



Tasting Notes / Hungarian Embassy Tasting

29th February 2024

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Top Picks in a nutshell

Sparkling

Bujdoso Blanc de Noirs (100% Pinot Noir), 2019

Brut. Super nice bubble structure and acidity. Pinot Noir clearly coming out, fresh and red currant dominated, fresh apple, and the 2 years on the lees are clearly noticeable. Super nice balance. For the price point it is absolute value-for-money. Nice Champagne alternative from the Balaton region, 92 points.

White

Tokajicum Furmint 2020

Dry Furmint from Tokaj, beautiful in the nose, beautiful complexity. Of course, the florality of Furmint is coming immediately, honey and beeswax, some old and new oak, coconut vanilla, beeswax. Typical freshness, sour peach, fresh apple, so much Furmint. Honey very dominant. Beautiful straight minerality, saltiness, and saline structure, beautiful honey on the palate, very sweaty and mineral. Great ageing potential, medium-plus acidity, 93 points (gave it actually 94 in first impression).

Red

St. Andrea Merengo 2021

Color extremely light for this wine style and the grape composition. Really beautiful pale ruby, easy to see through. Enormous florality and ripeness in the nose for such a young vintage, only two years old, 2021. Lot of cherries, red currant, red plum, raspberry, strawberry. Very herbal like thyme, oregano. Oak is coming through, chocolate, tobacco, smoke, cedar wood, light coconut, light vanilla, really well-blended and very balanced on the palate. Medium-plus acidity, medium-plus body, very well-integrated tannins, nothing striking out here. Extremely pleasurable, chilled 14 to 16 degrees, outstanding as usual when I tasted Merengo, I give it 96 points.

Dessert

Pangold Tokaj Aszu 5 Puttonyos 1999

The 1999, wow what great development, super oxidized in nose and color. Dried hay, condensed dried apricot and peach, mirabelles, yellow plum, really on the beeswax and intense acacia honey side, deep vanilla, crème brûlée quality. Absolutely a banger wine, 96 points.



Hungarian Wine Regions

Tokaj

Known for its legendary sweet wines, Tokaj boasts a unique terroir characterized by volcanic soils. Its flagship wine, Tokaji Aszú, is crafted from **Furmint** and **Hárslevelű** grapes affected by noble rot, offering complex flavors of honey, apricot, and orange peel.

Eger

Eger is celebrated for its robust red wines, notably **Egri Bikavér** (Bull's Blood). The region's diverse soils and continental climate nurture grapes like **Kékfrankos** and **Kadarka**, resulting in bold, spicy reds with depth and character.

Villány

Villány is Hungary's premier red wine region, famous for its **Bordeaux-style blends**. Here, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc thrive in the region's warm, sunny climate and limestone-rich soils, producing powerful, full-bodied red wines with ripe fruit flavors and firm tannins.

Somló

Somló, located on an ancient volcano, offers a unique terroir for winemaking. **Juhfark** is the star grape here, producing wines with high acidity, intense minerality, and distinctive volcanic character. Somló wines are known for their age-worthiness and complex flavors of ripe fruits and minerals.

Balaton

Situated around Lake Balaton, this region excels in crisp white wines, particularly **Olaszrizling**. The moderating influence of the lake's microclimate and diverse soils produce refreshing, aromatic whites with notes of citrus, green apple, and almonds, perfect for enjoying by the water's edge.

Szekszárd

Renowned for its robust red wines. Situated in the southern part of the country, Szekszárd benefits from a continental climate and diverse soils, including loess and limestone. The region is known for producing full-bodied reds, notably made from the **Kadarka** and **Kékfrankos** grapes. These wines often exhibit rich flavors of dark berries, spices, and a characteristic peppery note. Szekszárd is also famed for its Bikavér (Bull's Blood) blends, showcasing the region's winemaking prowess and unique terroir.



Hungarian Wine Grapes and Styles

Kékfrankos (red)

A prominent red grape in Hungary, Kékfrankos, known as Blaufränkisch elsewhere, thrives in the country's cooler climates. It produces deeply colored wines with flavors of dark berries, spice, and earthy undertones, often showcasing a lively acidity and firm tannins.

