



HOLASS

Hungary

History of the Winery

Ellie and Imre first met at a wine fair in 2014, where Ellie was representing a Belgian importer and Imre was working for an Austrian winery. They began dating a year later, and in their adventures, stumbled across an abandoned vineyard in Sümeg in the Balaton region of Hungary. The outcome of this discovery was their first ever HOLASS wine. Since then, they have expanded their line-up to include wines from historical Hungarian wine regions, focusing exclusively on local varieties of those regions. They also include wines from the Burgenland region of Austria in their production, because its cultural and historical background is widely considered part of Hungarian wine heritage. Imre and Ellie do not own any vineyards themselves, preferring instead to partner with friends and peers who lend HOLASS the use of their cellars and allow them to source grapes from many different sites across Hungary and Austria. All the wines are named for a geographical indication of their origin, whether it be the region itself, or a notable village, river, or natural feature of the area. Their collective's name, [HOLASS], is the phonetic pronunciation of Imre's last name; Halász.

JS & HOLASS

We first met Imre and Ellie at La Dive Bouteille in the Loire Valley in early 2020. We are their first-ever US importer! We were immediately struck by their practicality, passion, kindness, and of course, the quality of the wines across the board. They are truly people who feel like old friends, even though we have only met a few times.

Fun Facts

- HOLASS came about because of the discovery of the vineyard from which they source Sümeg, which captured their imagination because it was entirely unique, co-planted to

both Kékfrankos and Olászrisling, and left derelict because co-ferments were not allowed to be produced and sold in Hungary per the wine law of the time. Imre and Ellie decided to make wine from this vineyard despite that rule, selling Sumeg only outside Hungary. That is, until a few years later when a lucky connection to a government official who happened to love the wine caused a chain reaction leading to the establishment of Sumeg as its own wine region, one of the smallest in the world, and one of the first natural-wine-only regions in the world. In this newly-established region, co-ferments are allowed, native yeast is obligatory, and there are rules about the farming practices and winemaking techniques permitted to ensure that wines bearing the Sumeg name adhere to natural winemaking principles. So, what was once an "illegal" wine in Hungary is now the trailblazing wine that established a whole new region. Pretty amazing, right?

- One of the most interesting examples of terroir within the HOLASS project is the striking difference between the two reds: Balf and the Sopron. These two Kékfrankos come from the same vineyard, separated only by 500m in elevation. However, this seemingly trivial shift in altitude offers startling juxtapositions in character, with small changes in the soils and fruit from each site yielding two very distinct wines, both complex expressions of the region's native variety.

Viticulture & Winemaking

HOLASS wines come from a diverse range of vineyard sites across different terroirs, but they are unified in their farming practices, all of which are organic or biodynamic. In the winery, all fermentations are spontaneous, and no additions are made to the wines other than a small amount of SO₂ at bottling.

Their wines are mostly single vineyard bottlings made in small batches. Each winery they collaborate with has a vineyard or parcel specially reserved for Holass. Imre describes this arrangement as being "a winery in the wineries". He visits each site he works with almost every month, paying careful attention to each stage of the grape growing and winemaking process. Even after the wines are in barrel, he and Ellie are directly involved and check in on their wines monthly to keep track of progress.

Wines

Balf 2017

100% Kékfrankos (Blaufränkisch)

Located in the Sopron region, the important winegrowing village of Balf is on the southern shore of Lake Neusiedl in a large nature reserve. From the Steiner Vineyard, 25 year-old vines, grown in stony soils and farmed organically. Grapes are destemmed and ferment spontaneously in open-top, wooden fermenters for four weeks. After pressing, the wine ages for 22 months on lees in an old Austrian wooden fermenter. No fining, no filtration, minimal SO₂.

Sopron 2018

100% Kékfrankos (Blaufränkisch)

The city of Sopron is the historic home of Kékfrankos and the former center of the Burgenland region. It is grown biodynamically on heavy clay with withered gneiss subsoils. Grapes are destemmed and spontaneously fermented in stainless steel, where they macerate for 3 weeks. Aging takes place in a 6000l conical wooden vat on the lees for 22 months. No fining, no filtration, minimal SO₂.

Sümege 2020

Kékfrankos & Olaszrizling (Welschriesling) co-ferment

From a unique vineyard in the historic city of Sümege near Lake Balaton that contains half white and half red grapes on pure limestone ground and farmed organically. The red and white grapes are pressed immediately after the harvest together in a wooden basket press, then spontaneously fermented in a fiberglass vat. Aged 11 months on lees in fiberglass before bottling. No fining, no filtration, minimal SO₂. This was the first-ever HOLASS wine produced, the first vintage was in 2015, so it is a special wine for Imre and Ellie every year.

Tokaj 2019

80% Furmint / 20% Hárslevelü

From Hungary's most famous wine region this is a blend made of co-planted grapes on volcanic (rhyolite) soils and farmed organically. From the Rány Cru. Grapes are destemmed, crushed, pressed, and spontaneously fermented in French and Hungarian 500l oak barrels and stainless steel tanks. Aged 9 months on fine lees in both barrel and tank. No malolactic fermentation. No fining, minimal SO₂.

Somló 2018

Juhfark / Olaszrizling (Welchsriesling) / Furmint / Hárslevelü

Organically farmed on the slopes of the extinct Somló volcano in Hungary's smallest wine region, where only white grapes are allowed to be grown. The soils are basalt covered by calcareous sand and loam. The grapes are pressed whole cluster with a manual wooden basket press and spontaneously ferment in a HDPE vat. They then age in the same vat for 11 months on the fine lees. No fining, no filtration, minimal SO₂.