



PIVNICA ČAJKOV

Wines from under the Sitno Volcano

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

Empress 2016 | Frankovka Modrá (Blaufränkisch) | Red

Our noble Habsburg legacy: zero pomp, all class

Frankovka is the most characteristic red variety of the old Habsburg monarchy, its Empress. I see it as the truly noble grape, capable of incredible purity, genuineness and terroir expression. The best wines provide an almost transcendental, magical experience – drinking them is like watching an exciting opera that leaves you speechless and overwhelmed with all the emotion, grandeur and mastery.

My version of this “Pinot Noir of the East” enjoys enhanced spiciness of our volcanic Sitno terroir, elegance from the classical winemaking and 3 years of slow barrel ageing in our 18th-century cellar. It's a sophisticated aristocrat with incredible ageing potential, esp. in magnum bottles.

The 2016 vintage was a cold and challenging one – winter temperatures as low as -31°C meant that more than a third of the buds froze. This significantly lowered the yields and delayed the whole vegetative cycle, including harvest which took place in late October, ie. as it used to be 20 years ago. I find that such colder conditions are perfect for Blaufränkisch, though – it emphasises the grape's energy and finesse, dotting it with elegant floral notes, temperament and acidity that help the wine age beautifully.



Vineyard: Stará Hora (northern part), Čajkov

Total surface: 2 Ha | **Altitude:** 300m ASL | **Aspect:** South | **Farming:** certified organic

Soil: Red rhyolite – crystallised magma, hard and erosion-resistant

Year planted: 2009 | **Density of plantation:** 5500 vines/ha | **Rootstock:** SO4

Trellising system: Vertical Shoot Positioned, single Guyot pruning | **Yield:** approx. 1kg/plant

Harvest & Winemaking

Second and third week of October 2016. Harvested by hand into small crates (18–20 kg) in order to keep the grapes as intact as possible.

Part of the grapes (about 25%) are kept as whole bunches, put on the bottom of the vat and covered with destemmed berries that were gently crushed. Spontaneously fermented (both primary and MLF) in open-top vats, with gentle punch-downs for ~4 weeks, then racked into old barrels. Only free-run juice is used. The wine then ages on its fine lees in the stable temperature of our historical underground cellar, for nearly 3 years. Bottled in November 2019. Unfined, unfiltered, no additives except for 15ppm of sulphur added at bottling. 13% ABV

Aromas, Flavours & Indulgent Pairings

Empress is an exciting, charismatic wine showing the *savoir vivre* of the aristocrat that she is. 2016 is especially energetic and lively, offering a vivid image of colder-vintage Blaufränkisch from our area. Silky and full of fresh fruit and violets, this is a wine you can easily drink the whole night, so enjoyable are its amarena cherries and hints of cedar wood. Refreshing acidic energy and elegant dry tannins. Open it a few hours before and enjoy its evolution over time, if you can.

My favourite over-the-top pairing is foie gras marinated in pekmez, smoked salt and brandy, glazed with dark chocolate. Or my mother's Izidor cake, a traditional local dessert whose bitter chocolate and walnut flavours are an awesome match to Frankovka's fruit. But a decent steak will do just as fine, of course...