Kadarka (red)

An ancient Hungarian grape, Kadarka is renowned for its light-bodied, aromatic red wines. With flavors of red fruit, herbs, and a distinctive peppery note, Kadarka wines often exhibit elegance and finesse, particularly when grown in the region of Szekszárd.

Furmint (white)

Primarily associated with Hungary's renowned Tokaj region, Furmint is a versatile grape used in the production of dry and sweet wines. It offers vibrant acidity, complex flavors of citrus, stone fruit, and honey, and the potential for age-worthy expressions, especially in Tokaji Aszú.

Hárslevelű (white)

Another grape closely linked to Tokaj, Hárslevelű contributes to the region's legendary sweet wines as well as dry expressions. It offers aromas of orange blossom, honey, and spices, with a rich texture, balancing acidity, and flavors of ripe orchard fruits and floral notes.

Juhfark (white)

Unique to Hungary's Somló region, Juhfark produces distinctive wines with high acidity and intense minerality. Its name translates to "sheep's tail," referencing the grape's elongated bunches. Juhfark wines often display flavors of ripe apple, pear, and a characteristic volcanic earthiness.

Olaszrizling (white)

Though its name suggests Italian origins ("Riesling Italico"), Olaszrizling is widely grown in Hungary, particularly in the Balaton and Somló regions. It yields crisp, aromatic white wines with notes of green apple, citrus, and almonds, often with a refreshing acidity and mineral finish.

Tokaj Aszú (Dessert wines style)

Tokaj Aszú wines are Hungary's pride, originating from the Tokaj region's noble rot-affected grapes. Crafted through a meticulous process, Aszú wines blend Furmint and Hárslevelű varieties. These sweet elixirs boast a rich golden hue, exuding aromas of honey, apricot, and orange peel. With luscious sweetness balanced by zesty acidity, each sip reveals layers of complexity, from dried fruits to exotic spices. Tokaj Aszú wines have long been revered for their unparalleled quality and exceptional aging potential.



All Wine Tasting Notes

96 Points

Red, St. Andrea Merengo 2021

Color extremely light for this wine style and the grape composition. Really beautiful pale ruby, easy to see through. Enormous florality and ripeness in the nose for such a young vintage, only two years old, 2021. Lot of cherries, red currant, red plum, raspberry, strawberry. Very herbal like thyme, oregano. Oak is coming through, chocolate, tobacco, smoke, cedar wood, light coconut, light vanilla, really well-blended and very balanced on the palate. Medium-plus acidity, medium-plus body, very well-integrated tannins, nothing striking out here. Extremely pleasurable, chilled 14 to 16 degrees, outstanding as usual when I tasted Merengo, I give it 96 points.

Red, Sauska Cabernet Franc 2019

Super beautiful like a cold-style Cabernet France. Extreme acidity, extremely well made, really beautiful vegetal aromas, very well-integrated tannins, good fruit profile, cedar, chocolate, 18 months in American oak, of which 30% were new barrels. Drinks very well now, perfectly balanced and integrated structure, but honestly forget this for 15 years in the cellar and it will be an absolutely outstanding wine. 96 Points.

Red, Gal Tibor Sikhegy 2017, Egri Bikaver Grand Superiore

14% alcohol. Beautiful intense color, more than the other Egri Bikaver wines. Seems a bit unfiltered, cloudy. Much on the fruity side, powerful plum, dark berries, beautiful balance, very floral in the nose. Milk chocolate, coconut, potent aromas of new oak in the glass. Clearly new oak on the palate, but still intense and drying out tannin structure, strong focus on the floral notes. Cherry and plum coming out very much on the fruity side but balanced with oak notes such as chocolate. Pretty awesome, great example of this style of wine, 96 points.

