

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE



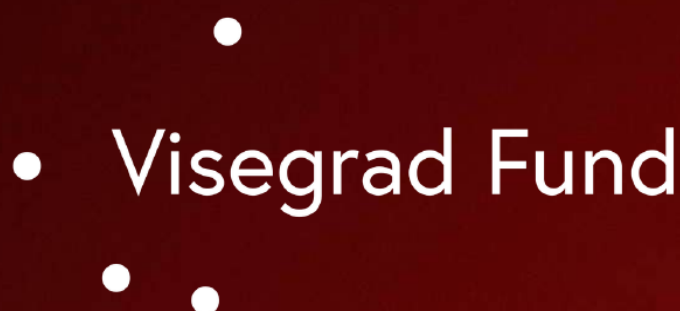
STORY4WINE

The science of wine storytelling

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Annotation

This Best Practice Guide presents a comparative study of wine storytelling in the Visegrad region. Through in-depth interviews, channel audits, and structured analysis, it examines how small and medium wineries in Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia communicate their identity, terroir, sustainability practices, and family heritage. Each winery profile contains four components: description, examples of promotional practices, short commentary, and key takeaways designed to be both individually informative and collectively comparable. The Best Practice Guide is intended for winemakers, marketing and tourism professionals, students, and educators working with the wine sector in Central Europe.

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SLOVAK WINERIES

Slovakia: SK-01

Carpate Diem

Šenkvice - Little Carpathians

Family Winery - Est. 2012



Description of the winery

2012
Founded

40-70k
Bottles /year

7 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A family winery from the heart of the Little Carpathians making Slovakia's first certified organic, low-histamine wines in a building by national architect Emil Belluš traceable from vine to bottle via blockchain.

Location and origins

Carpate Diem is based in Šenkvice, at the heart of Slovakia's most popular wine region, the Little Carpathians. The winery was founded as a family enterprise in 2012. It produces between 40,000 and 70,000 bottles annually from seven hectares of vineyards in the Modra district. The name itself combines two concepts: '**Carpe Diem**' (the philosophical invitation to 'seize the day') and the **Carpathian mountains** into a single identifier. The brand logo incorporates folk embroidery from the traditional costume of Šenkvice.

Distinctive position

The winery can claim three unique distinctions: it produces the **first certified organic wines** from the Little Carpathians; it is the first Slovak winery to declare **low-histamine wines across its entire portfolio** of 18 wines, all of which have been laboratory-tested; and it is the first Slovak winery to record its entire production process on **blockchain**. These claims cannot be verified or replicated anywhere else in the country. The winery is housed in a building designed by Emil Belluš, Slovakia's national architect, in 1944, which gives the property a layer of cultural heritage unmatched among Slovak wineries.

Markets and customers

Sales are split across corporate clients (~40%), gastronomy (~30%), wine shops (~15%) and direct consumer sales (~15%). In 2025, Carpate Diem received a gold medal at the Concours international des produits biologiques in France for its Pálava 2024, with a silver for Hibernal 2024. The winery offers tastings, e-bike rentals across the Carpathian vineyards, and has its own event space accommodating up to 50 guests.

Slovakia: SK-01

Carpate Diem

Šenkvice - Little Carpathians

Family Winery - Est. 2012

Examples of promotional practices

Carpate Diem's storytelling assets are unusually rich and unevenly used. Below is a mapping of the most relevant promotional practices, divided into those actively deployed and those that remain untapped.

Used A name that encodes philosophy and place

"Carpate Diem" fuses Carpe Diem with the Carpathian mountains. The Šenkvice folk-embroidery pattern is built into the logo, a brand mark rooted in a specific community. Rare, intentional, and difficult to copy.

Used Terroir ownership through the Little Carpathians

Brand name, logo, and website copy consistently position the winery as a product of the Little Carpathians, with 7 ha of own vineyards in the Modra wine district anchoring the claim.

Used In-person experience as the primary channel

Tastings, e-bike vineyard tours, and the event space form a strong physical storytelling stage. The owner rates personal contact 5/5; the most effective storytelling channel in their mix.

Short commentary

Carpate Diem has a strong hand: three verifiable 'firsts' in Slovakia, a philosophical name, and a workspace designed by a renowned architect. The challenge lies in maintaining consistency in communicating this message in places where customers actually look. The winery's most innovative asset: **full blockchain traceability**, remains its best-kept secret. Customers who buy a bottle have no way of knowing that this technology even exists. The Belluš building deserves particular attention. Operating in a building designed by Slovakia's most celebrated 20th-century architect is an asset that most wineries cannot acquire at any price. However, the strongest storytelling channel is also the most ephemeral. For visitors who never come, or after a visit ends, the narrative connection drops sharply. Instagram and the website focus on product content rather than narrative content, and the visitor experience is not converted into post-visit touchpoints. The winery has the potential to be one of the most distinctive small producers in Central Europe. What it needs is the discipline to share what it already does.

Slovakia: SK-01

Carpate Diem

Šenkvice - Little Carpathians

Family Winery - Est. 2012

"We use storytelling, although perhaps not as systematically as we could. We receive many visitors and organise tastings, but we need to improve how we convert these experiences into customer loyalty and purchases."

- Co-owner, February 2026

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 A winery without faces is a winery without a story

Every benchmark winery worldwide has named, visible protagonists. Anonymous "we" pages prevent emotional connection. The single highest-leverage action for most small wineries is to add the founders' names, faces, and personal origin story to the About page. This is free, takes one afternoon, and immediately transforms how the brand is perceived.

2 Innovation that no one sees is not innovation, it is a secret

A winery's most differentiating technical features must appear at the moments customers actually encounter the brand: the homepage, the wine label, the bottle in hand. If your most innovative practice lives only on a third-party booking site, you have outsourced your story to someone who is not accountable for it.

3 A statistic is a fact. A human story is a brand

Communicating sustainability or quality through numbers ("18 wines with low histamine," "100% organic," "30 years of family tradition") leaves an information impression but not an emotional one. The underlying human story, who is served, who is affected, who made the decision is what converts curiosity into loyalty.

4 The tasting room story must travel beyond the tasting room

The strongest storytelling channel for small wineries is personal contact. Visit experiences should be designed as content: photos, post-visit emails, named tours, and recurring social posts that extend the story to customers who haven't yet visited, and remind those who have.

Carpate Diem

Šenkvice - Little Carpathians

Family Winery - Est. 2012

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to small and medium wineries in Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia, particularly those with strong technical practices and weak digital storytelling.



Slovakia: SK-02

Domin & Kušický

Velký Krtíš · Southern Central Slovakia

Family Winery - Est. 1996



Description of the winery

1996
Founded

70 - 80k
Bottles /year

40 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

Slovakia's oldest ecological winery, three generations driven by one founding conviction: "If a winery, then ecological" now pioneering biodynamics from the forgotten land of Velký Krtíš.

Location and origins

Domin & Kušický is based in Velký Krtíš, in Southern Central Slovakia with distinct volcanic terroir. The winery was founded in 1996, but its ecological roots reach back to 1989, when founder Ján Domin established Slovakia's first eco-agricultural company. Production sits between 70,000 and 80,000 bottles annually. The vineyards rest on the bedrock of extinct stratovolcano Sitno (tuff, rhyolite and andesite) a geological identity shared by no other Slovak winery.

