



OREMUS KFT (OWNED BY BODEGAS VEGA SICILIA) TOKAY

FACT SHEET



OWNER

Bodegas Vega Sicilia

PRODUCTS

Tokaji, Dry Mandolas
Tokaji, Sweet Late Harvest
Tokaji, Aszu, 3 Puttonyos
Tokaji, Aszu, 4 Puttonyos
Tokaji, Aszu, 5 Puttonyos
Tokaji, Aszu, 6 Puttonyos
Tokaji, Aszu, Eszencia
Tokaji, Eszencia

SIZE OF THE VINEYARDS

115 hectares, all classified 'First Growth'.

LOCATION OF THE VINEYARDS

The grapes are grown on various hillside vineyards, the majority of which rise steeply above the village of Tolcsva in the heart of the Tokaj-Hegyalja appellation. They have excellent South and South-West exposure, and are close enough to the River Bodrog to benefit from the particular climatic conditions that generate noble rot. All the Oremus vineyards are classified 'First Growth', according to the historic Szirmay classification of 1803.

The cellars themselves are found under the village Tolcsva, in a labyrinth of hand-hewn cellars dating back to the 12th century. They also have access to more of these underground cellars in the neighbouring village of Erdobenyé.

SOIL

The subsoil is a volcanic tufa, similar to that found in the best vineyards of the central Loire (Vouvray, Bonnezeaux, Quarts de Chaume, etc). Topsoil in most vineyards is a stony clay; The remaining 20% of vineyards are planted on loess soil.

GRAPE VARIETIES

The oremus vineyards are planted to 50% Furmint, 20% Harslevelu, 20% Zeta and 10% Sarga Muskotaly (Yellow Muscat)

AVERAGE AGE OF THE VINES

The communist era vineyards were conceived and managed for quantity not quality, so Oremus have had to engage in a wholesale replanting operation since 1993. This is now approaching completion, and many of the newer vineyards are now reaching maturity (10 to 15 years age).

At the same time, some magnificent pre-phylloxera vines remain in production, a testimony to the former glories of the appellation.



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AVERAGE PRODUCTION

Total: 375 000 bottles per year, of which:

80 000 bottles Aszu

65 000 bottles Late Harvest Furmint and Szamorodni

226 000 bottles Furmint and Harslevelu

VINIFICATION AND AGEING

The 100% Furmint varieties are made in the international style, to showcase the exciting spicy character of this Hungarian grape variety. The Late Harvest Furmint is picked late, with 40 to 50% of the grapes having succumbed to noble rot (Aszu in Hungarian), giving concentrated sugars and a botrytis complexity. Fermentation lasts nearly a month, after which the wine is aged 6-8 months in cask.

Aszu wine production starts with specialised picking of individual botrytis-affected grapes. While the rest of the harvest is fermenting to dryness, these shrivelled grapes are pounded into a paste and stored in 20-25kg tubs, called Puttonyos (normally used for carrying grapes). The contents of these puttonyos are then mixed in with the base wine in fixed proportions (3 puttonyos per every 136 litre cask of base wine for Aszu 3 puttonyos, etc), and left to macerate 6 to 8 hours for extraction of sugar and flavour. After pressing, this sugar-rich mixture slowly continues fermentation, and subsequent long oxidative ageing in the cool, damp, mouldy cellars. The very rare, but justifiably famous top-of-the-range Tokaji is pure Eszencia, a nectar fermented from the tiny quantities of free run juice that drain out of the puttonyos. The must has such high sugar levels that, even using special yeasts, fermentation progresses at a snail's pace.

TASTING NOTES

Furmint Mandulas: Bright straw gold colour, with a fresh, intense nose of spice, ripe white peaches and flower blossom. The palate is dry, with crisp acidity, medium weight white peach fruit and a spicy finish. Great with Asian cuisine.

Aszu 5 Puttonyos: Rich, vivid gold colour. Complex nose features caramel, dried fruits (especially raisins and dried apricots), lemon peel, spice and brown sugar. Sweet on the palate, with great balancing acidity, the wine is crammed with layers of ripe fruit. Fresh, clean finish and very long length - irresistible.

Aszu 6 Puttonyos: Everything about this wine is extraordinary - even the colour, which is a deep, old gold bordering on Tawny. On the nose, it is difficult to know where to start: toffee, butterscotch, rum and raisins, toffee apples, tarte tatin, orange peel, and lots of spices. The palate is super-sweet, and one might mistake it for liquid honey, but for the appetising acidity that keeps it so crisp and refreshing. The ripe fruit finally gives way to a spicy finish, and the length just goes on and on. One of the great sweet wines of the world.



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NOTES ON THE PROPERTY

Tokaji should need no introduction - one of the greatest and certainly most individual styles of sweet wine found anywhere. Indeed, in the 18th century, this liquid gold was the most highly-prized and sought-after wine in the world, served to Princes, Kings and Czars at every capital in Europe. Louis XIV famously pronounced it "Wine of Kings and King of Wines". Admittedly, he was bribed with several barrels of Eszencia, but his opinion carried even more weight at the time than that of Robert Parker today !

With such a long history, it is difficult to separate fact from fantasy, but there is no doubt that Tokaji producers had discovered the beneficial properties of noble rot by 1650. This gave them a hundred-year head start on the Germans, and nearly 200 on the vigneron of Sauternes. The Tokaj district was delimited by royal decree in 1737, and the world's first vineyard classification system introduced in 1772. Unfortunately, Communist dogma and the realpolitik of the Cold War era were not conducive to fine wine production. Individual vineyard identities and the quest for perfection were subsumed in the mediocrity of state farm collectives, and the inevitable reorientation towards a Russian market thirsty for large quantities of the cheapest wines possible.

When the Iron Curtain was drawn back, fine Tokaji was more a legend than a reality, a romance fuelled by the recollections of a few wise old connoisseurs. But the allure was undeniable, and it quickly attracted both romantics and hard-headed money men to this rustic corner of northeastern Hungary. The Vega Sicilia team were aware of the dangers this gold rush presented, and realised that "if you're going to do it, do it right". Guided by this philosophy, they spared no expense in securing the most highly-rated vineyards, plus several kilometres of ideal underground cellars. These cellars are particularly important to the quality of Tokaji, because they create perfect conditions for long cask ageing: a constant temperature of 10°C, 95% humidity, and an ambient colony of moulds and bacteria that protect the wines from spoilage. The estate they bought was rechristened Oremus, and a team of the most experienced local and imported winemakers was put in place, under the direction of Andras Backsos, the most knowledgeable and passionate of the former state managers. Their aim was simply to produce the very best Tokaji imaginable.

Twenty years on, the Oremus wines are bang on target. The classic Aszu dessert wines are pure and precise and beautifully balanced, neither oxidised in the false-traditional style, nor over-oaked in an attempt to impress with modernity, but with a mineral-infused energy that ensures outstanding persistence and length. Meanwhile, Oremus have pioneered two new styles of Tokaji wine : a classy dry white from the exotically spicy Furmint grape, and a Late Harvest made in the style of a Beerenauslese, from bunches partially attained by botrytis.