

Vino ²⁰ LET

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10,20 € (za naročnike 9,24 €)



Srebrni se godi krivica

Klavdija Topolovec Špur
Radgonske Gorice

8

Zrela rdeča

22

Kogl

44

Batič

40

Bufolin

54



Elevated: Batič

• Ivan and Miha Batič
• Photo by Marijan Močivnik

En Primeur of Batič

Some wines win international competitions. Some, equally exquisite, aren't even part of the contest – they simply don't need medals to be winners. Those are the wines that put fidelity to their terroir above all else, embodying the winemakers' commitment to refuse compromise in the pursuit of pristine excellence. Such wines, and the people who fashion them, will be the focus of our story.

- How to recognize the apex of what the vineyard, the vintage and the master winemaker can create?
- Does the price even matter? It does, let's put that to rest. But wine, absolutely, also has value that cannot be expressed in numbers.
- It's not a matter of more or less. It's a matter of being complete.
- What are the shared traits of wine works of art?

Colour gradient: if the grapes are mature and the wine has aged for a number of years, the colour is never watery. Its depth and intensity convey a feeling of saturation and crystalline translucence. It's not necessarily golden-yellow or near black, but it must be captivating and full. On the nose: the variety is not always at the forefront, it simply can't be since over-ripeness and years of ageing have transformed the primary aromas. Strikingly serious wines are usually blends, where each variety contributes its most assertive characteristics. At any rate, the predominant sensations will be those of extravagance and opulence. Persistence of aromas is key, with the lingering scents often appearing exotic, intertwined and structured. The notion of complex layers is often pronounced. On the palate: warmth and softness should express themselves clearly. If there is a hint of hardness (astringency) or acidity, this indicates potential for longevity. When maturity is optimal, neither sensation will be disagreeable. Overall, impressions shouldn't appear one-dimensional but rather elaborately layered and balanced, elegant, arousing a duly hoped-for effect of perfect harmony.

So says Miha Batič: "My great-grandfather was born in Austria-Hungary, my grandfather in Italy, my father Ivan in Yugoslavia, and I in Slovenia." The political border migrated, and the farmers always had to adapt. It was no easy task, evidently, yet the farm has ever stood in the same place. Where it still does, in Šempas. His sister now lives in the homestead where Miha was born. Great-grandfathers reach far, but the lineage of the Batič family traces all the way back to Renaissance, and so the year 1592 shines proudly from their labels. The *Kažipot* gazette of the Goriška, Trieste, and Istria from 1899 lists four wine merchants, among them Miha Batič (indeed!), landowner, winegrower, miller, innkeeper and notably a "patriot" fond of the villagers – having established a reading room on his estate. The contemporary Miha, son of Ivan, is named after him; whereas Ivan is that steadfast man who restored to the farm its reputation and its vineyards, heftily overpaid at that. In the monograph *Batič* (2014), Miha writes how his father took him to the ruined house at the very edge of the village Vitovlje, cast his gaze across the land that was to become vineyard, pausing meaningfully before asking Miha, in his manner typically terse and matter-of-fact: "Yes or no?" Say no more ... terraced vineyards sprang forth in that place. Ivan has travelled his own path of winemaking belief, and his decision to pursue nature-friendly viticulture was neither fashion nor momentary trend but a communion, a relationship with nature. The cabless tractor fitted with a hot air blower, to protect the vines from disease, was of unique construction emerging from Ivan's own thinking. His artistry produced wines esteemed by top restaurateurs, travelling the world (exported into twenty-five countries) and returning with an especially curious story: the Japanese master chef Tetsuya Uehara resonated so deeply with Batič wines as to set on the front of his Tokyo restaurant a large sign "Batič, since 1592". In 1988 already, Ivan commissioned from celebrated designer Oskar Kogoj a distinct bottle decorated with the relief of a Carinthian panther, the eventual hallmark of Batič wine, in which

the Classic line is still bottled. I remember that Ivan wasn't much inclined to answer questions on the properties of his wines, waving them off as if, let others be the judge of that, replying idiosyncratically: "Whatever the wine is like, it has to be good wine!" (quote from the book *Najlepše trte na Slovenskem (Slovenia's Most Beautiful Vines)*, 1995). When this holds true it will suffice.

