

# **Kadarka - a wine to be forgotten or a chance for a unique Central European Red?**

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Abstract

## **Motivation**

Kadarka, once the flagship of Central European red winemaking became a marginal varietal by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are many factors which made this once adored grape disappear, but its uniqueness, the will of the winemakers and the market trends are enabling a better future for this black grape. A couple of years ago an extensive discussion started between the premium winemakers in the Carpathian Basin from several countries as Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, led by Hungary, as Kadarka is still represented most in this country. A present movement of 20-25 key winemakers from all around the region defined an ambitious goal of restoring and repositioning Kadarka on the local and preferably also on the international market. As I was part of the recent discussions, the thesis has an actuality too.

## **Objectives**

This thesis is trying to position this movement in the scope of the historical background, the overview of the viticulture and vinification of the varietal and the local and international markets. At the end propose possible ways forward to the movement, objectively analyzing if it makes sense to restore Kadarka or let it disappear.

## **Methodology**

To accomplish this task I did a research in the literatures available from the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the library of the Corvinus University, collected current articles and journal abstracts in the topic and also did a research over the internet. The majority of the literature was available in Hungarian language, but English and German texts were also processed. Finally I attended the internal round table of the Kadarka growers where valuable information was collected first hand.

In this work I have used a part of a research I did for my diploma thesis at the Corvinus University of Budapest, which I submitted in the topic of restoring the abandoned wine region of Szentendre, the largest Kadarka region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this document the chance of Kadarka is also analyzed as a varietal wine or a part of a blend on the local and international markets.

## **Content**

The thesis is divided to three sections, the first chapter is describing the historical background, revealing the origins of the varietal, analyzing the causes why it was able to conquer the Carpathian Basin and focusing on the viticulture, vinification and the market when the varietal was at its peak. It explains the uniqueness of its training method and the factors of the quality. Along with examples the special wine styles like sweet botrytized and Recioto della Valpolicella style wines are also described. The chapter describes the structural problems which resulted in a decline of the market far before the Phylloxera arrived. In the end the 20<sup>th</sup> century's industrialization and its dramatic effect on Kadarka is discussed.

In the second chapter the focus is on the present, a description of the growers, the sites and styles in the Carpathian Basin and the review of the clonal selection which is happening nowadays. Kadarka's profile is discussed through representative wines from all around the region with focus on its capability of expressing the terroir while keeping its unique flavor and aroma profile. A paragraph is describing the "new" style of Kadarka and the winemakers' activities into that direction.

The third and last chapter is focusing on the future, reviewing its market and market potential today and proposing ways how the winemakers can reposition their wines. Examples are discussed to differentiate the premium Kadarka from the basic ones and proposed actions are describing the way to make the repositioning happen.

## **Conclusion**

Kadarka has a future, as the varietal, the climate and its potential of expressing the different terroirs are enabling it to be a unique but potentially exceptional wine. If the growers momentum will persist, if they will invest in learning and studying the other, international regions and they continue the progress they started maybe not in 5 years as they plan but in a decade or two they have a chance to be part of the international premium wine niche. If it will be done by a varietal wine, or a cuvee, it's up to the next decade's developments.