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The Blaufränkisch summit: getting to grips with this fabulous variety in the Austrian alps

December 14, 2022

jamiigoode

Blaufränkisch Summit, Lech Am Arlberg, December 2022
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Blaufränkisch Summit, Lech Am Arlberg, December 2022

It's an exciting time for Blaufränkisch. Back in May 2022 I attended a Blaufränkisch summit in Slovenia, which looked at global expressions of this variety. Then in December that year I was at another Blaufränkisch event, in

Lech in the Austrian alps. This summit was focused solely on Austrian expressions of this variety, and was moderated by Andreas Wicker.



Andreas Wicker moderating

17 producers were chosen for this exercise. 'We needed to make a choice at some point,' says Andreas, and with 36 wines served in three flights of 12, the 17 producer limit seemed sensible. 'The idea is that we should help find out why Blaufränkisch is a great variety,' he said, 'and what defines this? What are the factors defining the world's great red grape varieties?'



The thing about Blaufränkisch is that it's a variety that has only recently come to prominence. 'This story of B is not older than 20 years,' says Andreas. Roland Velic of Moric explained how the Burgenland region, the home of this variety, was part of Hungary until 1921. And then after the war, Hungary became communist and the socialist five year plans were a disaster for viticulture. There was a level of cultural destruction. Prior to the war, Blaufränkisch had been sold east, but afterwards it was sold to Austria, and there was little awareness of the variety.



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Then there's the issue of Austrian red wine in the 1990s and noughties, when customers wanted ripeness and oak. 'The highest rated and most sold-out wines in Austria were blends based on Cabernet Sauvignon,' says Roland. David Schildenecht adds that there was a necessary shift from a "We too" mentality to an "only we" mentality. The only chance to make an impression on the market was to show that we too could do Cabernet Sauvignon blends – it's an insecurity of the Austrian winemakers in their early stages – they wanted to gain security by working with well-known varieties.'



Besides, in the past, Blaufränkisch wasn't always charming. It was a struggle to ripen it much of the time. 'Historically, in the 1970s and 1980s getting Blaufränkisch tannins ripe was tough,' says Andreas. 'Climate change has assisted in getting ripe phenolic components.'

So we tasted and discussed. One of the interesting dynamics here was looking at the young wines and also some older bottles. There has definitely been quite a style shift with this variety, and now the wines tend to be

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brighter and fresher, and there's less imprint from new oak. There's also been a working-out of terroirs, as the new style has allowed growers to see the place in a little more focus.

The older wines were important. On one level, they allow us to see the ageing potential, but on another we see the ageing potential as seen through the winemaking of 10-15 years ago which in some cases might have been quite different.

My conclusions? I've been a fan of Blaufränkisch, but even more so after this tasting. I like the style of wines that are being made today, which really show off the characters this grape possesses. One of those is its natural freshness and high acidity, which is a real asset. Couple this with its lovely fruit expression, and nice structure, and you've got a beautifully expressive lens to translate the Pannonian terroirs where this grape is largely found.

Flight 1 Origins

Less expensive 'regional' wines



Rosi Schuster Blaufränkisch 2020 Burgenland

This from the Leithaberg, from different villages, with bedrock covered by

sedimentary soils. Aged in larger oak. Sweetly aromatic with bright cherry and raspberry fruit with some fine spices. The palate is fresh and direct with sweet raspberries and red cherries with lovely spicy detail. Has a lot of freshness and purity, with hints of smoke and spice in the background. Juicy finish. 93/100

Uwe Schiefer Blaufränkisch 2019 Burgenland

Predominantly from Eisenberg (schist), plus some loam and also a bit of Leithaberg too. Perfumed with some spicy detail to the ripe plum and cherry aromatics. Lovely weight here: fleshy raspberry and cherry fruit with good acidity and fine spices. Has a freshness and elegance, finishing with some spice and fine tannin. 93/100

Moric Blaufränkisch 2019 Burgenland

Predominantly from Mittelburgenland. Limestone, a bit of clay, some primary rock. Bottled after 12-14 months in oak. This is taut and linear with lovely bright fruit: cherries and raspberries, with good acidity and nice tannic structure. Lovely fruit intensity but also some savoury structure. Finishes taut and focused: a lovely wine. 94/100

