Winemaker: Aleks Simcic
Generation: 1st

GIOCATO

Sauvignon Blanc

The complement to his highly popular Giocato Pinot Grigio, Alek Simčič's Sauvignon Blanc is a classically-styled wine from one of Europe's top white appellations. Piercingly clean and bright, its body is taut and linear, with a compelling array of stone fruit, citrus, and terroir-driven minerality. Through low yields, Aleks achieves a wine with stunning (unoaked) weight and character. Best Buy, Wine Enthusiast

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

While the family's farm in western Slovenia is too tiny to produce his popular Giocato line, Aleks Simcic works with a handful of organic growers in and around his village to create his affordable masterpieces. Here, Aleks applies the same lofty standards as he does with the single estate wines of Edi Simčič.

ENOLOGIST

Aleks Simcic

TASTING NOTES

Color	Straw yellow with green reflections
Nose	Grapefruit, lemon grass, sweet peas, and thistle undertones
Palate	Medium bodied with elegant mineral notes
Finish	Crisp, medium+ finish

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

	12
Vineyard Location	Goriska Brda, Primorska
Vineyard Size	8 ha
Varietals List	100% Sauvignon Blanc
Farming Practices	Organically farmed (non-certified) including dry-farmed; grapes picked by hand
Elevation	150 m
Soils	Ponca (clay)
Maturation Summary	Bottled for 2 months
Alcohol	13.0 %
Acidity	5.5 g/liter
Residual Sugar	2 g/liter
Annual Production	60,000 bottles

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GIOCATO

Aleks Simčič, of the Edi Simčič estate in Slovenia, is considered by many to be one of the finest winemakers in Eastern Europe. Located just meters over the Italian border and next door to Colli Orientali in Friuli, Simčič lives in Goriška Brda, a lush, subalpine zone that actually belonged to Italy until the end of World War II. It also happens to be one of the region's best areas, perhaps THE best area, to grow white varietals. Long-aging, intense, and sophisticated, his single estate wines now rival the best of France. In addition, Aleks also works with a handful of growers at the local co-op to make a series of affordables. When we challenged him, "can you make a fantastic, expressive, mineral-driven white for under $15 retail?" his answer was Giocato, a terrific wine that raises the bar on inexpensive Pinot Grigio. Low yields lend it great viscosity, and the palate offers a perfect balance of tropical fruit and acidity. As with the high-end wines of Edi Simčič, everything Aleks touches, it would seem, turns to gold.

As his own estate is too small to produce Giocato on its own, Aleks makes the wines in conjunction with the organic co-op, Vinska Klet. Established in 1957, this collective of small, independent farmers is wholly devoted to organic farming - including dry farming – and maintains a philosophy close to his own. Working with a small number of growers with whom he has long-standing relationships, Aleks is able to choose the best hand-picked grapes that his neighbors have to offer. While they're sourced from a number of sites in and around the village of Vipolže, the average vine age remains 20-30 years and the average altitude 180 meters, so the price-to-quality ratio remains lofty. As with next-door Friuli, the main soil type is ponca, a carbonate-driven clay full of salts and minerals that lends structure and poise to unoaked whites. Yields for the Giocato series are also remarkably low, at just under 1 bottle per plant!

REGION

PRIMORSKA

Primorska, the westernmost of Slovenia's 3 wine regions, is the only one with a Mediterranean climate and generally leads the country in terms of both quality and reputation. Located in the SW corner, it shares a border with Italy and its name translates simply as "coastal" or "littoral". The region is divided into 4 districts (from north to south): Goriška Brda, Vipava, Karst, and Slovenian Istra. Of these, Goriška Brda is both the smallest and most acclaimed due to its immediate proximity to the world-famous (Italian) subzones of Collio and Colli Orientali del Friuli.

Among the wine growing regions in Slovenia, Primorska has maintained the highest number of indigenous varieties, including Malvazija (Malvasia), Rebula (Ribolla Gialla), Refošk (Refosco), and Teran (Terrano). In addition, many other well-known grapes flourish in the region, including Beli Pinot (Pinot Blanc), Sivi Pinot (Pinot Gris), Chardonnay, Sauvignon (Blanc), Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot. These have been planted for generations and have long been woven into the local culture and economy.

Vineyards in Primorska stretch from sea level near Trieste to an inland altitude of around 600 meters. Along with Vipava, subalpine Goriška Brda mainly produces whites, while most of the red wine hails from Karst and Slovenian Istra, closer to the sea. Soils are varied, but include flysch, marl, limestone and dolomite. (Much of the region was prehistorically underwater.) With an abundance of hot, sunny days, influence from the Adriatic, and brisk winds coming down from the Alps, wines are often focused, structured, and complex.

GORISKA BRDA

The tiny Goriška Brda subzone, comprised of 45 villages and weighing in at just over 72 square kilometers, is sometimes referred to as Slovenia's "Little Tuscany". It's a gorgeous area of rolling hills covered in forests, hilltop hamlets, and olive and fruit groves. Also, it has the highest number of awards per hectare of all the Slovenian wine districts, with cultural and enological ties to both Italy and Austria. While the Italian influence can be felt throughout the greater Primorska region, Brda itself was physically joined with Collio once, forming a single, Slovenian-speaking region - until they were divided after World War II by a militarized Yugoslav-Italian border.

Tucked at the foot of the Julian Alps, Brda lies proximate to snow-capped peaks, but is also close the Adriatic and enjoys a largely Mediterranean climate. Summers are moderately hot, and the district receives even higher rainfall than the coast. It lies on the right bank of the Soča (Isonzo) river, NW of the Italian town of Gorizia, after which it is named. ("Brda" simply means hills). Prone to erosion, the primary soils in Brda are sandstone, marl, and flysch (also called 'ponca' or 'opoka' on either side of the border), whose loose weave often makes terracing necessary.

Vineyards in Brda stretch to an altitude of 600 meters, with higher-altitude wines praised for their elegance and higher acidity. The area's signature grape, Rebula (aka Ribolla Gialla), to cite one example, is a golden, thick-skinned variety that thrives in the hot afternoon sun, digging its roots deep into the poor soils of the highest, lowest-yielding terraces.

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