Generational arc.

The winery operates as a documented three-generation story. Ing. Ján Domin (1989–2017) the founder who refused the post of Minister of Agriculture after the Velvet Revolution and wrote the reference book "Organic Grapes and Wine" for Slovak ecological winemakers. Diana & Tibor Kušický (2017–present) the second generation; Diana was born on St. Urban's Day, the patron saint of winegrowers; Patrícia (STU design graduate) handles all visual identity in-house. Ing. Dávid Kušický (2019–present) a Mendel University Brno viticulture graduate who runs the David Kušický sub-brand and is leading the winery's biodynamic transition.

Markets and customers

The winery markets to domestic gastronomy, wine shops and direct buyers, with a confirmed export channel into the UK through Pandemonium Wines. Slovakia's first certified organic vineyard, "Katovka," was established by this winery in 1998. In 2023, the winery was featured in the international magazine World of Fine Wine - a vineyard photograph used as the article header.

Slovakia: SK-02

Domin & Kušický

Velký Krtíš · Southern Central Slovakia

Family Winery - Est. 1996

Examples of promotional practices

Domin & Kušický has the strongest People and Values storytelling foundation. Most of its assets are real and present, but unevenly distributed across channels.

Used Seven named family members with photos and emails

The About page lists Ján Domin, Diana, Tibor, Patrícia, Dávid and other family members, each with a photograph, a short personal story, and direct email contact. This is global best practice applied locally.

Used The Katovka blog post — a world-class vineyard story

A first-person post by Dávid Kušický about the Katovka vineyard tells the etymology (executioner's shed), the pioneer claim (Slovakia's first organic), the discovery, the winemaking decisions, and the emotional resolution. The template works.

Used Named vineyards as characters in product naming

"Katovka," "Pustatina," "Modrý Kameň," "Viničky" each vineyard carries a name and a personality into the wines made from it. The David Kušický sub-brand extends this with "Hey Mate!," "Serotonin," "Pustatina."

Short commentary

Domin & Kušický has the richest narrative infrastructure. Three generations with biographical depth, a founding manifesto from 1996, named vineyards each carrying their own story, a proven blog format, international press recognition, and a working creative director inside the family. The challenge is not building a story. It is the discipline to deploy it consistently across channels. The strongest single brand statement in Slovak winemaking **"Ked' vinárstvo, tak ekologické" appears on the About page once. It belongs on every customer touchpoint.** The owner explicitly confirmed that storytelling at the winery happens "naturally and spontaneously" which means different family members tell different versions to different audiences. Dávid Kušický's biodynamic transition is one of the most compelling ongoing narratives in Central European winemaking. A third-generation viticulturist completing the journey his grandfather started under Communism. This is content that international audiences actively look for.

Slovakia: SK-02

Domin & Kušický

Velký Krtíš · Southern Central Slovakia

Family Winery - Est. 1996

"I would not say that I use storytelling as a consciously learned marketing technique. Rather, it happens naturally and spontaneously when I talk to customers. The story emerges naturally from the product itself and our way of working."

- Dávid Kušický, February 2026

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 A great story told differently every time is a fragmented brand

When multiple family members or team members speak for the winery in parallel, the absence of a shared "story spine" produces inconsistency. The solution is not a marketing script. It is a one-page internal document listing five to seven core facts everyone agrees to communicate, in their own words, around the same backbone.

2 Your founding manifesto belongs on every touchpoint

If a winery has a single, conviction-driven statement that has held true across decades (an ecological commitment, a winemaking philosophy, a family promise), it should appear on the homepage hero, on back labels, in Instagram bios, and in export sheets. **Repetition across channels is what turns a statement into a brand code.**

3 A proven content format is wasted if it appears once

When a winery has demonstrated that a particular story format works (vineyard portrait, seasonal post, winemaking diary), repeating it on a calendar (four to six times a year) builds compounding brand value. One post is a curiosity. A series is a story. A multi-year series is a brand.

4 An ongoing transition is more powerful than a completed achievement.

Customers and importers respond more strongly to a brand documented mid-journey than to one presenting finished credentials. A winery moving from organic to biodynamic, from one generation to the next, or from local to international markets, should narrate the process publicly: quarterly updates, before/after vineyard photos, lessons unlearned. The journey is the story.

