

# Vino

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## Krško

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## Kulinarika 8, 10

## Penina 34

Movia

24

Cvičkov dvor

22, 32, 46, 56

Najboljši kraševci

20

# Elevated: Movia



"THESE ARE NEW REALMS OF FLAVOUR ..." ... announces Aleš as we discuss the role of Veliko Belo and Veliko Rdeče, his white and red *Grands Vins*, for the Movia estate. To better grasp his metaphor I ask for clarification, receiving: "You think I'd say something as grandiose, to you of all people, had I not meant it in earnest?..." adding, with characteristic reticence "Just how come none of these wines (note: relating to the other famous Slovenian wines of the region) reached for that paramount prestige and significance, though most everyone admits – openly so! – they belong at the top of the world?!" The gist, then, is that their achievements were not valorised properly, neither in the origin domain nor on the world stage. Why not, you might ask? Come to think of it, those from Bordeaux and Burgundy are still untouchable, all other wines aspiring to equal notoriety mere epigones. Centuries of strong PR will fuel disparities. • "Altars will be erected to others, always, though we've been pouring wines second to none under the sun", Aleš continues. At any rate, with the dissolution of borders and free flow of labour and capital, technical differences are disappearing. Today, we speak more of style rather than quality disparities – it's all about detail, and if anyone has unlocked the secret, it's Aleš holding the key. Both his 'Great Wines', the white Veliko Belo and the red Veliko Rdeče, introduced to Slovenia a premiere awareness of the importance of international visibility in the topmost category of wines, empowering other winemakers in their own confidence-building efforts, their trust in domestic originality and outstanding excellence, as contained within the "new realms of flavour"; the masterful one points out after some contemplation. *Elevated* wines, without exception, originate from vineyards and winemakers with a soaring mission. Without such men and the fruits of their labour, any winemaking region is hard pressed to develop worldwide admiration.

MOVIA, Aleš, Kristančič, Ceglo, Brda, Slovenia – the order seems about correct – a winemaker, like our famous folk legend Martin Krpan, hailing from a "Hilltop by the Holy Trinity" (joking aside!), fittingly belonging among the triad of the most illustrious family estates in Slovenia, and the first whose quality and originality of wines fought their way inside the very best restaurants of planet Earth. Aleš speaks and ideates with peculiar radiance, a passionate enthusiasm spilling over into practical engagement, pondering ways to lead Brda into the company of "the greatest wines out there". His locution is interspersed with subtle accents, imperceptible perhaps to the casual listener, spellbound, no doubt, by the man's startling charisma. And yet many of these, spectral only at first glance, carry their weight: "It's up to us and no one else to uphold the reputation of our own wines and our winemaking kinsmen, those deserving of the vote (naming then some); up to us, certainly, to envision a future of Brda grounded in true sustainable development" – would an oath of winemakers vowing: "... in this place, there is no herbicide" not be a deserving first seed? • Aleš's knack for wildfire imagination, ever a step ahead of his thoughts, is liable for his many sobriquets like the "showman", "storyteller", "enfant terrible des slovenischen Weins" or "ideatore sloveno". It's not entirely unusual to see him wade fully dressed into the Adriatic, up to his thighs, to disgorge his Puro and so bring it in contact with all creation ... quite the parable, yes? The ostentatious idiosyncrasies veil a sobering truth: only absolute, staggering commitment opens the doors of the exclusive Triple "A" (*agricoltori, artigiani, artisti*) and the *Lg rennaissance des Appellation* when it comes to biodynamic grape and winegrowing principles. • Avant-garde presentation, as championed by Aleš, can be viewed through an entirely pragmatic lens: the foaming Puro, disgorged into a water bowl seconds before being served, right before the guests in a hospitality setting or at home as now practiced by aficionados, sommeliers and oenologists all over the globe, brings a firsthand experience of the creation of sparkling wine right under the audience's noses. Thousands of sommeliers ("*Movia squade*") thus obtained a brand new tool to fascinate their guests with! Is it all purely for show? The Lunar, whose clear portion separates during decanting from the thick sediment – about a glass's worth of it, still retaining a healthy (sic!) fragrance of lees, reminds intently that wine is first and foremost