Gesellmann Blaufränkisch Creitzer Reserve 2020 Deutschkreuz, Mittelburgenland

20 months ageing in cask. Some smoky spicy detail on the nose which shows nice bright black cherry fruit. The palate has brooding dark fruits with nice acidity and a bit of structure. Supple, fruity and focused with some flesh. Lovely. 92/100

Wachter Wiesler Blaufränkisch 2019 Deutsch Schützen, Eisenberg

Distinctive savoury, spicy black fruits nose: quite assertive. Has depth and concentration on the palate, together with good structure. Firm, grippy, quite spicy and showing a slight wildness, but also lovely complexity and layers of flavour. 94/100

Krutzler Blaufränkisch Eisenberg Spätfüllung 2018 Eisenberg

Very lively and expressive with lovely vivid raspberry and cherry fruit, with keen acidity and some structure. Vivid, pure and intense with lovely raspberry notes on the palate. Crunchy and fine. 94/100

**Claus Preisinger Erde Luft Grasundreiben 2020 Burgenland**

An outlier, picked early and matured in amphora. Fresh and highly perfumed on the nose with sappy red cherry fruits and some fine spices. Pure and supple with lovely focused, elegant, precise red cherry on the palate with amazing freshness and keen acidity, and a distinct mineral layer. A remarkable, elegant, bright expression of this variety. 95/100

Kolfok Neckenmarkter Blaufränkisch 2019 Neckenmarkt, Burgenland

Sophisticated, polished aromas of red cherries, plums and a touch of creamy, spicy oak. The palate is refined and concentrated with a real sense of restrained power, showing beautiful fruit, good structure, drinkability and also well integrated oak. Impressive stuff. 94/100

Dorli Muhr Samt & Seide 2019 Prellenkirchen, Carnuntum

This is fresh, focused and sappy with lovely red cherry and plum fruit, showing bright acidity and lovely purity. It has focus, drinkability, but also a bit of substance. So expressive and with almost perfect balance. 94/100

Kollwentz Blaufränkisch Leithakalk 2019 Leithaberg

This is quite lovely. There's some oak here, adding a bit of cream and spice, but it integrates very well into the sweet black cherry and blackberry fruit, with some flesh and real purity. Has a lovely acid line on the finish. 93/100

