alcohol: 10,5%
Picked: mid-end September

KARL FRITSCH
RUPPERSTAHLER
PINOT NOIR 2019

Although located in a region mostly dominated by whites (Grüner, Riesling...), the Fritsch estate has always been also a champion of expressive reds. The cool climate grape Pinot Noir feels particularly well at home in their biodynamically farmed vineyards. Besides the famous "Pinot Noir P" selection, the *Rupperstahler Pinot Noir* (formerly known as

Exlberg) is a lighter, more everyday Pinot, fruit-driven on the red berry spectrum yet structured and with good aging potential. 25 years old vines, low yields of max. 4500 liters/ha, destemmed, spontaneously fermented/macerated for 12 days and aged for 12 months in used 500 L barrels, voilà the recipe for an absolute crowd pleaser!

Alcohol: 12,6%
Picked: mid-end September



The making-of holds little surprise: the grapes are macerated for 3-7 days depending on the respective lot and then fermented and aged in a large, old 4000 L barrel for roughly 10 months. The wine rests on its lees until bottling and receives a little bit of SO₂ just before being filled. A chilled by-the-glass must-have with a biodyn conscience!



CLAUS PREISINGER
BAUFRÄNKISCH
ERDELUFTGRASUNDBREBEN
2019

For biodyn icon Claus Preisinger, the picture of his terroir and its expression in outstanding reds (and whites) does not need heavy colors. You can taste this in many of his easy-going wines such as Puzta Libre or the KalkundKiesel range but the principle also applies to his top notch wines. The *Blaufränkisch Erdeluftgrasundreiben* ("earth, air, grass and vines") is picked from 32 years

Alcohol: 11,5%
Picked: beginning - mid September

ERWIN TINHOF
TINHOF NOIR 2019

The Burgenland is Austria's warmest region, so picking cool reds is a challenge. Luckily, experienced winegrowers such as Erwin know how to do it. For his juicy, easy-drinking, bright red fruit driven *Tinhof Noir*, he picks Zweigelt, Blaufränkisch and St. Laurent on different occasions and from young vines who reach physiological ripeness earlier than

old ones. The musts ferment in steel tanks and are pressed immediately to keep extraction and tannins low. The 3 wines are then blended and the whole ages in neutral vessels (steel tank, old large barrels). St. Laurent is an asset here, providing the extra portion of finesse and acidity.

Alcohol: 12,6%
Picked: mid-end September



old vines on mostly calcareous soils, fermented in amphorae (partly semi-carbonic, partly carbonic with stems) and matures in 1000 L amphorae for 8 months. In this natural born beauty, exceptional freshness meets alluring red fruit and spiciness. Self-assured and uncompromising, just like the man behind it.



JOHANNES TRAPL
UNI6 2020

It's not easy to tell whether Johannes' *Uni6* is a red or rosé but as the name suggests, this is absolutely not the point. As in people, it's the character that really counts. Great taste at low alcohol levels is a Trapl-guarantee so to say. Even in his most dense, "powerful" wines, Johannes hardly ever exceeds 12% as he manages to harvest ripe, balanced grapes at low sugar contents. The *Uni6* is pretty

unique: it is composed mainly of Blaufränkisch and Sankt Laurent (this may vary in every vintage) and vinified and macerated in various vessels (oak, steel, amphora). *Uni6* is not about varietals or vineyards, it's an extremely drinkable, fruit-driven, yet complex light-red-dark-pink wine without any nonsense added, as Johannes likes to put it. Highly gastronomic!

Alcohol: 10,5%
Picked: mid September

WABI SABI
LOVE & PASSION RED

Love and passion is exactly what is needed to produce easy drinking, refreshing wines. In this vibrant, juicy blend, Zweigelt and Blauer Portugieser (a less known Central European grape which can yield very nice wines when treated the right way) come together and are supplemented by a dash of Müller-Thurgau for an extra portion of

liveliness and acidity (the use of white grapes in light-footed reds has become more and more popular among wine-growers who care more about the style of their wine than its official classification). 3 days only on skins, aged in big old barrels for 10 months, unfiltered, hands-off, heart-on.

Alcohol: 11,5%
Picked: beginning – mid September



REINHOLD KRUTZLER
EISENBERG
BLAUFRÄNKISCH 2020

The mix of soils – climate – variety – winegrowers is pretty unique in the Eisenberg region. Even powerful single vineyard Blaufränkisch wines will always show palpable acidity and this refreshing earthy spiciness so typical of the origin. You fancy Eisenberg the easiest way? Try Krutzler's *Blaufränkisch 2020*.

Handpicked from 4-15 years old vines, fermented in closed vats and pressed after 6-10 days, malolactics in stainless steel, aged in large oak barrels for 6 months - no big fuss. As 2020 was a cooler than usual vintage, this archetypical Blaufränkisch will give you even more aromatic finesse and vigour.

Alcohol: 12,5%
Picked: end of September

JOHANNES ZILLINGER
JZ VELUE ZWEIFELT 2020

Johannes' „JZ velue“ line focuses on drinkability and a pure expression of the household grapes of Weinviertel. The *JZ velue Zweigelt* is assembled from 3 different vineyards (a northern slope, a southern one and a windy hilltop side, aged 20-30 years) on loess and calcareous sandstone. The fruit is fermented

for a sufficient 5-days in an open vat and subsequently aged on its lees in old 500 L oak barrels. Johannes recommends a drinking temperature of 11 – 14 °C and we couldn't agree more. Light-footed, super refreshing, like crushed cherries in a bottle!

Alcohol: 11,5%
Picked: mid September





THOMAS STRAKA
BLAUFRÄNKISCH
EISENBERG DAC 2019

The grandmaster of Welschriesling has reds on offer as well, of course. Southern Burgenland obliges, Blaufränkisch it is. Tom vinifies a couple of outstanding Blaufränkisch, from entry level to old-vine single vineyard. The *Eisenberg DAC* label is probably the purest expression of the green schist Eisenberg terroir. Even though this has 13% alc., it is more

refreshing and vivid than many other reds. The reason is the grape's outstanding acidity, its sour cherry spectrum and the unmistakable iron-like minerality. Handpicked, macerated for 8 days, fermented and aged in large oak for 12 months. No more needed, Tom took care of the rest in the vineyards.

Alcohol: 13%
Picked: mid-end September

Jasmin and Rainer Hack live and work in the amazingly beautiful Sausal region in Southern Styria. Their steep high-altitude vineyards with unique schist and quartzite soils require an enormous amount of manual work and dedication. The couple cultivates their land biodynamically and vinifies mostly white

wines from regional varietals. The only red on offer is a true representative of their terroir: early picked, just 4-5 days on skins and aged in used barrels. Bright red fruit, palpable acidity and smooth tannins, to be served chilled like the Warga-Hack white wines. GlouGlou – nomen est omen!

Alcohol: 11,5%
Picked: mid September



WEINGUT WARGA-HACK
GLOUGLOU RED





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