Some wines win international competitions. Some, equally exquisite, aren't even part of the contest – they simply don't need medals to be winners. Those are the wines that put fidelity to their terroir above all else, embodying the winemakers' commitment to refuse compromise in the pursuit of pristine excellence. Such wines, and the people who fashion them, will be the focus of these writings. • How to recognize the apex of what the vineyard, the vintage and the master winemaker can create? Does the price even matter? It does, let's put that to rest. But wine, absolutely, also has value that cannot be expressed in numbers. • **It's not a matter of more or less. It's a matter of being complete.** • What are the shared traits of wine works of art? Colour gradient: if the grapes are mature and the wine has aged for a number of years, the colour is never watery. Its depth and intensity convey a feeling of saturation and crystalline translucence. It's not necessarily golden-yellow or near black, but it must be captivating and full. On the nose: the variety is not always at the forefront, it simply can't be since over-ripeness and years of ageing have transformed the primary aromas. Strikingly serious wines are usually blends, where each variety contributes its most assertive characteristics. At any rate, the predominant sensations will be those of extravagance and opulence. Durability of aromas is key, with the lingering scents often appearing exotic, intertwined and structured. The notion of complex layers is often pronounced. On the palate: warmth and softness should express themselves clearly. If there is a hint of hardness (astringency) or acidity, this indicates potential for longevity. When maturity is optimal, neither sensation will be disagreeable. Overall, impressions shouldn't appear one-dimensional but rather elaborately layered and balanced, elegant, arousing a duly hoped-for effect of perfect harmony.



a gift of nature infused with the machinations of the human spirit. With such risky winemaking methods, where each barrel is a story unto itself (Lunar) and each bottle depends on the singular character of the dead yeast cells (Puro), significant oscillations in sensory characteristics and style are to be expected. In this sense, it's reminiscent of walking on the razor's edge, a practice that by necessity expands the winemaking horizons. "Those who believe we've deciphered all there ever is to know about wine, all there is to create, are dead wrong!" Aleš snaps, indignant. Is his approach exaggerated, eccentric? Why would he want to devalue so frivolously all the heavy toil? Stellar examples of his wine cast such doubts aside, while those less immaculate are readily criticized, as it's perfectly normal for any wine or winemaker on the global stage. That the manufacture of Puro and Lunar demands a high degree of extravagance and a steady divergence from conventional oenological practice and craft is evident. Gadgets, one the other hand, are limited to a bare minimum, as befits romantics. Minimal total sulphur content further confirms an uncompromising faith in sustainability. • Winemakers tend to forget they're part of the broader service industry, or, as the Americans might put it "showbusiness", where a typical consumer is looking for more than just an exchange of money for product. Why not give them what they expect? That's precisely what Aleš does. Still, he puts forth a cautionary disclaimer: "I'm not some pompous cock parading on his little hill!" His confidence rests on accolades and breakthroughs: it's been eight years already since Wine Spectator published its first-ever comprehensive article on Slovenian wine, his wine and estate (*The Magician of Movia*, photography by Marijan Močivnik). Making it into the global W&S top 100 in 2015 and 2017, as well as six times prior, can no longer be attributed to coincidence which also holds true for consistent top marks granted by famous wine critics. To belong among the Wine Creators (2008, Ronda, Spain), a winemaking elite destined to shape contemporary wine history – including that of Slovenia – is icing on the cake. The role of a wine star, a "horse raising a cloud of dust" to paraphrase a local saying, is not an easy one to play. Skirting the edge, perpetuating credibility in all arenas, each and every time, these are no simple tasks for a man of any stature. Be as it may, one thing is certain. If anyone, Aleš is aptly described by the Bible-inspired verses of our songwriter Andrej Šifer (1978): "... better be cold, better be hot, a lukewarm sip I'm spitting out ...".

