



# CONFRÉRIE DE TOKAJ

*On the Golden Route*

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# Confrérie de Tokaj

*Past, present and future*



## Past

“Region Vinum Regum Rex Vinorum” Knights of Wine was founded in 1987 in the Rákóczi Cellar in Tokaj, the place where knights from Transylvania and beyond the River Tisza elected János Zápolya King of Hungary in 1526.

Then in 1999 the Grand Assembly was reformed when it joined Tokaj Renaissance. The Assembly then consisted of twenty members. The Order was rejuvenated in 2012 when the name Confrérie de Tokaj was adopted.





# Present

Initiation of the 100 founding members of the Confrérie de Tokaj on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2012 in the Castle of Sárospatak. Since 1987 over 400 members have been initiated, thus proclaiming their support of Tokaj.





## Passionate about Tokaj

The Confrérie de Tokaj welcomes people who wish to contribute to the development of the legendary Tokaj Wine Region. Most of the founding members of the Confrérie are leading Tokaj wine producers who believe in distinct terroirs and the exceptional character of wines produced here. However, membership is open to anyone committed to the Tokaj Wine Region who would like to actively participate as an ambassador for the region.

These bonds are strengthened by the annual Tokaj Spring event, Great Tokaj Wine Auction and Tokaj Rendezvous and international events.

## Mission

Tokaji Aszú has long been a legendary wine: the “Wine of Kings and the King of Wines”. As Hugh Johnson said, iconic wines, such as Tokaj, Port and Champagne, need time to be explained and understood. This exposure is part of the mission of the Confrérie de Tokaj, an active community of people from a variety of professions who represent the Tokaj Wine Region in Hungary and abroad, promote the wines of this unique volcanic area and assist their journey to rightful recognition.





## Reflections on Tokaj

*"And in that quarter of a century I have seen the region and its wine reborn."*

Hugh Johnson

*"Today, here and now, we are witnessing the rebirth – the renaissance – of the Tokaj Wine Region. It is exciting for me to witness Tokaji Aszú regaining its reputation and prestige as the world's noblest sweet wine. In dry wines, are we witnessing the birth of Hungary's Burgundy? I believe, YES, we are." Ronn Wiegand. MW, MS*

# Confrérie events

The Confrérie organises events for members and non-members that bring Tokaj lovers closer to the region, its wines and producers as well as bringing outstanding Tokaj wines to a wider audience. A personal connection that helps people experience the magic of Tokaj.



# TOKAJ SPRING

*Exclusive three-day event with the  
winemakers in the Tokaj Wine Region*

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

Guided vineyard tours  
Wine tastings and dinner  
Blind tasting of auction lots

**Great Tokaj Wine Auction**

Initiation of new members  
Gala dinner





# GREAT TOKAJ WINE AUCTION

## THE EVENT

The Confrérie organises the annual Great Tokaj Wine Auction as part of the Tokaj Spring weekend.

The wines? Rare and exclusive lots of the best unique contemporary wines from the top Tokaj producers.



Dry wines are offered as one Gönci barrel (136 l), sweet wines as half or one Gönci barrel (68 l or 136 l).

The outstanding quality of Auction lots is ensured by the expert panel of the Confrérie Wine Tasting Committee



# The range of Tokaj wine

*The whole range of Tokaj wines has been presented at the Great Tokaj Wine Auctions: Dry Botrytis free single vineyard, Late Harvest, Szamorodni Dry and Sweet, Aszú, Eszencia. Each is delivered to the buyer with its specially designed Confrérie de Tokaj label.*

## Dry wines

*made from non-botrytized grapes*

The three main varieties, Furmint, Hárslevelű, and Sárgamuskotály can all be used to make dry (száraz) white wine. Furmint, the most common of the three, is pretty versatile. It can be crisp and light, often with distinct minerality and sparkling acidity. Hárslevelű is usually lighter in body, possessing balanced acidity and a wonderful bouquet of honey and linden flowers, while Sárgamuskotály is often said to be quite “feminine” with its intensive floral notes and delicate structure. Maturation can be carried out either in stainless steel or in oak.

## Late harvest and Szamorodni wines

*made from partially botrytized, shrivelled and overripe grapes*

Late Harvest wines – the unofficial late harvest category, into which vastly different wines are found, is responding to market trends and sparked a much needed debate over the future direction of Tokaj. They can be anything from dry to very rich and concentrated (price is normally a good indication of what to expect); made of a single variety or a blend; and with virtually no Botrytis or with a high proportion of botrytized grapes. The common denominators are the later-than-usual harvest and the limited use of barrel ageing in order to preserve the intensity and freshness of the fruit.

Szamorodni is a word of Polish origin that conjures up the age when Poland was the biggest customer of Tokaj and means “as it grew” or “as it comes”. In order to make Szamorodni, healthy and botrytized bunches are harvested and vinified together. Depending on the proportion of aszú berries in the mix and on vinification decisions, it can be dry or sweet, but always undergoes a mandatory maturation period of two years.

