

2016 Bibich R6 Riserva

North Dalmatia, Croatia

The Bibich Winery is located in the hills of Skradin, 5 miles east of the idyllic port city of Šibenik along Croatia's island speckled coast. Across the Adriatic from Italy, it is roughly in line with the wine hills of Tuscany. The vineyards are around the tiny village of Plastovo, and clearly defined by the primitive looking rock pile/walls that are the result of clearing the fields for vines. What plots of soil can be found are just the broken down bits of the solid limestone hills. Although an incredibly picturesque part of Croatia, it was also hard hit during the Yugoslav wars of the early 90's. That was the past, enterprising young wine makers are now building a new future. Today it is impossible to talk about the Mediterranean wine region of Skradin without mentioning Alen Bibič. In many ways he deserves credit for putting Skradin back on the wine map. A life long native he learned to make wine from his grandfather. Today it is his mission to bring the wines of Skradin to international prominence. By doing so he hopes to sustain the long tradition of the indigenous white Debit and red Zinfandel relatives Babić, Plavina and Lasin unique to his home. Alen also has a taste for Grenache and Shiraz, of which he makes surprisingly Rhone-ish examples. Despite the quality of his wines and the acclaim they have received Alen believes that the surface is just being scratched.

VINEYARDS

Alen eats his lunch in the shade of the same tree he would as a child when helping his grandfather in the prized Lučica vineyard planted long ago. Head pruned old vine Debit, it is the source of the premier white wine of Bibich and named after the vineyard. Located in the hills around the tiny village of Plastovo, Lučica and Alen's many other small plots benefit from the dry, sunny conditions that demand little spraying against molds or pests. At night low pressure created by the nearby Adriatic also draws cool air from the easterly mountains which dramatically reduces temperatures and imparts a freshness to the wines. Most vineyards are head pruned and all are dry farmed. Yields range between 1 and 2 kilo per plant, and all harvesting is done by hand.

WINE MAKING

Grapes are delivered to the winery in small plastic crates. With the exception of the the fresh stainless steel fermented Debit, all Bibich wines are fermented with native yeast, sometimes in stainless steel, sometimes in barrique and usually aged in barrel for 12 months or more. Interestingly, Alen ages his white R5 Reserva and red R6 Riserva in American oak barrique. However, and despite the often overwhelming nature of this kind of wood, with Alen's wines it's more like a touch of salt to bring a dish to life. The integration is remarkable, unique in the region, and great with food.



NOTES & PAIRINGS

The lithe, mineral R6 typically has a freshness uncommon to the reds from the more famous and warmer growing areas in Southern Dalmatia. A roughly equal blend of native red varieties Babić, Plavina, and Lasin, it's then co-fermented, aged 12 months in American oak, and consistently dry with 13% alcohol. Ripe fruit aromas that hint at the Zinfandel heritage all three grapes belong, but ultimately savory and chock full smoky Mediterranean herbs. Exceptionally food-friendly pair it with anything from goat cheese to smoked meats to raw tuna. The American oak accents compliment just about anything that comes out of a wood fired oven.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

PRODUCER: Bibich
APPELLATION: North Dalmatia
VINTAGE: 2016
GRAPE COMPOSITION: Babić, Plavina, Lasin.
CLIMATE: Warm Mediterranean
SOILS: "Black and grey" sand and clay over a limestone base.
EXPOSURE: Varied
MACERATION & AGING: 18 day co-fermentation. Aging in new and used American oak barrels.
ALCOHOL: 14.1%
RESIDUAL SUGAR: 2 g/l
ACIDITY: 6.6 g/l



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