

# weninger

Franz Weninger is considered one of the pioneers of quality wine growing and producing in Austria. Back in 1982, long before the wine scandal and the ensuing revolution of the industry, Weninger took over his parents seven hectare estate and had the vision to transform it by establishing rigorous standards that were considered radical at the time. They included reduction of yield, strict selection at the vineyard, and slow aging in wooden barrels. The passion of the young vintner paid off. Only a year after he had taken over the family business, Franz Weninger was already making a name for himself. His Blaufränkisch Kabinett 1983 captivated wine experts and won international prizes.

In the years that followed, Weninger became a shining star among the Austrian red wine producers, earning him an excellent reputation at a time when Austria still had the image of being a purely white wine country. The wine journal Falstaff has voted Weninger wines their red wine winner four times, as well as naming him 1995's "Winemaker of the Year".

Viticulture is Franz Weninger's passion. He is considered by many to be a perfectionist when it comes to vinification: he personally supervises the aging process of his wines and has made a name for himself as a barrique specialist. Nevertheless, Weninger is convinced that real quality isn't made in the cellar, but comes from the vine itself. That is why he has also planted high vine density vineyards (6,000 vines per hectare) with young vines that have been grafted to slow-growing, early-ripening lower trunks. As he says, "In the cellar one can only bring out that which is already in the grape. The decisive conditions for good wine, therefore, are the soil and the climate. Also, the willingness of the wine grower to apply radical selection measures, for those who accept only the finest, shall be rewarded with the best results."

Today the Weninger family own 23 hectares of vineyards in and around Horitschon, most of which have been planted with Blaufränkisch, Merlot, Zweigelt, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Some of the Blaufränkisch vines from the Hochäcker and Dürrau sites are up to eighty years old, the average age of the Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon vines is 15 years.

## THE HORITSCHON ESTATE

**Vineyard:** 23 hectares in and around Horitschon in the Mittelburgenland wine region Austria. The soil here features a deep, moderately heavy to heavy loamy topsoil and is rich in clay and iron.

**Varietals:** Blaufränkisch, Merlot, Zweigelt, Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Laurent, Blauer Burgunder.

**Production:** 900 hl per year, which is equivalent to 120,000 bottles or 10,000 crates, red wine only.

**Cellar:** 250,000 liters (barrels and tanks, 400 barriques)

**Export:** 30 percent, mainly to Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Japan, UK, USA

## The Hungarian Estates

In addition, Weninger has followed the wine scene in neighboring Hungary for many years. In 1992, he and the Hungarian winemaker Attila Gere founded the Weninger & Gere Winery in Villány in southern Hungary. In 1997, the Weninger family acquired 26 hectares of the Sporn Steiner site, which is some of the finest wine-growing terrain in Hungary. Located on a hill in Balf near Sopron with a magnificent view of Lake Neusiedl, it is just a few minutes car drive from Rust, Austria. Son Franz Reinhard Weninger is the winemaker at this estate.