

2009 Kabaj Cuvée Morel

Goriška Brda, Slovenia

On the Northeastern Italian border, 15 miles from the Adriatic, and at the foothills of the Alps lies the Goriška Brda, or the better known 'Collio' in Italian. Hardened remains of an ancient seabed, the soils are rich in marl and flysch and offer an infinite range of vineyard exposures and microclimates. Sadly, when Slovenia became part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the late 1940's, wine production became a state run quantity over quality industry. Since gaining Independence in 1991, private production has resumed, indigenous grapes replanted, and terroir rediscovered. In the late 1980's Katja Kabaj met former French Legionnaire and Bordeaux trained enologist Jean Michel Morel. They married and settled in Katja's family village of Šlovrenc. Living in Slovenia also introduced Jean-Michel to fellow winemaker and neighbor Jasko Gravner. Deeply inspired by Gravner's ancient Qvevri wines, Jean-Michel studied in Georgia, became 1 of 25 producers in the Xeloba Kartuli Association, and now buries his own 3500L Qvevri vessels.

VINEYARDS

Approximately 4800 acres of vineyards are planted in the Goriška Brda, much of it to the local white varieties, Rebula (Ribolla Gialla in Italy), and Sauvignonasse (formerly known as Tocai Friulano). Many French varieties introduced to the region centuries ago also flourish, most notably: Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Blanc, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Kabaj maintains 29 of these acres delegated to 2 primary sites, Šlovrenc and Belo. 70% are planted to white varieties with an average vineyard age of 30 years and a yield of 1.5 kilos per vine. Single Guyot trellising is preferred. The primary fertilizer is horse manure.

WINE MAKING

Fermentation is typically conducted in large oak tanks with native yeast, acerated (fermented with the skins) between 1 and 30 days, and once barreled down, malolactic fermentation in barrique follows. Kabaj does not make "fresh wine." Everything, white or red, spends at least 12 months (Amfora is an exception) in their large vaulted cellar room. Jean spends a tremendous amount of his time here. Tasting, planning and ultimately blending. In the deepest point of the cellar, past the barrels, is an exposed wall of natural limestone with a spring whose colors inspire the earthy greens and browns of the Kabaj labels. In addition to artistic inspiration the spring serves a real purpose, of keeping the cellar appropriately humid and ideal for aging wine.



NOTES & PAIRINGS

Bordeaux varieties have existed in Brda for over 200 years and are planted to the steepest and most exposed portions of the vineyards Grbunovo, Velika brajda, Jez, Neblo-vrh. With an average vine age of 20 years, grapes are hand harvested in late September, quickly transported to the winery, de-stemmed, and macerated in concrete vats for 2-3 weeks depending on each fermentation. Three years of barrel aging with careful attention paid to topping each barrel has resulted in a wine built to age with enough fruit and spice to make the 2006 the current vintage to drink now.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

PRODUCER: Kabaj ((Ka-Bye)
APPELLATION: Goriška Brda (Gor-eesh-Ka Bur-duh)
VINTAGE: 2009
GRAPE COMPOSITION: Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit verdot
CLIMATE: Mild Sub-Mediterranean
SOILS: Sandstone and Slate
EXPOSURE: Southern
MACERATION & AGING: Maceration: 14 – 21 days in concrete vessels. Aging: 36 Months 225L French Oak, 4 months in bottle



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