

Schmitt 'Wild Pony' 2017

Producer - Bianka and Daniel Schmitt (hence the d.b on the label)

Provenance: Rheinhessen

Farming: Biodynamic

Grape(s): 10% Muskateller, 45% Riesling, 45% Sylvaner

Vineyard(s): A field selection of different parcels of varied sandstone, loess, clay with plenty of limestone running throughout.

Vintage: 2017 - a difficult, cold vintage with hail damage.

Fermentation/ Aging: Each grape is fermented separately and macerated for 6 weeks on the skins before pressing into a single 500L barrel. The barrel is deliberately left underfilled to provide enough oxygen for the flor to develop. The wine is aged under flor for one year.

Fining/ Filtration: none.

Sulfite: 15 ppm was added to 2017 Wild Pony because the Flor took a little longer to develop; they didn't want a wine that would oxidize too quickly after being uncorked.

Misc: The wine takes its name from a Hungarian rock band Bianka was fond of. Story goes that the charismatic and handsome guitarist wrote a song of the same name for his girlfriend. 2015 was the first vintage of this flor aged wine and when they tasted out of barrel Bianka thought 'THIS is the Wild Pony!'

The Producer:

In 2012 at the tender age of 21, Hungarian winemaker-to-be Bianka journeyed to Flörsheim-Dalsheim in the southern part of the Rheinhessen to pursue and opportunity to harvest and make wine with the Schmitt family. Bianka's grandmother and her mother before here were both holistic healers and practitioners of Prana Nadi so it comes as no surprise that biodynamic agriculture would be a source of deep curiosity. Eager to learn from an old hand, she was surprised to learn that the Schmitt patriarch Peter who she'd thought to learn from had handed the reins over to his son Daniel who had already begun converting the 230+ year old, 16 hectares of family vineyards to biodynamic agriculture. What started as comradery quickly emerged into a romantic relationship that has blossomed into an impressive and collaborative professional partnership and eventually, marriage.

Having studied conventional wine in school Bianka and Daniel journeyed to Alsace to investigate a style of winemaking more in line with their growing philosophy and to find



out if Bianka's professors had been wrong when they said "spontaneous fermentation is humbug." The following harvest, inspired by their travels they immediately starting making wines without selected yeasts, commercial additives, fining, filtration, added sulfite or any other nonsense. Today they make 105,000 bottles in a good vintage and have garnered a genuine and enthusiastic following for their highly energized wines that amplify minerality without sacrificing the fresh, rawness that make natural wines so exciting.

The Vineyard:

The family's 16 hectares that were once devoted to cereals and sugar beets some 200 years ago are now lush with grape vines. Daniel Schmitt achieved organic certification in 2007 and joined a small number of Demeter certified German growers in 2012, shortly before Bianka's arrival. They sell the equivalent of about 4 hectares as bulk wine or grape juice as well as potatoes and herbs they grow.

"We have limestone everywhere in the soil,' Bianka says as well as sandstone, loess and clay. Before harvest they drive out twice a day through the fields, checking in on different parcels and comparing the maturation of their grapes to the wines they intend to create. Between Daniel's quintessentially German organizational streak and Bianka's more intuitive, though rigorously scientific approach they make joint decisions in reflection of the shifting realities of each blend.

The Winery:

Muskateller, Sylvaner and Riseling are all hand harvested and fermented separately on the skins. The base wines remain in contact with the skins for a total of 6 weeks before pressing together into a single 500L barrel. The notion was to age a wine under flor, a reference more to Hungarian Szamorodni Tokaji than the Jura or Xerez. The 2017 was dosed with 15 ppm of Sulfite just prior to bottling because the flor took longer to develop because they were using a newer barrel.

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