Slovakia: SK-02

Domin & Kušický

Veľký Krtíš · Southern Central Slovakia

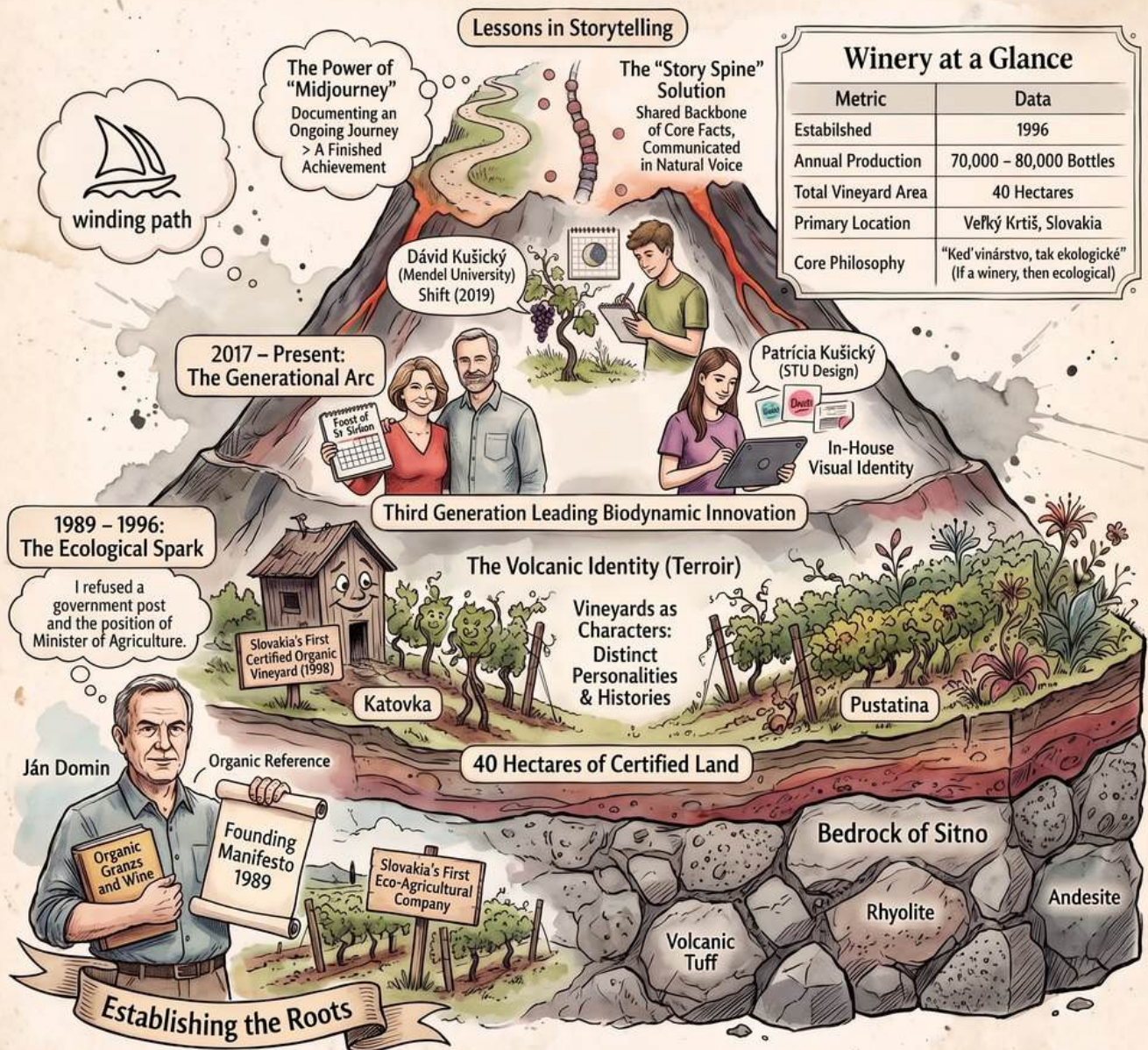
Family Winery - Est. 1996



Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to multi-generational family wineries in Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia, particularly those with strong heritage and inconsistent digital communication.

The Volcanic Legacy of Domin & Kušický: A Generational Journey in Ecological Winemaking



Slovakia: SK-03

Hancko Family Winery

Levice · Nitra wine region

Family Winery - Est. 1996



Description of the winery

1996
Founded

5k
Bottles /year

0.5 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A young family winery in the heart of Levice. Born from the fusion of two family lineages (Hancko and Vidra) reaching back three generations, making natural wines on the dual terroir of travertine hill Šiklôš and the volcanic foothills of the Štiavnické vrchy mountains.

Location and origins

Hancko Family Winery is based in Levice, a town in southern central Slovakia with a Mediterranean-influenced microclimate. The winery represents the union of two family viticultural traditions (Hancko and Vidra families), and is led by the third generation. Both grandfathers and great-grandfathers cultivated their own vineyards and made their own natural wines. Today's winery formalises those legacies into a single brand. The new visual identity launched in 2023, designed by Slovak studio ZNOVA, signalled the family's transition from informal home production to a professional natural winemaking business.

Distinctive position

The winery's defining terroir story is dual: "Travertín a Vulkán" - travertine and volcano. The travertine hill Šiklôš (also known as Vápnik) is the source of "Levice golden onyx," a precious recrystallised stone considered a European unicum and one of the most expensive worked stones in the world. The same hill yields fossils of rhinoceros teeth and turtle shells. The volcanic side comes from the foothills of Štiavnické vrchy, on tuff and andesite from the extinct Sitno stratovolcano (15 million years old) the same volcanic system that anchors the terroir of Domin & Kušický. Vines have grown here since the time of the Roman Empire.

Winemaking and markets

The winery produces natural wines with minimal intervention: no commercial yeasts, no enzymes, no chemical adjustments to taste, colour or stability. Fermentation relies on wild yeasts from grape skins and cellar environment. Wines are bottled unfiltered, by gravity and time, with sulphur kept under 20 mg/l free. Production is small and family-scaled, with sales mainly through direct contact and a Wix-based e-shop.

Slovakia: SK-03

Hancko Family Winery

Levice · Nitra wine region

Family Winery - Est. 1996

Examples of promotional practices

Hancko is the youngest SK brand in this SK study and shows the clearest evidence of a deliberate, designer-supported brand launch. Several elements are unusually well executed for a small winery.

Used Professional brand identity from a named designer

ZNOVA studio (designer Martin Machala) built the identity in 2023: a lion-and-barrel logomark referencing Levice's heraldry, a handwritten brand wordmark, and a series of hand-painted watercolour illustrations digitised for labels. Rare-quality design for a small Slovak winery.

Used Articulated "Travertín a Vulkán" terroir story

The About page tells the terroir story with geological precision: tuff, andesite, travertine, Šiklůš hill, Sitno stratovolcano, Roman-era vineyards. The "golden onyx" and rhinoceros-fossil details give the place a uniqueness no competitor can claim.

Used Watercolour illustrations as a visual signature

Hand-painted artworks form the graphic spine of every wine label, "symbolising the variety of flavours" (ZNOVA). This is a consistent brand asset that distinguishes Hancko from generic small-winery typography-driven labels.

Short commentary

The Hancko Family Winery is a brand that has been professionally launched in the context of storytelling. The decision to commission a full identity from a named design studio before the brand had built market traction is unusual among small Slovak wineries. The watercolour labels, the lion-and-barrel logomark, the handwritten wordmark, and the layered terroir narrative ("travertine and volcano") form a coherent identity package that most peers acquire only years later, if at all. Few Slovak wineries can claim a hill that produces a European-unique stone ("Levice golden onyx") and yields rhinoceros fossils. Combined with the volcanic Sitno foothills, this gives Hancko two distinct narrative anchors - geological and historical. The fusion of two family lineages into a single brand is one of the most narratively interesting setups in Slovak winemaking. Lastly, joining a charter community AUTENTISTA (or at least referencing peers operating in the same tradition) would anchor the natural-wine claims in something more than self-description.

Slovakia: SK-03

Hancko Family Winery

Levice · Nitra wine region

Family Winery - Est. 1996

Through a distinctive identity, we emphasise the winery's origin. The striking symbol combines a lion representing Levice and a barrel, symbolising the winery. The handwritten brand name communicates the uniqueness of the product."

Martin Machala, ZNOVA, 2023

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 Investing in identity before traction is a competitive advantage

Most small wineries build a brand identity reactively, after years of inconsistent communication. Hancko commissioned a full identity package before the brand had built awareness.

2 Geological storytelling makes terroir verifiable

Generic "terroir" language ("our unique soil," "special climate") sounds the same in every region. Naming specific geology (travertine, tuff, andesite, a stratovolcano, a quarried gemstone, rhinoceros fossils) turns terroir from rhetoric into verifiable fact. Specificity is the highest-leverage storytelling tool a winery has.

3 "Third generation" is a claim — names are a story

Referring to ancestors collectively ("our grandfathers," "the third generation") creates an aura of heritage without giving readers anyone to connect with emotionally. Naming individuals, dating their work, and showing their photographs converts a heritage claim into a heritage story.

4 A fusion story is rare

Hancko's origin: two family lineages (Hancko and Vidra) merging into one winery in the third generation is a structurally interesting narrative few wineries have. Treating it as a one-sentence reference on the homepage understates its uniqueness. Fusion stories deserve dedicated narrative space: who decided, when, why, what each family brought.