**Sweet Szamorodni** (édes szamorodni) – they generally contain between 50-150 grams of residual sugar. Though not as viscous, complex or sweet as Aszús, they do offer real harmony and elegance.

**Dry Szamorodni** – is the only wine on earth that is dry AND made with botrytised grapes. It is the great dry wine from Tokaj,

consumed for centuries in Poland and the Northern European countries, shaped by the commercial relationships between Tokaj and those countries. Aged for several years under yeast, it may be compared to Dry Sherry or to Vin Jaune du Jura. The range of aromas makes it wonderful in food and wine pairing: nutty and full-bodied with some Botrytis, oozing zesty acidity – just the stuff to whet all palates.

## Tokaji Aszú Wines

Aszú is the wine that made Tokaj famous and its vinification method is entirely original. The botrytized (aszú) berries are harvested individually and gently crushed into a so-called aszú paste. This process was once carried out by treading, though today most winemakers gently mash the berries. The crushed aszú berries are then added to either must, fermenting must or new wine and left to macerate in contrast with Szamorodni, indeed most other sweet wines, which are simply pressed. Macerating the aszú berries or the aszú paste is a key step in aszú making, as it helps extract a complex array of distinctive flavours, acids and sugars. The wine is then matured in cask and bottle in underground cellars before release.

The name “puttonyos” pays homage to how the wine was made in the past. A “puttony” is a hod in which roughly 25 kg of aszú berries were collected. Depending on the number of hods added to a 136-litre barrel of base wine, you had a 3 to 6 puttonyos wine. Rising puttonyos numbers indicate increasing levels of concentration, complexity and balance. In 2013 minimum residual sugar were set at 120 g/l for Aszú wines. The driving objectives of these recent changes are to strengthen Aszú

as the highest category of Tokaj sweet wines and tighten appellation controls, as well as to simplify the range of Tokaj wine styles for easier understanding by consumers.

## Tokaji Eszencia

Eszencia, the free-run juice the berries exude without pressing, is purely the most concentrated form of grape juice you can imagine: sweeter and more concentrated than honey (over 800 grams of residual sugar is not that abnormal), thus fermentation is incredibly slow and Eszencia usually has between 1.5 to 4 % alcohol. Not to be confused with Aszú Eszencia (former category of Aszú wine with residual sugar above 180 g/l, (no longer in use since the vintage 2009), the highest category of all is Tokaji Eszencia, a legendary nectar. This elixir which was once available in pharmacies is virtually everlasting.



## Confrérie wine store

Twelve bottles of each of the wines which go under the hammer at the Great Tokaj Wine Auction are given to the Confrérie de Tokaj for presentation purposes, tastings and dinners. These wines are stored in the cellar of the Tokaj Wine Region's Research Institute for Viticulture and Oenology in Tarcál.

## Geology

The Tokaj Wine Region, at the meeting of the Great Hungarian Plain with the Zemplén mountains, extends over 5000 hectares (12000 acres) on the south-facing volcanic slopes of the Zemplén at the confluence of two rivers, the Tisza and the Bodrog. The effects of past volcanic activity should not be underestimated. The vine roots reach deep into the base volcanic rock, proffering a distinctively mineral touch to the wines of Tokaj. The top soil is mostly loess in the south, around the Tokaj hill, while it turns to mostly clay in the north. But, as one climbs the vineyard slopes, the soil gets progressively shallower, until there's almost nothing but the bare volcanic rocks (rhyolite, andesite and others) to foster the vines.

## Climate

The climate is continental with dry, hot summers and cold winters. Autumns are generally fairly long and dry, with Indian summers typical. The southern slopes and gently undulating hills and vales protect the vines from the ferocity of the northerly winds and secure a high number of hours of sunlight. The real wonder of the region is produced in autumn, as the combination of misty mornings and sunny afternoons creates ideal conditions for noble rot. Mist rises from the two rivers, sweeps in among the rows of vines and settles over in the mornings in the cold October vineyards. The sun then dispels the mist and warms the vines. This is the moment that *Botrytis cinerea*, a fungus that thrives under warm and humid conditions, has been awaiting. It attacks the berries whose skin becomes thinner and the berries exude water and shrivel, thereby achieving levels of extreme concentration. These botrytized, or aszú berries as they are called in Hungarian, are the basis of Tokaji Aszú and Eszencia.

# TERROIR OF TOKAJ

# Grape varieties

Wines bearing the name Tokaj must be made from one or more of the six grape varieties permitted in the Tokaj Wine Region. The three main varieties are Furmint, Hárslevelű, and Sárgamuskotály with smaller areas of Zéta, Kövérszőlő and Kabar.

## Furmint

Furmint is the most common and important variety of the region, although its origins remain unknown. Since Furmint has been grown in the region at least as long as Aszú wines have been made, it is certainly fair to refer to it as an indigenous grape variety. The Furmint vine is generally vigorous, producing medium sized berries in bunches that are closely packed.

When left on the vine into October and November, given favourable weather conditions it provides high sugar concentration while preserving high acidity. It is particularly prone to botrytis.