Among the eleven tasted wines, I selected those that most excited my imagination. As times before I must stress these wines resist the traditional sensor anatomy one is perhaps used to in the description of simpler examples. Wines occupying such strata of seriousness come with expected caveats. As with all those presented by the Elevated column, fact or reputation of extravagance was not a deciding factor. Aesthetic organoleptic assessment of wine is the sole postulate I adhere to. A significant point, on the other hand, is that all the wines have minimal total sulphur content (under 40 mg/l), yet no faults whatsoever are to be discerned on that account. Pristine!

**Gredič Exto 2016** • Dominant: juicy maturity, fullness and clarity of aromatic definition, hints of perfection. Still, the wine needs quite some time to fully develop on the nose. Ripe melon accentuates the aromatic breadth that nevertheless defiantly maintains a shade of currant. The winner here is the aromatic profile, though the wine gives off impressions richer than those announced by the 12.5% abv.. The youthfulness of the vintage shows, yet not as classical simple freshness but rather as the promise of bountiful maturity.

**Pinot Grigio Ambra 2015** • Dominant: colour that identifies the variety, bouquet that overwhelms the aroma. Though the latter shows exquisite breadth, two years were not sufficient to fully reveal the balsamic notes, so further development is expected. After slowly opening up, the clarity of the varietal character is beautifully revealed. A surprise is the stable acidity, which makes the full-bodied wine more elegant and engaging. The inviting softness of the wine, alongside its moderate ethanol content, speaks a tale of wondrous grapes...

**Veliko Belo 2006** • Dominant: crystalline translucent yellow-gold, boasting its 11 years, adorning a fine, gorgeously charming, complexly mature and

balsamic aroma. Elegance and potency in one. Vigorous on the palate, as befits the age. The strength of Chardonnay and a graceful touch of Sauvignon Blanc (expressing as peppermint) on a foundation of Ribolla. Tar notes reveal the barrique, or I wouldn't have guessed. A markedly tactile and outstanding (vintage 2010 was employed in comparison, showing that as years progress, the influence of the grape will continue to oust that of the wood).

**Lunar 2013** • Dominant: in the "new realm of flavours" of wines with a sediment, definitions are an issue. "Sedimentary wines" is how Aleš calls them, a departure from modern oenological axioms and a return to the primordial "white grape mash" maceration. A thoroughly inviting wine. There's something compellingly engaging in the orange ones: instantly, the bouquet triggers intuitions of pleasure, giving the fullness of flavour and permanence of finish even more kick as the neurons connect through prehistoric circuits. The grape berry has traversed its complete life span, from ripening on the vine to drowning in its own juice, releasing its full essence (berry asphyxiation). In good vintages, Ribolla was born for this role, claims Aleš. I was drawn to the extraordinarily "ripe" freshness and juiciness, as if this were a predicate

wine, followed by an awareness rush of the high complexity of the body against a backdrop of ripe and opulent tannins, the backbone of the wine (vintage 2007 was employed in comparison, giving insight into the added value of aging). He, who abandons all prejudice shall enter these realms...

**Veliko Rdeče 2008** • Dominant: total elegance of fragrance and flavour, hinting at the barrique though it's barely perceptible. The wine has certainly reached its pinnacle, counting down years till it flows into the glass. A wealth of smooth, mature tannins that will continue to ripen. The fine sensations on the nose and palate playfully intertwine, and it's relevant to postpone a final impression. Proper assessment requires attention and experience, and I'd recommend the wine be tasted on several occasions, preferably days apart. That alone will complete the full picture, revealing why 'Big Red' is making tidal waves on the market. Carefully refined transformations of the label, in stride with the strict demands of prestige and aesthetics, serve as an example to many a winemaker.

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