Slovakia: SK-03

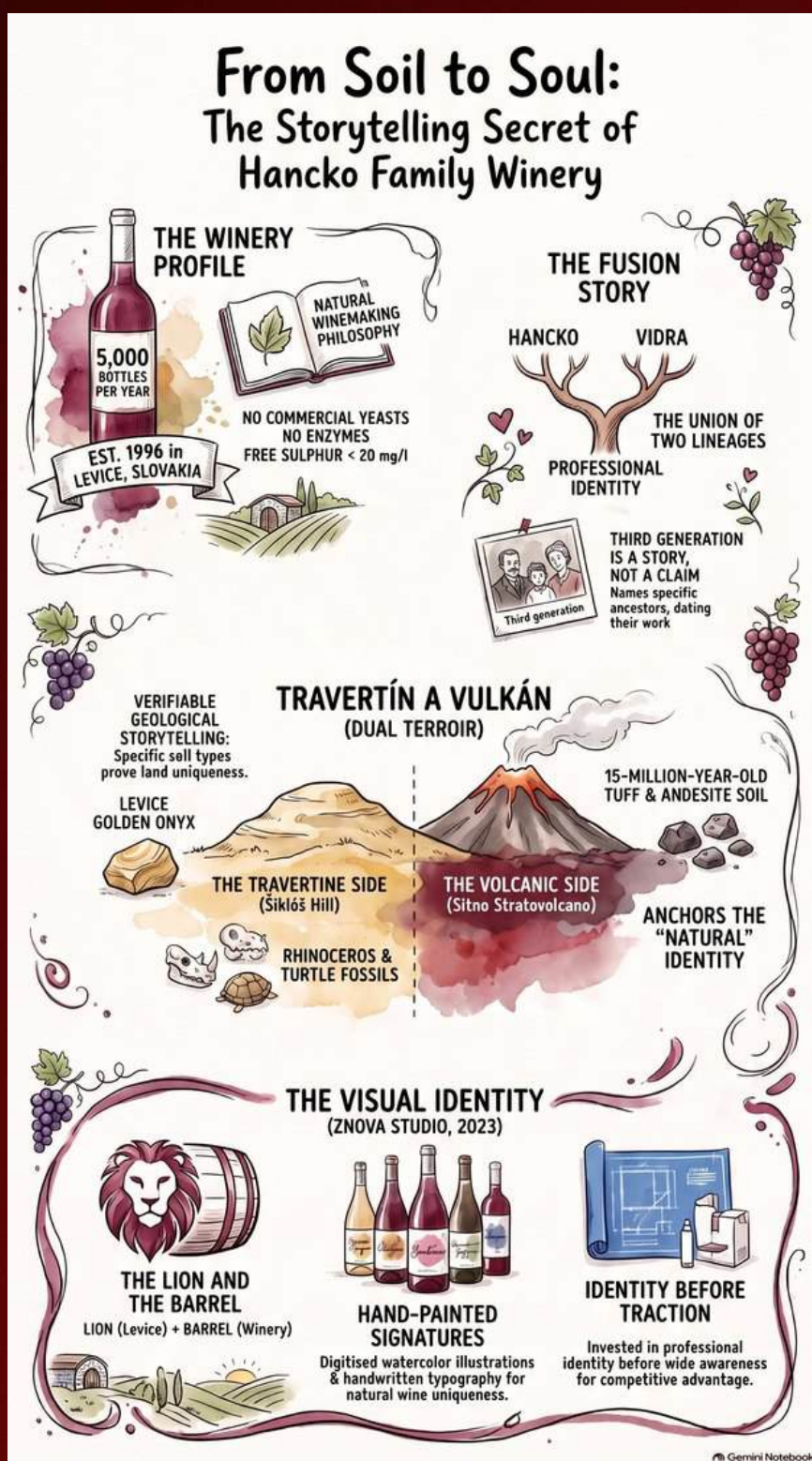
Hancko Family Winery

Levice · Nitra wine region

Family Winery - Est. 1996

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to young, design-led wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those building strong visual identity but with under-developed human and community storytelling.



Slovakia: SK-04

Víno MAGULA

Suchá nad Parnou · Little Carpathians

Biodynamic Farm Winery · Roots 1931



Description of the winery

2007

Re-established

20 - 24k

Bottles /year

8 ha

Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A four-generation biodynamic farm winery on a former monastery hill in the Little Carpathians continuing a great-grandfather's 1931 vineyard in the very valleys immortalised by Slovakia's most beloved wine novel, and a member of the Autentista Slovakia charter community.

Location and origins

Vino Magula is based in Suchá nad Parnou, in the Little Carpathians wine region. The family's roots in viticulture reach back to 1931, when Jozef Husár (Trnava health insurance secretary) bought a field in Ružová dolina (Rose Valley) and planted a modern wire-trained vineyard designed for horse work. After Communist-era dispossession, the land returned to the family in 2001. Replanting began in 2007. The winery achieved BIO certification in 2015 and converted to biodynamic farming in 2016. Annual production sits between 20,000 and 24,000 bottles from a former monastery hill between two named valleys - Ružová (Rose) and Vlčia (Wolf).

Distinctive position

The site itself is exceptional: a hill where a monastery once stood, with the surviving Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes, 200-year-old chestnut trees, a stone cellar, bees, animals, and orchards. The winery operates as a full biodynamic farm ecosystem rather than a wine-production unit. Falstaff has described the property as "a place with special charisma." The same valleys are the setting of František Hečko's "Červené víno" (1948) - one of Slovakia's most celebrated wine novels, later adapted into a TV series.

Markets and recognition

The winery serves domestic gastronomy, wine shops, direct buyers, and a confirmed Czech export channel. Peter Moser of Falstaff has scored 24+ Magula wines, consistently between 91 and 93 points across multiple vintages. The winery is a member of Autentista Slovakia, the charter-bound natural wine collective rooted in the 2,000-year Pannonian wine tradition. Recurring farm-to-table dinners with named guest chefs (Peter Slačka among them) anchor the visitor experience.

Slovakia: SK-04

Víno MAGULA

Suchá nad Parnou · Little Carpathians

Biodynamic Farm Winery · Roots 1931

Examples of promotional practices

Vino Magula holds one of the richest sets of story assets in selected Slovak wineries.

Used Wine naming embeds place into product

The names "Oranžový Vlk" (Orange Wolf), "Červený Vlk" (Red Wolf), "Lupo!", "Rosenberg" and "Baccara" reference Vlčia Dolina (Wolf Valley) and the historic Rosenberg parcel. This sophisticated place-embedded naming sits within the product line itself.

Used Farm-to-table dinners as recurring brand experience

The website's dedicated 'Farm' section features 'Wine & Dine' evenings with guest chefs. These events are popular, atmospheric and successful in converting visitors. Facebook shows a 100% recommendation rate from all reviewers.

Used 1931 archive photographs published

Original photographs of Jozef Husár's first vineyard can be seen on the website. They are a rare and excellent storytelling asset, though they are presented as a historical record rather than an emotional narrative.

Short commentary

Vino Magula holds the most poetic site of any winery in this study. A former monastery hill between two named valleys, in the literary landscape of Slovakia's great wine novel. "Červené víno" is a canonical Slovak novel, taught in schools, adapted for television, and set in the very valleys where the Magula family farms. This is terroir claim. Magula belongs to a formal natural-wine collective bound by signed charter. The restricted to producers from the Slovak Danube region who reject industrial filtration, synthetic yeasts, and chaptalisation, with maximum yields fixed at 40 hl/ha. The owner is unusually clear about the gap. He cites Pivnica Čajkov as a website storytelling model and Milan Nestarec for newsletter content. He is actively investing in photography and a website rebuild. This level of self-awareness and benchmarking precision is the highest readiness signal in this study.

Slovakia: SK-04

Víno MAGULA

Suchá nad Parnou · Little Carpathians

Biodynamic Farm Winery · Roots 1931

"Historically, our winery has had very limited systematic marketing communication, which I recognise as one of our main weaknesses. Our original strategy focused primarily on producing wine and selling it through professional partners rather than engaging directly with end consumers."