Red, St. Andrea Agapé 2016

Blend of Kekfrankos, Syrah, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Kadarka. Beautifully rustic in the nose, nice color development. Turning out very nicely, bloody, fresh, marzipan touch, dried roses, dried berries, good complexity. Rustic, lots of dark chocolate, cedar, and burned wood. Plummy. Really dry, really bone-dry, extremely good medium-plus tannins, feeling edgy. Old oak very nicely integrated, giving it super good structure. 2016, still some great ageing potential, needs some time to open up. Pretty nice wine, similar to Merengo (St. Andrea) 96 points, too.

Dessert, Pangold Tokaj Aszu 5 Puttonyos 1999

The 1999, wow what great development, super oxidized in nose and color. Dried hay, condensed dried apricot and peach, mirabelles, yellow plum, really on the beeswax and intense acacia honey side, deep vanilla, crème brûlée quality. Absolutely a banger wine, 96 points.



95 Points

Red, Grof Butler Egri Bikaver Grand Superiore 2015

Much lighter on the color than the St. Andrea Agapé. Bloody, rustic. Much more developed, lots of marzipan and dried aromas. Oxidized in a beautiful style. Red currant, lots of it and dried like cranberries. Lots of red plum. Cherries and strawberries. Less touch on old oak, very well integrated. Again, absolute bone-dry character, actually well-integrated tannins, straightforward drying out, medium-plus acidity, very nice body, very delightful. Great food wine, some cheese and meat on the table. Pretty beautiful, 95 points.

94 Points

Red, Toth Ferenc Kekfrankos egri Superior 2021

Beautiful nose, beautiful florality, extremely bloody, intense in the nose, pretty outstanding. Kind of "wow, how bloody can a wine be?". It's really thriving. Plummy, black fruit, dark fruit, black plum, chocolate, got really some new oak here, the vanilla and the coconut coming out. Woody-chocolate intensity. Typical medium/medium-plus tannins are very well integrated, light body, typical Kekfrankos style, beautifully made. 94 points with some real good ageing potential. 94 points.

Red, St Andrea Nagy Eged 2019

Kekfrankos, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Merlot. Nice sediment, feels unfiltered, deep colored. Striking is the bloodiness from the Kekfrankos, plummy, fruity, but the Cabernet Franc adds great complexity, green and vegetal touch, great balance. Well integrated grape blend. Strong acidity, good body, very nice. Smoothness-wise not at the level of St Andrea Merengo, so it's 94 points. Beautifully balanced though.

Dessert, Pangold tokaj Aszu 5 Puttonyos 2013

Tokaj at its purest essence. The 2013 still extremely lively, very young, still lot of potential very much on the fruity side. Old oak well-integrated, hints of new oak, too. Buttery smoothness, cream, coconut touch, but very much peach, condensed apricot, honey coming out nicely, the beeswax, super good acidity, very good ageing potential.

93 Points

White, Tokajicum Furmint 2020

Dry Furmint from Tokaj, beautiful in the nose, beautiful complexity. Of course, the florality of Furmint is coming immediately, honey and beeswax, some old and new oak, coconut vanilla, beeswax. Typical freshness, sour peach, fresh apple, so much Furmint. Honey very dominant. Beautiful straight minerality, saltiness, and saline structure, beautiful honey on the palate, very sweaty and mineral. Great ageing potential, medium-plus acidity, 93 points (gave it actually 94 in first impression).

Red, Grof Butler Syrah 2017

Definitely floral, clear cut in the nose, as typical as Syrah can be lots of blueberry in the nose. Noticeable oak, dark chocolate, smokey, cedar wood. Really impressive tannins, dried out structure, bone dry, strong acidity, but light in the appeal. Begins to develop a bit with good floral aromas. Pretty good, that's 93 points.



92 Points

Sparkling, Bujdoso Blanc de Noirs (100% Pinot Noir), 2019

Brut. Super nice bubble structure and acidity. Pinot Noir clearly coming out, fresh and red currant dominated, fresh apple, and the 2 years on the lees are clearly noticeable. Super nice balance. For the price point it is absolute value-for-money. Nice Champagne alternative from the Balaton region, 92 points.