Prieler Blaufränkisch Leithaberg 2019 Leithaberg

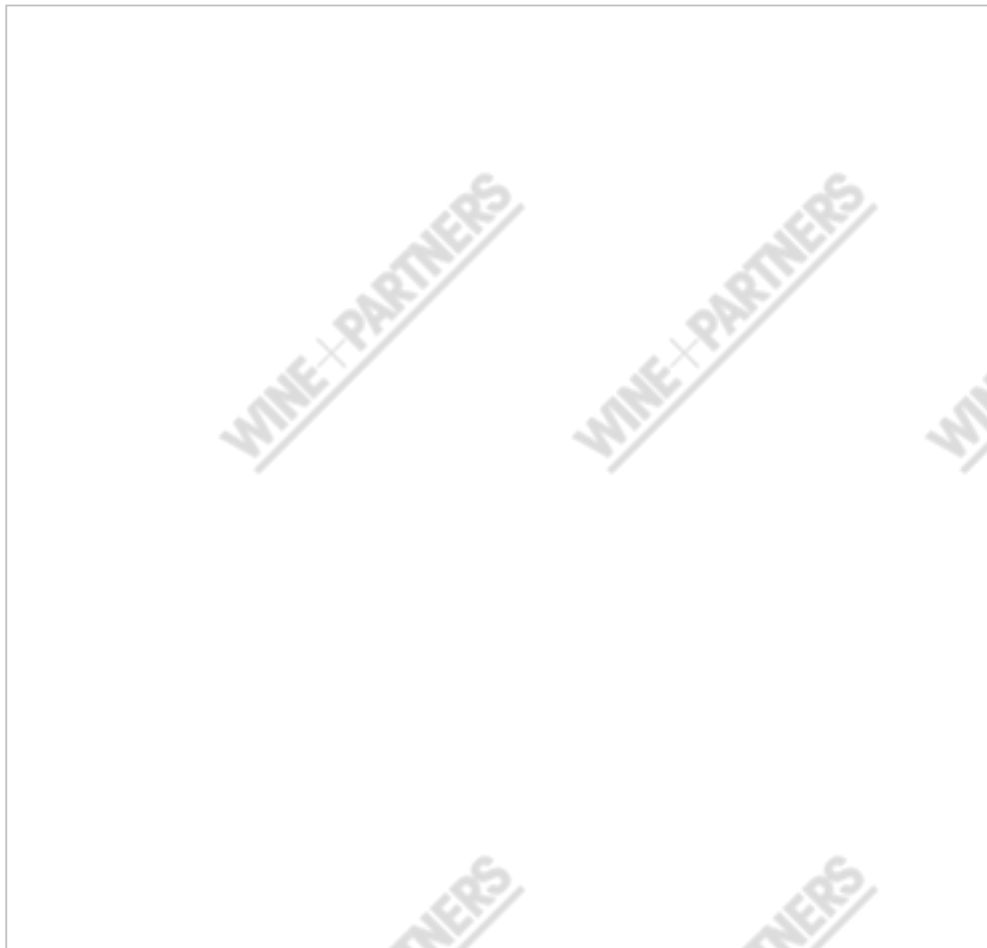
Amazing freshness and balance here, with sweet cherries and plums. There's a nice finesse to this wine which shows a bit of grip and lovely raspberry and cherry notes. Lovely freshness here with nice bright fruit and a slight spiciness on the finish. 93/100

Lichtenberger Gonzalez Blaufränkisch 2019 Leithaberg

Really distinctive with bright, vivid, slightly waxy red cherry and plum fruit, with some citrus peel and tart acidity. It's compact and slightly reductive with really vivid fruit. Bright, high-acid finish. 92/100

Flight 2 In pursuit of regional expression

Some older wines here



Rosi Schuster St. Margarethen Blaufränkisch 2017 Burgenland

A selection of two single vineyards, with older vines. Fresh and direct with lovely juicy cherry and berry fruits, with some chalky notes and good acidity. This is linear and expressive with nice weight, showing lovely purity. 93/100

Anita & Hans Nittnaus Ried Tannenberg Blaufränkisch 2013 Leithaberg

North-facing slope on schist. Warm, sweet strawberry and cherry fruit on the

nose. Lovely sweet aromatics here. The palate is bright but also has some depth, with notes of tar, gravel and wood smoke as well as some structure. Very expressive and ageing in interesting ways, showing lovely development. 94/100

Prieler Ried Goldberg Schützen am Gebirge Blaufränkisch 2012 Leithaberg

A site away from the lake, with schist soils. Very perfumed aromatics here with ripe cherries and some strawberry, with an appealing sweetness and a sense of refinement. The palate is fine and elegant with a core of sweet, silky fruit, and nice tannins and acidity. It's textural, pure, and evolving in beautiful ways. Lovely refinement. 95/100

Gesellmann Ried Hochberg Blaufränkisch 2011 Neckenmarkt, Mittelburgenland

Some assertive spice and earth notes on the nose. Stern, structured palate but with direct red cherry and berry fruits, with some peppery hints and firm tannins. Evolving in good ways, but still quite firm. Lovely stuff. 94/100

Gernot Heinrich Ried Alter Berg Blaufränkisch 2011 Leithaberg (magnum)

Savoury, spicy edge to the sweet berry fruits nose, with a hint of earthiness. Has some structure on the palate with some olive, spice, dried herbs and dense, sweet plum and cherry fruit. Nicely evolved and developing well, finishing firm and structured. 94/100

Paul Achs Ried Altenberg Blaufränkisch 2011 Gols, Neusiedlersee

Lovely aromatics: sappy and fresh with cherry and raspberry and some fine spicy notes. The palate has lovely fleshy black fruits with hints of chalk and gravel and olive tapenade. Lovely intensity here with some freshness and well integrated oak. Good acid and also nice structure. A rich, expansive wine in a good place right now. 93/100