- Magula, February 2026

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 Literary, cultural and historical context is rare

When a winery's location appears in canonical literature, folklore, or regional cultural identity, this connection must be foregrounded — not buried as a regional curiosity. A single sentence on the homepage linking the vineyard to a recognised cultural anchor reframes the entire brand and produces a positioning no competitor can replicate.

2 Membership in a credible collective is a brand asset

Charter-bound wine movements (Autentista, Demeter, Slovenian Renaissance, Italy's VinNatur) function as third-party authenticity validation more powerful than self-declared organic claims. The logo, the charter link, and a brief explanation of what membership requires belong on the homepage and on relevant labels.

3 An ancestor's photograph is not a story - until you write the story

Referring to ancestors collectively ("our grandfathers," "the third generation") creates an aura of heritage without giving readers anyone to connect with emotionally. Naming individuals, dating their work, and showing their photographs converts a heritage claim into a heritage story.

4 An atmospheric place must be photographed atmospherically

When a winery's physical site is distinctive (a monastery, a cave cellar, ancient trees, a river, a chapel), this distinctiveness must be communicated visually — not described in text. One commissioned photo essay deployed consistently across website, social media, and export materials transforms an extraordinary place from a sentence into the brand's central visual asset.

Víno MAGULA

Suchá nad Parnou · Little Carpathians

Biodynamic Farm Winery · Roots 1931

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to small wineries in Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia - particularly those with extraordinary places, deep heritage, and underdeveloped digital storytelling.

Víno Magula: The Poetic Terroir of the Little Carpathians

HERITAGE & REBIRTH

**Founded in 1931
by Jozef Husár**

**Communism Era
Dispossession**

**2001: The Return of the Land
Replanting in 2007**

**20,000 – 24,000
Bottles Annually**
Production focused on
quality and authenticity
from 8 hectares

BIODYNAMIC PHILOSOPHY & IDENTITY

A Full Farm Ecosystem
Bees, animals, and orchards.
BIO certified (2015) and biodynamic (2016)

**Autentista Slovakia
Charter**
Rejects industrial filtration, synthetic
yeasts; strict maximum yield of 40 hl/ha

A LITERARY & SACRED LANDSCAPE

**The Landscape of
“Červené víno”**
Set in Ružová (Rose) and
Vlčia (Wolf) valleys,
immortalized in František
Hečko's novel

The Monastery Hill
13th-century site, Chapel
of Our Lady of Lourdes,
ancient stone cellars,
and special charisma

Place-Embedded Naming

“Oranžový Vík” (Orange
Wolf) and “Rosenberg”
directly reference the
valleys

Farm-to-Table Experiences

“Wine & Dine” evenings with guest
chefs; 100% recommendation rate

Consistent Critical Acclaim
Falstaff's Peter Moser scored over 24
Magula wines between 91 and 93 points

91

Gemini Notebook

Slovakia: SK-05

Strekov 1075

Strekov · Southern Slovakia

Autentista · Founded by Zsolt Sütő, 2002



Description of the winery

2002
Founded

30k
Bottles /year

12 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A former pumpkin-seed farmer turned philosopher-winemaker who became the first Slovak natural winemaker known worldwide bottling by lunar calendar, naming his donkey after Robert Parker, and serving as a founding voice of the Autentista Slovakia charter community.

Location and origins

Strekov 1075 is based in Strekov, a small village in southern Slovakia near the Hungarian border where 90 % of residents are ethnically Hungarian. Founder Zsolt Sütő began as a producer of pumpkin-seed oil before turning to wine in 2002. The winery operates on 12 hectares of vineyards along the Danube marshland microclimate, with clay-loam on marine sediments. Annual production is approximately 30,000 bottles. The brand name encodes three meanings simultaneously: the year 1075, when Strekov was first documented in writing; Zsolt's house number on Hlavná ulica; and a declaration of rootedness in the village.

Distinctive position

Strekov 1075 is consistently described by international importers as "the first Slovak natural winemaker to make a name for himself in the world" (HokusPokus), "the pope of natural wines in Slovakia" (Roland Wines), and "a mad scientist, staunch medievalist and visionary artist" (Olmstead Wine). Practices include spontaneous fermentation with native yeasts, no synthetic inputs, herbal teas instead of chemical sprays, lunar-calendar bottling by gravity, and minimal sulphur (most wines at 14–42 mg/l, many near zero). The winery is a founding voice of Autentista Slovakia — the charter-bound natural wine collective rooted in the 2,000-year Pannonian wine tradition.

Markets and recognition

Strekov 1075 exports to Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Czech Republic — only 5 % of production sells domestically. The brand also includes a notable side project: a sour beer compared by importers to Belgium's legendary Cantillon. The vineyard's outdoor tasting table has been described by Jenny & François (US importer) as "one of the most charming tasting rooms we know of, indoors or out."

Slovakia: SK-05

Strekov 1075

Strekov · Southern Slovakia

Autentista · Founded by Zsolt Sütő, 2002

Examples of promotional practices

Strekov 1075 is internationally recognised winery, yet operates with the most minimal own-channel storytelling of any case.

Used **The number 1075 — three meanings in one mark**

The brand name encodes the year Strekov was first written about (1075), Zsolt's house number, and rootedness. The number appears on labels, signage, and the brand identity. A layered marker that competitors cannot replicate.

Used **Radical technical transparency on every wine**

The wine listing shows variety, vintage, total sulphites (most 14-42 mg/l), alcohol, residual sugar, and exact bottling date for every bottle. Transparency as a product feature — proof in data form.

Used **Direct relationships with international importers**

Jenny & François, Olmstead Wine, Roland Wines, MORE Natural Wine — Zsolt's personal connections with importers across four continents have built 95 % export success entirely through trust and conversation.

Short commentary

Strekov 1075 is the most internationally recognised winery in Slovak selected wineries, and the one with the most minimal own-channel storytelling. The owner explicitly rejects "aggressive digital promotion" and describes the website as "an informational platform rather than a sales-driven marketing channel." The brand's success has been built on personal relationships with importers, festival presence (RAW WINE, Real Wine Fair), and the irreducible authenticity of the wines themselves. With 95 % export and 5 % domestic, the brand depends entirely on a small network of importer relationships and festival appearances. If Zsolt cannot attend festivals for a season, or if a key importer changes, the brand has almost no digital fallback to sustain awareness. The philosophy that built the brand also creates its vulnerability. Marketing persuades; documentation proves. Zsolt is a man of proofs. The technical wine data on the website demonstrates this clearly. Extending that documentation logic to the practices (lunar bottling, herbal teas, Bob the donkey, Autentista charter) would not betray the philosophy. It would honour it. Documentation matches the brand's existing posture of transparency without adding promotional language.

Slovakia: SK-05

Strekov 1075

Strekov · Southern Slovakia

Autentista · Founded by Zsolt Sütő, 2002

"I understand storytelling as the communication of the deeper meaning and identity behind the wine... storytelling is not an artificial narrative but a truthful expression of origin, place, and continuity. My online presence serves mainly as an informational platform rather than a sales-driven marketing channel."

