



PIVNICA ČAJKOV

Wines from under the Sitno Volcano

Landscape of traditions and contrasts on the northern border of Central Europe

Empress 2013 | Frankovka Modrá (Blaufränkisch) | Red

The one that started it all

This wine carries a deeply personal value for me as a winemaker – it's one of the very first serious Frankovkas I made, and it opened a whole new world to me. I kept it for nearly 10 years in barrel in my old cellar, simply because I felt the need to learn how the wine would evolve. Back in 2013, the Slovak wine scene was a very different place – most winemakers made wines to be released quickly, saying that “the best wine is the one you already sold” and the general belief was that we don't have the terroir for great (red) wines anyway. Frankovka was frowned upon; many people would tell you what this grape is or is not, but I didn't believe them, suspecting they actually knew shit. So did I, but at least I was aware of my lack of knowledge, and desperately wanted to gain some, first-hand. Because, how can I make really good wine with my grapes if I have no idea how they change with age?

Witnessing this evolution was a huge eye-opener – like when you send a satellite to the edge of the Solar system and discover how vast and fascinating the universe actually is. Since then, I've been keeping a barrel of Frankovka from each year, building a true library of vintages, the perfect learning material. Many things have changed – Frankovka is now justly recognised as the truly noble grape of our area, capable of incredible purity, genuineness and terroir expression, and Empress became one of my signature wines. Releasing this pivotal wine, still fresh and lively even a full decade after it all started, feels like the perfect celebration of this journey.

Only one barrel made. Limited amount of magnums available.



Vineyard: Sádovie, mainly Cyril's vineyard (named after my uncle), Čajkov

Total surface: 0,2 Ha | **Altitude:** 240–280m ASL | **Aspect:** South | **Farming:** organic not-certified

Soil: pyroclastic tuff with volcanic glass and ashes, very porous and well drained

Year planted: 1992 | **Density of plantation:** 4000 vines/ha | **Rootstock:** SO4

Trellising system: High Cordon 1,8m | **Yield:** approx. 1kg/plant

Harvest & Winemaking

End of September / beginning of October. Harvested by hand into small crates (18–20 kg) in order to keep the grapes as intact as possible.

The grapes were destemmed and gently crushed. Spontaneously fermented (both primary and MLF) in open-top vats, with gentle punch downs for ~3 weeks, then racked into stainless steel tanks where it sat until next spring. We then moved it to used French oak barrels and aged it on its fine lees in the stable temperature of our historical underground cellar. Aged for almost 10 years in total before its bottling in March 2023. Unfined, unfiltered, no additives except for ~20ppm of sulphur added at bottling. 12,5% ABV

Aromas, Flavours & Indulgent Pairings

Empress is an exciting, charismatic wine showing the *savoir vivre* of the aristocrat that she is. 2013 was a classical, well-balanced vintage and the wine shows it very well. Vivid and fresh despite its substantial age, it seduces you with its silky, elegant and delicate personality and sour cherry chocolate notes. A true class. Let it breathe in a decanter 30–45 min before serving, and use big enough glasses.

Geeks will enjoy its subtlety on its own, but it matches nicely with a very delicate-flavoured meat like the chops from a really young lamb or good tuna steak, only lightly seared. Or roasted root vegetables.