White, Grof Butler Chardonnay 2019, Egri Select

Beautiful nose, mature fruit, a bit soapy and mineral touch. Beautiful peach, some malolactic notes, a lot of new oak, especially in the mouth. Medium/Medium-plus acidity, very nice finish, herbal touch a bit of chamomile and fennel, quite nice complexity, easy-to-drink. 92 points.

Red, Gal Tibor Pajados 2021, Egri Bikaver Superiore

Definitely a lower level than St Andrea Merengo. More unripe in its quality. Nose is floral but is a little bit to the greenish side actually, vegetal character added to the plum, cherry, and strawberries. Unripe and immature, unripe tannins, needs probably some time to mature and to develop also on the palate. The greenish and tannic aspects are predominant, as if the oak is not totally integrated. So, while Merengo is very good to drink for a 2021, the Gal Tibor Pajados definitely needs some more time and has some less complexity to begin with. Still a great wine, I give it 92 points.

Red, Toth Ferenc Kadarka 2021

Even a little bit more floral, a bit more ruby in color than the one from Sauska. Bit more clear-cut profile, but very true to the grape. Great acidity and soap character in the nose, cherry, raspberry, beautiful florality, clear cut acidity. Medium-plus acidity, beautiful balance, nice and light, refreshing, cherry explosion, a bit of spicy pepperiness, typical Kadarka notes, super nice wine, 92 points.

Red, St. Andrea Egri Csillag Superiore 2022

Sauvignon Blanc, Harslevelu, Furmint. Beautiful in the nose, Harslevelu is coming through nicely but well-balanced, great mineral, soapy, oily touch. Pine needle aroma from Harslevelu clearly noticeable. Hint of oak on the palate, old oak, well balanced giving substance and body, harmonizing with the oiliness of the Sauvignon Blanc. Well-integrated acidity, pretty good wine actually, especially for the summer, 92 points maybe even 93 points.

91 Points

Sparkling, Sauska Brut Rose

65% Furmint, 20% Pinot noir (10% Blanc de Noirs, 10% Red wine), 15% Chardonnay. 2 years on the lees. Pinot coming out clearly, very much on the strawberry and fruity side, yeast-contact definitely coming out with brioche and butter quality. Oak noticeable. Very foamy, soft bubbles and actually better bubble structure than the Sauska Brut white. Beautifully integrated acidity. 91 points, pretty nice Rosé Champagne-alternative.



White, Pangold Furmint 2020

Dry, 4.9g sugar, barrels selection 100% Furmint. Really nice and precise in the nose actually, clear, flora, honey, beeswax, a little bit of floral aromas, a bit of a vegetal touch to it. Fennel note coming out, good complexity actually. Lacks a tiny bit behind on the palate. Might be a bit too warm now at the end of the tasting, but I would expect a tiny bit more precise acidity, especially compared to the other Furmint tasted today. Sugar-acidity balance is very good. Nice full-body, it is a good wine, deserved 91 points.

White, Tokajicum Harslevelu

Typical and classic. Fresh apples and fresh pear in the nose. Citrus and clearly the famous pine needle aroma that gave the grape its name, Vegetal aromas coming out nicely Sweaty, and saline focused. Strikingly harsh acidity, good old oak touch, smoky. Nearly high acidity. Very sweaty and saline. Less complex than their Furmint but very clean and well-made style true to the grape variety. 91 Points.

Dessert, Heritage Tokaj Aszu 2015

6 Puttoynoy. Super young and vibrant especially after tasting the older vintages Pangold. Complexity-wise a bit more on the honey, oily, sweet side. Could have a bit more acidity to be really balanced out, but has depth and body and some solid ageing potential. I am just a bit concerned about the acidity-side here but it is a very nice Tokaj Aszu. Price might be an issue. 800 bottles made, absolutely worth a try, 91 points.

90 Points

Rose, Attila Pince Roze 2013 (Syrah)

Very floral, 10-year-old Rose, this seems kind of off, but it is not showing any clear reduction signs or so. It is actually very much alive and lively, floral and sweet aromas (but bone dry), cherry, raspberry. Honestly, for an experimental Rose, 10 years old, it is a pretty good wine, deserving 90 points.