- Zsolt Sütő, February 2026

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 Documentation is not marketing — it is transparency at scale

For wineries philosophically opposed to promotional language, the answer is not silence but documentation. Marketing persuades; documentation proves. Explaining practices, naming peer communities, and showing the people behind the wine matches a transparency posture without adding sales rhetoric.

2 Brand fragility is a real risk for relationship-only businesses

A B2B model built entirely on personal relationships and festival presence is powerful — but exposed. If the founder cannot attend events for a season, if a key importer changes, the brand has no digital memory to sustain it. A modest digital layer (an updated About page, a quarterly journal post, a press section) acts as insurance for the philosophy that built the brand.

3 The bigger the importer's story, the bigger the home-channel gap

For export-heavy wineries, the most common pattern is that international importers communicate the brand's story better than the winery itself. The longer this gap persists, the more dependent the brand becomes on relationships it does not own. Closing the gap means restating, on the winery's own channels, what importers already say — in the founder's own voice.

4 An unexplained detail is a wasted story.

When a brand contains a memorable, irreducible detail — a named mascot, an unusual practice, an idiosyncratic decision — explaining it in two sentences on the product page is worth more than ten paragraphs of generic copy. The donkey, the lunar calendar, the herbal tea, the pumpkin-seed origin — these are stories competitors cannot manufacture.

Slovakia: SK-05

Strekov 1075

Strekov · Southern Slovakia

Autentista · Founded by Zsolt Sütő, 2002

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to export-focused, philosophy-driven small wineries in Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those built around a singular founder voice.

Strekov 1075: The Philosopher-Winemaker's Proof

Profiling Zsolt Sütő's unique "documentation-over-marketing" philosophy and medievalist approach to natural winemaking.

The Identity of the "Mad Scientist"

From Pumpkin Seeds to Global Natural Wine



Founder Zsolt Sütő transitioned from farming seeds to becoming Slovakia's leading natural wine "pope."

The Philosophy of Proof

"Marketing persuades; documentation proves."

Zsolt rejects aggressive digital promotion in favor of radical, data-driven technical transparency.

% Export Success via Personal Trust

The Triple Meaning of 1075

1075

Village's first historical mention



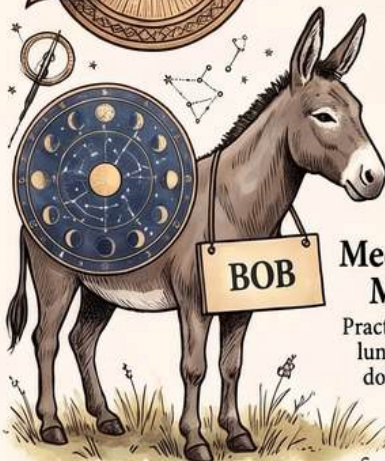
Zsolt's house number

Local rootedness



Medievalist Methods, Modern Results

Practices include bottling by the lunar calendar and naming a donkey after Robert Parker.



The Vulnerability of the Silent Brand

Relying solely on personal presence creates a "fragile" model if digital storytelling is neglected.

95%

Global reach in Japan and the US was built entirely through festivals and importer relationships.



HUNGARIAN WINERIES

Hungary: HU-01

Dobosi Winery

Szentantalfa - Balaton Highlands, Hungary

Family Winery - Founded by the Dobosi family



Description of the winery

1990
Founded

100k
Bottles /year

30 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A 300-year-old family winery in the Nivegy Valley of the Balaton Highlands, where "Drink organic!" is both a motto and a business philosophy combining three centuries of grape-growing tradition with full organic certification, a modern wine estate, and year-round hospitality.

Location and origins

Dobosi Winery sits in Szentantalfa, in the picturesque Nivegy Valley of the Balaton Highlands, five kilometres from Lake Balaton in the Balatonfüred-Csopak wine region. The family's grape-growing history dates back to 1721, passed from father to son across three centuries. After the communist era, Dániel Dobosi re-established the business in 1990; the winery building was constructed in 1988. Today the third generation - sons Bálint (winemaker) and Győző (host) runs the estate alongside their father, cultivating 25 hectares of owned organic vineyards plus five leased, producing roughly 100,000 bottles annually.

Distinctive position

The winery's commitment is organic farming. Its motto is "Drink organic!" The range spans whites, reds, rosés, and sparkling wines, from Olaszrizling and Rhine Riesling to Hungarian varieties Juhfark, Kéknyelű and Kékfrankos. Beyond wine, the estate produces pálinka, organic grape juice, grape-seed oil and grape-seed extract. The family played a key role in establishing the Csopaki Kódex, a set of strict self-regulatory principles for conscientious winemakers in the Csopak Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) region. Their single-vineyard "Háromszög" (Triangle) Olaszrizling is widely regarded as a benchmark wine for the region.

Markets and recognition

Since 2020, the family has built a year-round agri-tourism offer: a 600 m² estate centre with eight guest rooms, a restaurant, a tasting and event space, a panoramic terrace, and a wellness/sauna house. Wine dinners, sauna programmes and e-bike tours extend the season beyond summer. Around 60% of wines are sold directly — in the estate shop, the restaurant, or the web shop.

Hungary: HU-01

Dobosi Winery

Szentantalfa - Balaton Highlands, Hungary

Family Winery - Founded by the Dobosi family

Examples of promotional practices

Dobosi communicates two consistent core messages: family heritage and organic conviction.

Used **Heritage encoded directly into the logo**

The family history is built into the brand mark itself. The logo features the founding year, signalling three centuries of continuity at a glance. Heritage is not just told in copy; it is embedded in the visual identity customers see on every bottle.

Used **"Drink organic!" — a single, repeatable motto**

The winery distilled its philosophy into a two-word slogan deployed consistently across channels. Critically, they frame organic not only as sustainability but as a practical benefit. Many customers buy because the wine "doesn't give them a headache," not for ideology.

Used **Hospitality as immersive brand experience**

Wine dinners, sauna programmes, e-bike tours, accommodation, and the KóBor cellar hike with neighbouring winemakers create a full year-round experience offer converting visitors into long-term customers and extending the brand beyond the bottle.

Short commentary

Dobosi identified their two core messages, three-century family heritage and organic conviction, and communicated them consistently enough that customers repeated them back. This is the rarest achievement in wine branding, and the Dobosi family treats it as deliberate strategy rather than accident. The organic message is unusually well-positioned. Rather than relying on ideology, Dobosi frames organic wine through a practical, emotional benefit. Dobosi winery faced with a funding crisis mid-construction, the family turned to its community rather than a bank and nearly 100 customers responded with HUF 16 million. Displaying supporters' names on a winery wall, producing a thank-you video, and hosting a fifth-anniversary party demonstrates a sophisticated understanding that loyalty is built through reciprocal, remembered gestures. Few wineries in Central Europe have executed community storytelling as successfully as this one. With around 270 Dobosi relatives in one village producing cheese, garden produce and handicrafts, the winery is at the heart of a vibrant "family ecosystem" that competitors could never replicate. It is a remarkable narrative: a whole village interwoven with one family name, yet this does not feature in customer-facing communication.

Hungary: HU-01

Dobosi Winery

Szentantalfa - Balaton Highlands, Hungary

Family Winery - Founded by the Dobosi family

"Self-identity is important — it is original, it is built on trust, and it builds trust. Personal touch and the importance of sustainability matter even in the online store."