**Uwe Schiefer Ried Reihburg Blaufränkisch Deutsch Schützen 2010
Eisenberg, Burgenland**

This is still quite taut and youthful, with some bright peppery red fruits at its core, and notes of chalk and citrus peel adding structure, along with the trademark high acidity. Juicy and vivid with a nice savoury twist to the fruit. Showing taut, grainy, dry tannins on the finish. Nice presence. 95/100

Dorli Muhr Ried Spitzerberg Blaufränkisch 2010 Prellenkirchen, Carnuntum

A humid, cool year. Lovely elegant, open sappy notes on the nose with tea, sappy leafy red fruits and some floral characters. The palate is fine and fresh with a hint of sweet malt in the background and some supple cherry and strawberry fruit, with a touch of citrus. Light, fine and complex. So pretty: this has developed beautifully. 95/100

Kollwentz Ried Setz Blaufränkisch Eisenstadt 2009 Leithaberg

East-facing limestone-based vineyard. Sweet creamy nose with some appealing oak notes as well as sweet berry fruits. Lovely palate, with quite a bit of oak evident, but it works well with the core of sweet, pure strawberry and cherry fruit. Evolving beautifully, with a long life ahead of it, but the winemaking does dominate the variety here. 93/100

Krutzler Perwolff Blaufränkisch 2009 Eisenberg

Iron-rich clay and some schist. Some savoury, spicy hints on the nose as well as ripe berry fruits. Fresh and direct with bright cherries and plums, with grippy structure. Juicy and showing keen acidity, with a dry tannic finish. Has freshness and purity, despite the dry finish. 93/100

Moric Neckenmarkt Blaufränkisch Alte Reben 2006 Burgenland

Highly perfumed with wild strawberries, cherries and some sappy green hints. The palate is very fine with a savoury, spicy twist to the supple, green-tinged cherry and plum fruit. A touch of cured meat and earth here in the background, with fine spiciness. It still has a bit of tannin and good acidity, with a nice savoury twist on the finish. So lovely. 96/100

Ernst Triebaumer Ried Mariental Blaufränkisch 1986 Rust, Burgenland

Savoury nose with some earth and spice, as well as iodine, black cherry, raspberry and some mineral notes, with wet stone and chalk. The palate is firm and savoury, but still has some fruit. Strawberries, raspberries and some cherry, with some olive notes and a touch of pepper. This has developed really beautifully: it still has fruit, and the high acidity helps preserve it remarkably. 94/100

Flight 3 Perspectives

Wines that winegrowers have chosen as particularly close to their own vision of Blaufränkisch

**Claus Preisinger Bonsai Blaufränkisch 2021 Burgenland**

Perfumed, fresh and floral with sweetly aromatic strawberry and red cherry fruit. Fine, light, elegant and pure: a lighter expression of Blaufränkisch with good acidity and fine red fruits, showing a silkiness to the texture. So supple and elegant with massive drinkability, and a fresh finish. 95/100

Ernst Triebaumer Ried Mariental Blaufränkisch 2020 Rust, Leithaberg

Lovely precision here. Really fine and expressive with red cherries and raspberries, showing nice acidity and a really nice density of fruit. Such lovely precision and purity with plenty of concentration, but also a sense of lightness. Very fine and expressive. Remarkable wine. 96/100

Kolfok Ried Bodigraben Blaufränkisch 2018 Neckenmarkt, Burgenland

Steep south west facing slope on gneiss. Floral aromatics here with black cherries and plums, as well as some chalk, a hint of green and some white pepper. The palate is floral and fresh with amazing precision, good acidity, and a very fine texture, with sweet red and black fruits, finishing supple and lithe. Such precision, and quite tannic, too, although these tannins are partly hid by the fruit. A lovely wine. 95/100

Krutzler Ried Weinberg Blaufränkisch 2017 Deutsch Schützen, Eisenberg

Loam soils with some iron. Sweetly aromatic on the nose with a spicy, slightly

earthy framing to the sweet berry fruits. The palate is pure, concentrated and very fresh, with high acidity supporting the cherry and raspberry fruit. Lovely precision and purity, finishing slightly firm. 94/100

