

## **Notes and Queries from Bulgarian Wines**

At our last meeting, the Wines of Bulgaria, a number of the attendees noted that the wines made from Pinot Noir were significantly deeper in colour than they would have expected. Specifically much deeper in colour than the wines from Burgundy.

David Wright promised that he would look into this for us and pass back the information he was able to discover.

We quote from the notes he has provided us, which are extremely technical and detailed - so much so that some may wish they had never asked!

### **Pinot Noir**

When we started producing Pinot Noir in Bulgaria 15 years ago it was very unusual in Bulgaria where all the wines were made from Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. We had to adapt our style using clonal blending, vine growing, winemaking and ageing.

#### Clonal blending

Based on the detailed analysis we made of our soil, we contacted Mr Pierre-Marie Guillaume, whose nursery is one of the most famous in the world. He is the exclusive provider of Romanée-Conti (where of course he more specialized in grafting to rootstocks) and supplies some of the biggest estates in the world such as Chateau Margaux, Antinori,... The nursery has a satellite in Sacramento. As we are French speaking our parents went to Guillaume in France and asked him to look at our soil report and personally recommend us the best clones. Pierre-Marie said that after 7-8 years of laboratory experiences and observation of wines over 4-5 years, the Nursery has a proof that the combination of several good clones gives a better result than single clone wines.

Therefore, for our Premium Pinot Noir we use 4 different clones: The only 2 (out of the 40 Pinot Clones) which are A category (with very limited yield): 828 and 777 and clones 943 and 114

The two common Burgundy clones 777 (colour) and 828 (fruit & elegance) of the category A (with limited yield) and add also clone 943 for the structure and 114 for specificity.

For Pinot Noir Cote de Danube we mainly use clones 777 and 943

777 clone also exists in California. It is the reference for PN in Burgundy and California. The clone gives high quality Pinot with a short cycle (quite late bud burst and early maturity) with a higher degree of sugar content and weak acidity. As the most tanninous and color giving it is the one you the least assimilate to Pinot.

943 clone has smaller berries and less seeds. The wines are dark, but softer. The clone is famous for giving structure, more color and more largeness (shoulder).

Vine growing

One characteristic for us is that we hand collect the grapes at phenolic maturity (and not based on technical maturity or sugar content). This means that we consider the overall concentration of phenolic compounds (anthocyanins and tannins) when we pick-up the grapes and these elements are more pronounced

Winemaking

To extract more color and fruit, we practice cold-maceration or cold soaking (like the white wines) at 14C for a few days before the alcoholic fermentation.

Ageing

We only age less than 40% in French oak and the rest is not oaked to keep its fruit profile

David was also asked about the prevalence (or otherwise) of irrigation in Bulgaria - this the response from the Cote de Danube region:

As in the rest of the EU, irrigation is allowed in Bulgaria, although it is regulated. WE do not irrigate. Indeed, Chateau Burgozone terroir is on the banks of the Danube river and the soil is loess which is very porous. The roots of our vines (which are on average 15 years old) go very deep up to 7m (against the standard 2m) and because there are many underground rivers going to the Danube we do not need to irrigate. Even this year with the extreme heat waves our leaves are green and the vines are in good shape.