

Karen and Evan's excellent adventures

Ethnology: November 17, 2023: A river runs through it*

This evening's theme concerns wines grown by two rivers: The Columbia and the Danube. We traveled to Portland Oregon this summer to attend a wedding along the Columbia River. In Hood Oregon we visited the Stave and Stone wineries and shipped the following for your consideration:

1. Stave and Stone Pinot Gris 2022: aromas of pear, apple, and melon. It has a medium full body, with bright and dense flavors of green pears, lime, and lemongrass along with an attractive long finish. Alcohol content: 13.6%. \$30
2. Stave and Stone Dorothy Pinor Noir Rose: 2022: Named after our founder's grandmother, this sassy Pinot Noir Rosé is bursting with bright cherry and strawberry flavors. Alcohol content: 13.4%. \$30

Last month we took a river cruse along the Danube from the Czech Republic to Budapest. We purchased representative wines at the PA state store and brought back an apricot "liqueur".

3. Gruner Veltliner 2021. Austria. Delicate spice, a little green apple, light pepper and a hint of flowers, subtle acidity, typical regional representative of Austria's most popular wine variety. \$22.
4. Weinrider Riesling 2020: Austria. Ripe, tender, sweet, quite juicy fruit, fine acidity, herbs in the background as well as traces of nuts, tobacco, mineral, long finish. \$40
5. Vylyan Macska 2020 Potugieser Hungary 2022. In the Villany wine region portugieser is a variety that can found in every cellar. The varietal is represented by a cat. A third-quenchingly fruity, nice, and easy-going wine that "purrs" and flatters. The varietal specific red berries on the nose are rounded off by a combination of sour cheery, plum, and slow on the palate. Its tannins are soft and velvety. \$24
6. Marille Apricot liqueur: The Wachau, a romantic valley of the Danube between Melk and Krems, 80 km from Vienna, is a landscape that has been a UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site since 2000. Due to the given climate and soil conditions, the Wachau is known for its wine and fruit cultivation. In addition to the stone terraces, the landscape is characterized above all by apricot gardens. All products are homemade in the traditional manner and the schnapps is distilled exclusively from quality fruit without any added flavorings. Tasting notes: Typical apricot liqueur, fruity, youthfully fresh. Mild on the palate with unobtrusive elegant sweetness.

The origin of the Wachau apricot

Apricots first originated in China. The fruit has been cultivated here for some 4,000 years. According to recent research, the apricot was not brought to the Danube region by the Romans but rather via the Pontic area and Danube way - probably around the mid-1st century - at the same time as the fruit was beginning to make its way from Asia to West and South Europe. The fact that fruit-growing was already taking place in the Danube region during Roman times is clear from the writings of Eusebius - 'Vita S. Severini' on the life of St. Severinus.

The background of the Wachau apricot

The Wachau apricot was previously grown for private consumption. Then in the 19th century, commercial production began. In the late 19th century, infestation by grape phylloxera threatened to curtail the source of income from Vienna. Fruit growing experts and tree nurseries therefore developed the Klosterneuburg apricot from various species and this remains the dominant species today.

The apricot at the crux of history

During the 20th century, the success of the Wachau apricot was stopped on two occasions. The Second World War disrupted sales. Then in the 70s, competition from other types of fruit was so fierce that prices slumped and many fruit growers were forced to halt production of the apricot. Today the Wachau apricot is undergoing a renaissance: some 20 different sorts of apricot are grown in Wachau today with 167 Wachau apricot farmers guaranteeing the fruit's origin and unique quality flavour and taste as part of the 'Association for the Protection of the Wachau Apricot'.

*Norman Maclean 1976. Film adaptation 1992 (IMDB 7.2)