Red, Attila Pince Kekfrankos 2019

New oak, old oak, everything in there, unfiltered actually but not organic or biodynamic, sulfites used as it suits the vintage. Really true to the Kekfrankos grape, light color, straightforward color, some acidity in the nose, acetonc character, nail polish remover in a light style. Dark berries, plum, cherry, unripe strawberry, somehow greenish and vegetal, probably cold vintage. Rustic edge, nice dark chocolate, cedar wood, tobacco, spice, good acidity, good body, well-balanced, solid wine, really solid Kekfrankos, 90 points.

Red Sauska Kadarka

Very nice typically-styled Kadarka, clean cut steel tank, typical extremely light and pale in color, beautiful to look at, a wonderful Kadarka color. Super big strawberry and cherry explosion in the nose with some rustic edge, Hungarian-styled pepperiness. Kick-ass acidity, light body, very delightful sommer wines, 14 degrees, sausages on the table, nothing to complain about. 90 points.



89 Points

White, Bujdoso Olaszriesling 2023

Balaton region, steel-tank driven. Extremely candied and floral, yellow butter flowers, summer-like wine. Beeswax, peachy, very much on the fruity side. Smoky actually? Floral and fruity character also dominant on palate, also some grapefruit-like bitter after taste. Medium/medium-plus acidity would benefit from more but it was a warm vintage and especially around lake Balaton which is a heat pot. Solid Olaszrizling, 89 points.

White, Attila Pince, Chardonnay 2018

Typical 2018 vintage, very mature in the nose with ripe peach and ripe apricot. Got a bit less oak than the Grof Butler Chardonnay, more on the mineral side. Steel-tank driven, solid medium-plus acidity, nicely balanced, actually a pretty nice bottle, but due to the warm vintage of 2018, a bit more oak impression would have suited the wine much better.

88 Points

Sparkling, Sauska Brut

Traditional method, 70% Furmint, 20% Chardonnay, 10% Pinot Noir. Very fresh in the nose, green apple, pear, Furmint clear with its honey and herbal touch but also the Pinot Noir is striking through with this red currant edge. Nicely sparkling, but there is a bit overwhelming Furmint touch, chamomile, fennel. Tiny bit of oak ageing, 7 grams of residual sugar, to balance the strong acidity of the Furmint, but I personally think it would have benefitted from a tiny bit less sugar. I find it a kind of balanced and give it 88 points

White, Sauska Furmint 2022

Clean, easy-style, easy-to-drink, mineral and fresh. Good acidity structure. Much on the apple, pear, sour peach side. Low complexity. Good minerality, but nothing to remember given the general quality of the producer. 88 points.

Red, Sauska Kekfrankos 2017

Beautiful nose, classic Kekfrankos, very floral, very plummy, very dark cherry and fruity. Chocolate and cedar coming out extremely much, definitely some oak touch. Deeper in color than the previous Kekfrankos wines tasted. On the palate, yeah sort of too acidic, the acidity is too fresh, too pronounced, 2017 should be a good and balanced vintage. There seems something of regarding structure and balance, it is not as precise and smooth as the other wines I tried. Acidity striking out, needs maybe more maturity time. 88 Points.

Red, Gal Tibor Kadarka 2022

This is a good value-for-money wine but one clearly feels that it is Gal Tibors "cheap" version of a red wine. Extremely fair for the price you pay in Hungary but lacking significantly behind in complexity compared to his top wines. Cherry, raspberry, light color, acidity striking out a bit too much.

Dessert, Tokajicum Sweet Szamorodni

Nice, a bit boring, had better, especially from the Tokaj region. It has the typical intensity and complexity, yellow mature fruit, apricot, peach, a bit of a banana touch, really ripe and mature in the nose. Lots of honey, kind of interesting with clear old oak touch, some white chocolate, smoke, white toffee. Good complexity but lacks some acidity for some reason. Body is smooth, oily and buttery, but the acidity should be more shining. It gets 88 points, it is nice but nothing special.