



BRAVIUM

Hungarian Oak

WHY BRAVIUM USES HUNGARIAN OAK BARRELS

About ten years ago, my eyes were opened to Hungarian oak during a blind tasting arranged by iconic barrel broker Mel Knox. I tasted the same Chardonnay and Pinot Noir raised in every manner of oak barrel and was drawn to the wines - especially Chardonnay - aged in Hungarian oak. Research and a later trip to Hungary confirmed my sensory intuitions: 'As a result of the harsh growing conditions of the North Hungarian Range, the oak forests are composed almost exclusively of sessile oak or *Quercus Petraea*, literally translated as Oak of the Rocks. Tight grained *Quercus Petraea* has a high aromatic concentration matched with low tannic content resulting in wines of complex aromas, enhanced fruit character with tension and brightness.'¹

The Zemplen forest that my friend Andras Kalady is pictured standing in straddles one of the youngest volcanic ranges in Europe in the Inner Northern Carpathian Mountains in the Tokaj region. 'Composed of 1,500 extinct volcanoes ranging to 2,500', the Tokaj Eperjesi Mountains are steep, rocky and cold. The continental climate of cold winters and dry summers combines with the steep slopes and the thin rocky soils of the young volcanic mountain range to produce *Quercus Petraea* oak that grows some 30% slower and denser than in other European oak forests.'¹ The Zemplen produces some of the tightest grain oak anywhere, with a higher percentage of *Patraea* trees [almost 100% *Patraea*] than the renowned Troncais forest [80% *Patraea*] in France.

I select this oak for Bravium Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, with a specific focus on barrels that are seasoned for 3 to 4 years in the Zemplen forest itself, an important quality contributor. The idyllic seasoning yard - also pictured - sits adjacent to the forest along a year-round stream and pond. This setting provides an ideal microclimate to promote the enzymatic activity of microbiological populations of fungi and bacteria that are critical for the transformation of wood compounds. As understanding of the importance of microbial terroir in vineyards is on the rise, the same applies to oak barrels.

Derek Rohlffs
Winegrower
Wiley Vineyard & Bravium Winery



Andras Kalady in Zemplen Forest with 100 Year Old Tree



Stave Seasoning Yard



Derek Rohlffs

¹ One of the youngest volcanic mountain ranges in Europe.
<http://www.kadarhungary.com/forests-terroire>.