

2013 Szőke Mátyás Zöld Veltelini

Matra, Hungary

An hour and a half north east of Budapest and next door to the famous wine-growing region Eger, the Mátra mountains have been planted with vineyards since at least the 11th century. Wine production even predates the arrivals of the Magyar tribes – ancestors to today's Hungarians. The most important family owned winery of the district is the Mátyás Szőke Winery in the town of Gyöngyöstarján. Located at the base of Hungary's highest peak Kékes and a part of a long dormant volcanic chain that extends all the way to Tokaji, its clayey chocolate colored soils and moderate climate give wines both density and lift. Although "Szőke" means blonde, Szőke Mátyás's (in Hungarian it is sur-name first) hair has long turned silver, but he and his wines still share a sunny and particularly youthful disposition. Mátyás continues to manage the vineyards and sales, while his son Zoltán, a university trained enologist, makes the wine and runs the cellar. The estate produces a wide range of native and international, mainly dry white wines, that could be aptly compared to lighter examples from Alsace, France. Ambassadors of the Mátra region; Szőke wines are served in numerous Hungarian Embassies and featured in many of the best restaurants in Budapest.

VINEYARDS

There are over 7,000 hectares under vine in Mátra, Hungary's second largest wine region. The family cultivates roughly 25 hectares in the Cserepes and Peresi vineyards focusing on white varietals like Pinot Gris, Irsai Oliver, Zöld Veltelini Királyleányka, Olaszrizling (Italian Riesling), Sylvaner, Hárslevelű, Ottonel Muscatel, Traminer, Chardonnay. The heavily forested mountains run East-West giving the vineyards a generally southern exposure. Soils are volcanic, but have over millennia degraded into the rich brown forest soils which nourish the vineyards today. Summer can be warm to hot, but nights are cool particularly leading up to harvest preserving acidity without sacrificing ripeness.

WINE MAKING

Grapes are generally harvested in late September to October and then quickly taken to the winery for manual sorting. The cellars, deep under the Mátra hills are old, some of them dating from the time of Napoleon, and maintain an ideal humidity and temperature for wine. Zoltán administers a strictly controlled fermentation, but not always with selected yeast, and aims to preserve the character of each variety and the freshness of the wine. Fermentation and aging both take place in temperature controlled inox tanks and malolactic fermentation is avoided. Though the red wines of the estate and small percentages of the whites are aged in large, old, traditional Hungarian oak casks. Free run and press fractions are vinified separately, blended to taste, and then filtered with Diatomaceous earth before bottling.



NOTES & PAIRINGS

As Austria's former Imperial partner it is no surprise that Zöld Veltelini (Grüner Veltliner) made its way East of Vienna to Hungary's volcanic Mátra. Without the influence of the Danube River, a slightly warmer climate, and the unique soils, it is distinctly Hungarian. Salty minerality and piercing acidity temper the wine's almost oily texture and spicy fruit. In a way Szőke Zöld Veltelini, mimics the famous, heady wines of the Wachau, making it an unbelievable value. Pairings run the gauntlet from traditional Schnitzel to light Asian fare, although with more body than most Austrian Grüner, the weight can match heavier full flavored dishes such as peanut sauces or spicy red curries.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

PRODUCER: Szőke Mátyás (Soe-ka Mautch-yash)

APPELLATION: Matra (Mátra)

VINTAGE: 2013

GRAPE COMPOSITION: 100% Zöldveltelini (Zuhld-feltEel-eeen-ee)

CLIMATE: Moderate

SOILS: Volcanic with layers of clay and sand

EXPOSURE: Southwestern

MACERATION & AGING: 100% Stainless Steel



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