- With the year 2018, the greater part of responsibility for the continued development of the Batič wine trademarks falls on son Miha. The farm has expanded considerably in the past few years, now encompassing forty-five hectares of vineyards. Miha reveals that the acquisition of eighteen hectares in Šmihel offered a once in a lifetime opportunity. Thereon, two hundred and fifty thousand vines will bear about a hundred thousand bottles of wine per vintage, in four quality lines ascending from Classic to Selekcija, Angel, and Rezerva. With the increase in wine production, yield per vine remains unchanged, and the preservation of the outstanding quality of the grapes and the wine a paramount task. The selection of varieties likewise stays. A gradual increase in the share of tolerant white varieties (so-called PIWI varieties) that have proven more resilient to disease and were well received by the market (Marlon) is on the horizon.
- With the vintage 2020 thus, they had their first opportunity to offer the market younger, two-year-old wines that do not hide their youthfulness, bursting with a mighty architecture of tannins that grip the gums and yet still offering the elevated tactile sensations we have grown accustomed to in Batič wine. Miha describes the criteria behind picking the angels: "The key to the Angel line is a yearly sampling of the complete cellar, all the crus, every single barrel. Those wines that excel in the blind tasting, 'show something extra', form the basis of the Angel selection."
- But there is more! The stylistic refreshment has brought another recent characteristic of modern wines, described as "nose genuineness" (It. *franchezza*, Fr. *Franchise*, Ger. *reintönig*), whose achievement requires flawless hygiene standards from the vineyard to the cellar.



Angel Barbera 2020, Rimc

- Very dark, nearly opaque colour with a distinct violet hue, a nod to the youthful condition of the wine. The nose is medium-intense, showing clear hints of complexity and over-ripeness of fruity impressions (mulberry, blackberry). The aromatic profile opens up slowly, temperately, as gentle resiny notes of cedar and coffee. A combination revealing the variety's potential. Tactile warmth, fullness and somewhat softened tannins. A serious Barbera, already compelling yet easily handling the weight of the years.

Angel Merlot 2020, Livišče

- Very deep, opaque ruby violet colour. A strong though concealed, ripe fruit and jam aromatic profile shows a wood-fruity note alongside contemporary perfection in the genuineness. The barely felt mushroom mycelium reminisces of Merlot yet without any leathery hints. The hardness isn't coarse, just a wealth of tannins from the grapes! As astringent sensations envelop the palate, without the bitterness that might be expected in most wines with such overpowering phenols, I realize future excellence (in twenty years, perhaps?) is assured.

Angel Cabernet Sauvignon 2020, Koladovca

- Very dark, opaque violet colour, even darker than in the Merlot. Even greater density and depth. Again a strong, masked, over-ripe fruity nose where blackcurrant gives meaning to varietal identity. Immaculate genuineness. A subdued note of raspberry, this time a touch of oak as well. The wealth of diverse tannins is even more opulent, greater here. Very full, and very warm.

Angel Rezerva 2020

- Profound, opaque, nearly black colour. The nose is powerful, over-ripe, highly intense like cooked dark berries with animalic hints. A truly complex, layered aromatic profile that requires some air passing across the palate to be properly grasped. Plums, soot, smoke. Lush astringency is dominant, yet also a guarantee of future excellent development, strongest among all the featured wines this time.

After tasting, it immediately becomes clear these wines promise superb growth, though distant in a temporal sense. The tartness is yet considerable, as if they were purchased "en primeur" in the foreign example of purchasing wine from the barrel, only that they are already bottled. This is why I entitled the piece: the *en primeur* of Batič. The seriousness and demanding nature of these wines will see their life expectancy measured in decades. And though aromatic complexity is still held back at such an early stage, the tactile impressions are already immense and most promising. "Every angel is terrifying," writes Rainer Maria Rilke in *The First Elegy*. Indeed, these are no exception ...

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