Although Furmint is still the essential component in the great sweet wines, dry Furmint is fast becoming highly appreciated by connoisseurs around the world.

It is also known as Fehér Furmint, Mosler, Moslavac, Posipel, Sipon, Szigeti, Somszóló, Zapfner.



*The development of aszú berries*

## Hárslevelű

An aromatic variety which represents around 30 % of vines in the Tokaj Wine Region. Hárslevelű is usually lighter in body than Furmint with distinctive aromas of honey and linden. Although Hárslevelű is as vigorous as Furmint, it is less prone to Botrytis in drier years since the berries hang much more loosely on the bunches and have thicker skins. Despite this, when the autumn is wet and rainy, Botrytis is less likely to turn into unwanted rot.

It is also called Lipovina or Lindenblättriger in German-speaking areas. Lipovina (in Slovak).

## Sárgamuskotály

– “Muscat lunel”

It offers intensive floral, fruity notes and delicate structure. As a late ripener, it is harvested at the end of September for dry or late harvest wines. Probably the most aromatic variety of Tokaj with a fine balance of sugar and acidity.

A small number of wineries make single varietal dry wines. Fairly common across Europe, this variety is also called Muscat (blanc) à petits grains, Muscat Lunel, Musdkat Zoti, Moscato Bianco, Zoruna, Gelber Muskateller, Muskat Zlty.

## Zéta

This cross between Furmint and Bouvier was introduced in 1951 and authorized in 1990. Formerly known as Oremus, until 1999. Its main asset is its particular aptitude for high sugar concentrations, early ripening and susceptibility to Botrytis.

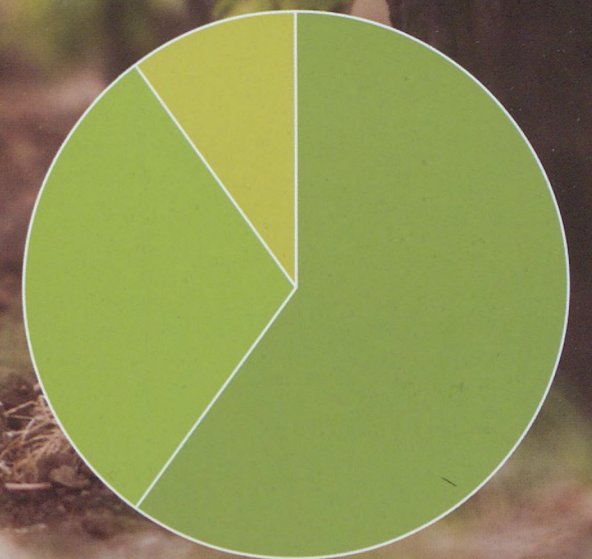
## Kövérszőlő

This an indigenous variety of Tokaj almost entirely disappeared after the phylloxera epidemic of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kövérszőlő is characterized by its fairly large berries, something also implied by its name, Kövérszőlő, which translates as “fat grape”. It shows its best on dry and windy slopes.

## Kabar

Also known as Tarcal 10 experimental variety. This cross of Hárslevelű and Bouvier was authorized in 2006. With a relatively low yield, it ripens as early as Zéta, produces high sugar and is prone to Botrytis. Due to its thick skin, it is fairly resistant to late autumn rains.

Vineyards are planted with the authorized varieties in the following overall proportion:



Furmint: 60 %  
Hárslevelű: 30 %  
Sárgamuskotály, Zéta, Kövérszőlő, Kabar (combined together): 10 %

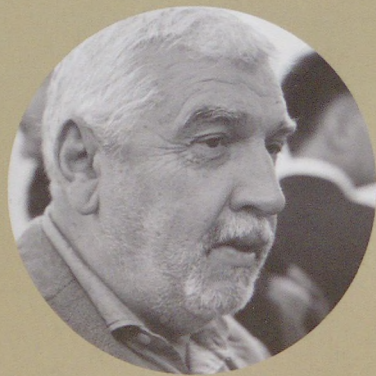


# UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

*Perhaps the first delimited wine region in the world, the Tokaj Wine Region has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage Historic Cultural Landscape since 2002. The work of the Confrérie supports the development and preservation of this historic area.*

The Tokaj Wine Region was designated a Historic Cultural Landscape in 2002. The organisation and character of the landscape, along with the 27 settlements, are shaped by the interaction of the thousand-year tradition of wine production which still thrives today. The legal base of delimitation of the wine region was among the first in the world and dates back to 1737 when the decree of Emperor Charles VI (Charles III, King of Hungary) established the area as a closed wine region. Wine quality and management have been strictly regulated for nearly three centuries.

The unique combination of topography, environmental and climatic conditions of the Tokaj Wine Region mean it has long been recognised as outstandingly favourable for grape cultivation and specialized wine production. The unique terroirs, indigenous grape varieties and the rivers that create a special microclimate favourable for the development of “noble rot” (*Botrytis cinerea*), while the surrounding oak forests are the source of excellent barrels. All these features have contributed to the vineyards, farms, villages, small towns and historic networks of wine cellars carved by hand into mostly volcanic rocks.



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