-Győző Dobosi, February 2026

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 It is not enough to have a story — you must communicate it relentlessly

Dobosi's success rests on identifying two core messages (family heritage and organic conviction) and repeating them until customers recite them back. A great story communicated inconsistently is invisible; an adequate story communicated relentlessly becomes a brand. Consistency, not novelty, is the engine of recognition.

2 Translate values into a benefit the customer can feel.

"Organic" as ideology persuades few. "Organic, so no headache" persuades many. Dobosi reframed a sustainability practice as a personal, physical benefit and the message stuck. Wineries should always ask: what does this practice do for the drinker? The answer is the message worth repeating.

3 Tradition does not mean old-fashioned.

Dobosi pairs deep history with continuous modernisation (a new estate centre, wellness facilities, e-bike tours, exposed-concrete architecture), creating an atmosphere that is heritage-rooted yet contemporary. The lesson: heritage is an anchor, not a ceiling.

4 Owned-channel reach is the multiplier for every good story.

Dobosi's crowdfunding could have raised more, but many willing supporters were never reached. The lesson for every winery: invest in direct channels (newsletter, CRM, membership lists) so that when a great story or campaign arrives, it reaches the people most likely to act on it.

Hungary: HU-01

Dobosi Winery

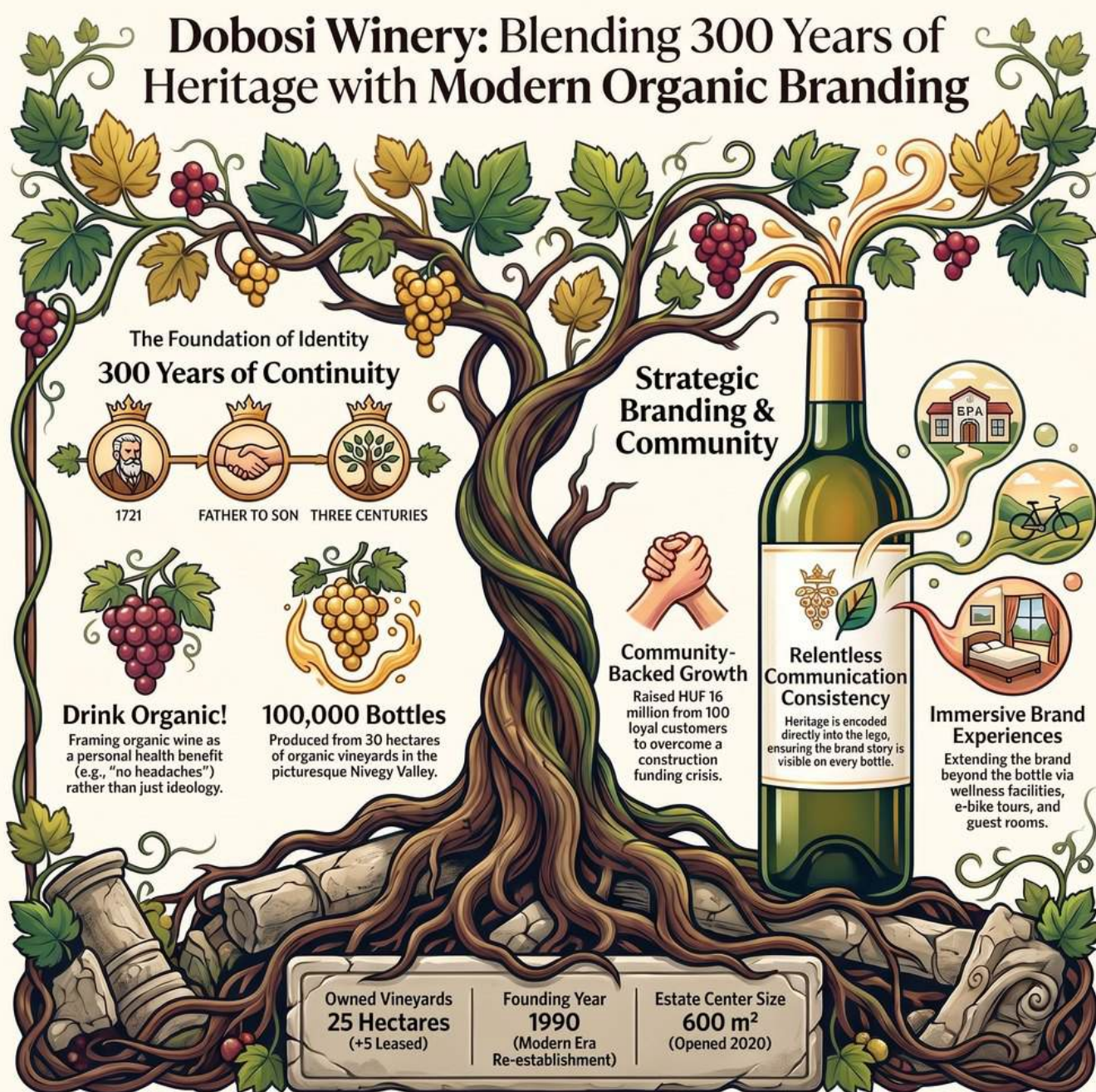
Szentantalfa - Balaton Highlands, Hungary

Family Winery - Founded by the Dobosi family

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to heritage-rich family wineries in Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those building agri-tourism and direct-to-consumer loyalty.

Dobosi Winery: Blending 300 Years of Heritage with Modern Organic Branding



Hungary: HU-02

Vali Winery (VáliBor)

Badacsonyörs, Southern Hungary

Boutique Winery - Founded by Péter Váli



Description of the winery

2000
Founded

40 - 50k
Bottles /year

10 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A small organic estate in Badacsonyörs where wine is still a passion rather than a job - voted Hungary's Most Beautiful Small Estate in 2025, built around one promise: "Come and visit us and experience the magic of this place for yourselves."

Location and origins

Founder Péter Váli launched the estate in 2000 in Badacsonyörs, one of the smallest villages in the Badacsony wine region on the northern shore of Lake Balaton. The vineyards nearly 10 hectares in size and fully certified organic, are south-facing at around 150 metres altitude, situated on Pannonian sand mixed with basalt volcanic rock beneath thick brown forest soil. All viticulture and winemaking are done locally and by hand, in line with artisan-wine principles. The estate also provides accommodation for 24 guests in renovated peasant houses near the winery.

Distinctive position

Váli works with authentic Badacsony and Hungarian varieties (Kéknyelű, Budai Zöld, Olaszrizling, and also Rhine Riesling, Szürkebarát) to express the volcanic terroir. The winery's central conviction is hospitality: the founder believes the estate's success lies in the fact that making wine is "still not a job, but a passion." Guests are welcomed into a spectacular garden, served food made from estate-grown produce vegetables, herbs, salami, sausages, cheese, jam, and house-baked bread and every waiter is trained to answer any question about the wines, the cellar, and the region.

Recognition

The estate has earned remarkable acclaim for its size: Hungary's Most Beautiful Small Estate 2025, James Suckling scores of 92 (Rhine Riesling Tabula Rasa) and 91 (Kéknyelű), a Vince Gala recognition in 2025, and a gold medal at the National Organic Wine Competition for the Ágyús dűlő Kéknyelű 2019. The winery sells primarily direct to consumers and is also exported to the United States.

