

KING OF POLISH RIESLING

KRÓL POLSKIEGO RIESLINGA

Riesling is one of several hundred contemporarily known strains of grapevines but at the same time, it belongs to the top ten of the most recognizable and popular strains. It is considered that it was „invented” by the Germans: certain traces indicate that German King Ludwig, who reigned over the Rhine River territories at the 2nd half of the 9th c. B.C., was its father. The first reserved records where the name of Riesling is mentioned (a bill from the vineyard of the Monastery of the Cistercians) dates back to the middle of the 15th century and the name Riesling, derived from German Russling (Russ = dark tree) or Rissling (rissig – coming from reissen = to tear) just originates in the mentioned period. The discussed strain, being named in a form consistent with today transcription, was mentioned the first time in 1552, in a Latin text of herbal book by Hieronymus Bock.

Anyway, it seems that the Germans have cultivated Riesling for ages, and 60% of all Rieslings all over the world derive just from the discussed above place. Hence, where the Polish Riesling, as mentioned in the title, comes from? Well, it appeared owing to the changes of the borders after the World War II – in

the Zielonogórskie voivodeship where the German cultivated grapevine earlier, the Poles became successful later. It did not come, however, instantly; the so-called real socialism was not favourable for development of vineyards and wine production. As late as in the nineties of the 20th century, it was possible to find out and identify old, wild sprouts of grapevine. Marek Krojcig – the man whom I call today the King of Polish Riesling, has accomplished this work. The warming up of the climate was helpful but the idea of reconstructing the vineyard and wine manufacture was the most important factor.

The first new planting at the territory of the old vineyard and its vicinity were made by Krojcig in 1996 and the official sale of wines from that place was commenced in 2010. When I heard the first time about the wine from Górzyskowo (it was in 2014), Marek Krojcig and his wife Barbara managed already 6.5-hectare vineyard „Old Wine Mountain” (in Polish: „Stara Winna Góra”) and the adjacent atmospheric hotel. Initially, the majority of the produced wines (ca.70%) was consumed at the site but gradually, the external sale was commenced. It began from the



interest of the known importer and distributor Robert Mielżyński in Krojcieg wines and introducing the Rieslings from Górzynkowo to his offer.

In 2014, production of wine in Stara Winna Góra amounted to ca 25 thousand bottles annually; the most interesting products were: Lyrical Riesling and Riesling from Pradolina (in English: ice-marginal valley). The mentioned wines were first found in the offer of Mr Mielżyński what became a very good promotion of them. And that's where I met the discussed wines the first time. They made a perfect impression even when compared (absolutely incidentally) with the simultaneously consumed excellent New Zealand wines: Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc from Little Beauty.

From the beginning, the both Rieslings of Krojcieg had – depending on the vintage – 10 to 10.5% of alcohol and were very drinkable. I tried to drink them in cold Poland as well as in hot Africa (yes, it took them with me there!), with the same good impressions.

Although manufacture of good wine from the Riesling strain in Poland is – due to the climate and short period of vegetation of grapevine – very difficult, the opinion about Krojcieg Rieslings was early positive and the recognition came after release of vintage 2013. Although dry Lyrical Riesling 2013 was determined as thrifty in aroma and strongly acidic, it was simultaneously indicated that the discussed wine would become more favourable after resting in bottle for 1 – 2 years. In turn, the semi-dry Riesling from Pradolina '2013 attracted the attention by its excellent, typical-of-the-strain, pleasant fruity aromas and noble taste in the mouth and a good structure and length. The terms „dry” and „semi-dry” as used in definition of the categories of the discussed wines require certain comments but about that in a moment.

So much is about the vintage '2013 of Krojcieg wines. And what was the next one – 2014? Lyrical Riesling of that year was delightful due to its typical Riesling aroma – with flavour of citrus fruits, green apples and peaches and somewhat like





a smell of spring (wet catkins?). It had a lot of body and was mineral, crystal acidic and long. Its back label had the inscription reading „dry wine” and such was its receipt though indeed, it was rather semi-dry Riesling but a very acidic one; the mentioned acid was perfectly balanced by the residual sugar. During the „blind” degustation I would indicate Mosel as the place of origin of the tested wine, so chapeau bas!

The second Riesling from Krojciec, coming from Pradolina in 2014 vintage was felt as a pleasantly semi-dry wine (though in aspect of the residual sugar content it was rather semi-sweet, and such was information on the back wine label), strongly fruity (flavour and taste), bodied and long. It made the impression of more extractive than Lyrical Riesling but was still very fresh. Especially, I liked its sensible (especially at the finish, aftertaste) flavour of sweet pineapple.

It is impossible to describe all vintages by Krojciec in one article – moreover, Mark did not focus his attention on the Rieslings exclusively. When I met Him again in 2018, he presented his new wine from the strain Pinot Gris, coming from 2017. It was very aromatic; his smell reminded me hard candies but the taste rewarded everything: it was extractive, fresh and perfectly acidic. And flavours of apricot, peach and taste of candied fruits were delightful.

What was the comparison with the both Krojciec Rieslings dating to 2017 vintage? Lyrical Riesling was – as usually – more acidic than that one from Pradolina; it had also a good extractivity and almost required some meals to accompany. As compared

to it, „Pradolina” seemed to be like a meditation wine – it had a perfect balance, quite a lot of body and very light herbal nuances. I liked it more than the previous vintages of the discussed wine.

To-day, Krojciec offers wines of 2018 vintage and apart from Rieslings and Grey Pinot, also few other wines of his production. The novelties include white semi-dry wines: Traminer (for meals of Italian kitchen, fat fishes and spectrum of cheeses), Saphira („wege” meals, and Asiatic kitchen) and „upgraded” version of Riesling from Pradolina, corresponding to German Auslese (choice of grapes from the selected bunches). Krojciec has also produced his rosé wine (the so-called Autumn Wine fits very well into various salads) and red wine (Regent, good for delicate roasted meals).

It is not the last word of Krojciec as a wine producer. For now, we should appreciate a class of wines which are produced at this moment. I participated once in the „blind” degustation where the Rieslings from Górzynkowo conquered really good French wines from Bordeaux and Italian wines from Trentino-Alto Adige.

The success never comes itself; I am absolutely aware of the effort which had to be put by Krojciec into the work to reach such quality of wines. He undoubtedly deserves a Title, mentioned in the beginning of the present article. I do not know better Polish Rieslings although I tasted at least several of them.

Andrzej Kusyk

The illustrations come from the Internet page of Mr Krojciec <http://winna-gora.pl> and <http://pixabay.com>