Wachter Wiesler Ried Saybritz Blaufränkisch 2017 Deutsch Schützen, Eisenberg

This is his lowest intervention wine. Green schist and loam soils. Vibrant nose of cherry and spice, with a slight wildness. Assertive berry fruits, too. The palate is lush and textured, but also spicy and structured, with sweet blackberry and cherry fruit as well as grainy, grippy savouriness. Great concentration, with layers of flavour. Finishes slightly tart and spicy. 94/100

Gernot Heinrich Ried Edelgraben Blaufränkisch 2017 Breitenbrunn, Leithaberg

Brooding, spicy black fruits nose with some perfume. The palate is taut, fresh and linear with lovely mineral notes, keen acidity and good structure. Very expressive with focused red cherries and plums, and some bright raspberry. Lovely precision and I really like the acidity, and this is really restrained in style. 95/100



Uwe Schiefer Ried Szapary Blaufränkisch 2016 Deutsch Schützen, Eisenberg

Taut, compact aromatics here, with cherry and raspberry as well as some

dusty notes. Vibrant, fresh and expressive, combining good acidity, firm tannins and some dusty, spicy characters on the finish, complementing the vivid black cherry and raspberry notes. Pleasantly tart and very expressive. 94/100

Anita & Hans Nittnaus Ried Joiser Altenberg Blaufränkisch 2016 Jois, Leithaberg

Very fine aromatics with blackcurrant and black cherry, as well as some subtle green hints. The palate is very fine: fresh and focused, but with some flesh on the bones, showing hints of black cherry and blackcurrant with nice grainy structure and good acidity, as well as a hint of olive and black pepper. A really lovely wine. 96/100

Paul Achs Ried Golser Altenberg Blaufränkisch 2016 Gols, Leithaberg

Generous and full with a lot of ripe black fruit character. Shows some richness of texture on the palate: this is a bold, ripe, rich Blaufränkisch with nice density, some spiciness, a twist of olive and tar, and a bit of grip. 94/100

Tschida Felsen I Blaufränkisch 2015 Illmitz, Burgenland

Lively, intense and vivid with nice sweet black cherry and blackberry fruit, some peppery notes, and grainy structure. It has a hint of naturalness to it, and a contrast between the silky fruit and the slightly angular, grippy tannins. A slight biscuity savouriness on the finish. 91/100

Lichtenberger Gonzalez Ried Vorderberg, Blaufränkisch 2013 Breitenbrunn, Leithaberg

Slightly baked, savoury, spicy edge to the sweet cherry and plum fruit on the nose. The palate is fresh with sweet cherry and plum fruit, but also a drying, savoury spicy edge. Grippy and vivid, finishing dry. Apparently, not a typical bottle. 90/100

Rosi Schuster St. Margarethen Blaufränkisch 2013 Burgenland

Good structure here: dense and quite firm with a spicy edge to the cherry and plum fruit. Has a grainy, savoury, slightly drying character on the finish. Quite firm, showing a bit of development, finishing grippy and tight. 92/100

See also:

Exploring Blaufränkisch at the Blue Frank Think Tank, Slovenia – 1 [The presentations](#) – 2 [The tasting](#)

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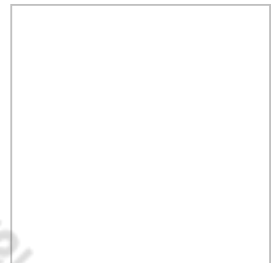
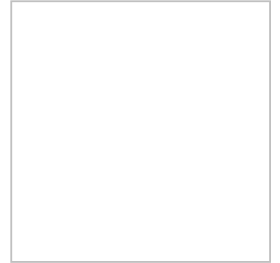
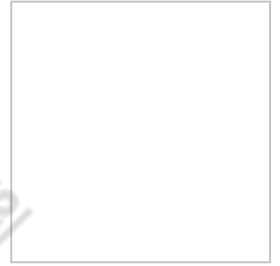
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