Hungary: HU-02

Vali Winery (VáliBor)

Badacsonyörs, Southern Hungary

Boutique Winery - Founded by Péter Váli

Examples of promotional practices

Váli has built its brand almost entirely around experience and place. The storytelling is consistent and emotionally clear.

Used "The magic of the place" a single clear message

The winery distilled its entire brand into one invitation: come and experience the magic for yourself. The Balaton Highlands atmosphere, the volcanic terroir, the gastronomy framed as "like going to Provence or Tuscany."

Used Full farm-to-table immersion as the product

Estate-grown vegetables and herbs, house-made salami, sausages, cheese, jam, and freshly baked bread turn a tasting into a complete sensory experience. The wine is inseparable from the meal, the garden, and the place. Exactly what visitor reviews remember and recommend.

Used Staff trained as storytellers

Every waiter knows the wines, the cellar, and the wine region, and can answer any question. This turns service staff into brand ambassadors. A rare and deliberate investment that makes the storytelling consistent regardless of who delivers it.

Short commentary

Váli winery is clearest example of experience-led storytelling. Where other wineries build their narrative around heritage or product, Váli builds it around a feeling. Visitor reviews repeat the same words again and again: "legend," "treated like a friend," "fairy tale." When customers spontaneously use the brand's own intended language, the storytelling is working. The owner is candid that, for financial reasons, small Hungarian wineries must avoid wholesalers and sell directly. The brand's power lives in the physical experience, which means it depends on people actually arriving. Consolidating this validation on the winery's own channels, and capturing the in-person magic in video and photography, would let the experience reach the audience that cannot yet visit turning a seasonal estate into a year-round brand.

Hungary: HU-02

Vali Winery (VáliBor)

Badacsonyörs, Southern Hungary

Boutique Winery - Founded by Péter Váli

"The hardest thing is to provide a good experience, because it is very labour-intensive and requires investment. It's like a good restaurant where you walk in and find yourself in a fairy tale. It is always the experience that makes you unique."

- Péter Váli, February 2026

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 A winery's strongest story can be a feeling, not a fact

Váli's brand is built on the sensation of arriving somewhere magical, not on dates, certifications, or scores. When visitors spontaneously describe a place as a "fairy tale" using the brand's own intended language, the storytelling has succeeded. For experience-led wineries, the goal is to engineer a feeling consistent enough that customers repeat it back.

2 If you must sell direct, make the place itself the product

Small wineries that cannot rely on wholesalers must convert visitors into loyal customers. Váli engineers every element (garden, farm-to-table food, trained staff, guest houses) toward that single goal. The magic of the place cannot be wholesaled, so the place itself becomes the thing being sold.

3 Rare native grapes are an unbeatable terroir story.

Committing to varieties that exist almost nowhere else (Kéknyelű, Budai Zöld) ties a brand to something no outside competitor can claim. A near-extinct local grape is not a limitation; it is the most defensible origin story a winery can own, and it generates press that money cannot buy.

4 Train your staff to be storytellers, not servers

When every waiter can answer any question about the wines, the cellar, and the region, the brand story is delivered consistently regardless of who is on shift.

Vali Winery (VáliBor)

Badacsonyörs, Southern Hungary

Boutique Winery - Founded by Péter Váli

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to small, hospitality-led, direct-to-consumer wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those in scenic, tourism-driven regions.

Váli Winery: Engineering the Magic of Place

The Foundation of Terroir & Craft

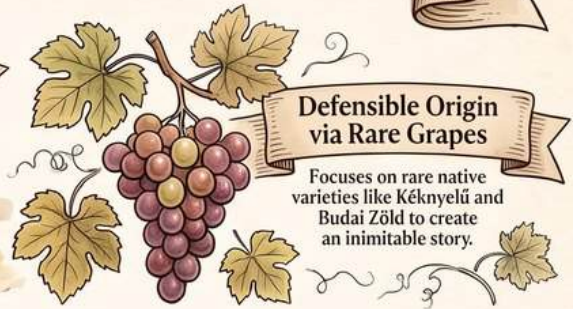


10 Hectares of Volcanic Terroir

Fully organic vineyards situated on basalt volcanic rock and Pannonian sand.

Defensible Origin via Rare Grapes

Focuses on rare native varieties like Kéknyelű and Budai Zöld to create an inimitable story.



Award-Winning Boutique Quality

Voted Hungary's Most Beautiful Small Estate (2025) with James Suckling scores up to 92



The Experience-Led Strategy

Full Farm-to-Table Immersion

Guests are served estate-grown produce, house-baked bread, and artisanal meats in a garden setting.



Staff as Brand Storytellers

Every waiter is trained to answer deep questions about the cellar, region, and winemaking.



"Make the Place the Product"

Owner Péter Váli emphasizes that providing a "fairy tale" experience is the key to direct-to-consumer success.



Hungary: HU-03

Tokaj Pendits

Abaújszántó • Tokaj Wine Region

Family Winery • Founded by Márta Wille-Baumkauff



Description of the winery

1991
Founded

10k
Bottles /year

8.5 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one paragraph

A family biodynamic estate at the northern edge of Tokaj, founded on a single audacious dream. A hungarian woman with no winemaking background who became the pioneer of biodynamic viticulture in Hungary, and the first Demeter-certified winery in the country.

Location and origins

Pendits is based in Abaújszántó, the historic "gateway" town at the northern edge of the Tokaj-Hegyalja wine region. The estate was founded in 1991 by Márta Wille-Baumkauff, who fulfilled a long-held dream of making wine in Tokaj despite having no professional background in viticulture. With her German husband (who died in 2000) and their three sons, she acquired the renowned cellars of Flórián Bilicki. Today the estate farms roughly 8 hectares across historic crus including Pendits, Krakó, Bea and Báthory. Her son Stefan who learned biodynamics at Nikolaihof in Austria is now winemaker.

Distinctive position

Pendits is one of the pioneers of biodynamic winemaking in Hungary. The estate began organic cultivation in 2005, became the first certified organic winery in Tokaj in 2008, and the first Demeter-certified biodynamic winery in Hungary in 2011. The vineyards lie within the UNESCO World Heritage site of Tokaj. The prize plot (south-facing Pendits vineyard) was already listed among the first growths in the definitive 1867 Tokaj-Hegyalja Album. Soil work is still done with horses; the family follows the Maria Thun biodynamic calendar and gathers wild plants for teas.

Wines and markets

The portfolio reflects classic Tokaj: dry Furmint and Hárslevelű, late-harvest wines, Szamorodni, and Tokaji Aszú, with very low yields producing concentrated, terroir-driven wines. Pendits is a member of the Renaissance des Appellations - the biodynamic association founded by Nicolas Joly. The family worked with no consultant, instead consulting friends including Nikolaihof, Domaine Marcel Deiss and Nicolas Joly directly. Wines are exported across Europe and beyond (Slovakia, Poland, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, the UK, France, South Africa and Brazil).

Hungary: HU-03

Tokaj Pendits

Abaújszántó • Tokaj Wine Region

Family Winery • Founded by Márta Wille-Baumkauff

Examples of promotional practices

Pendits builds its storytelling around three pillars: a personal founding dream, biodynamic pioneering, and authentic terroir. The communication is consistent, emotionally resonant, and reinforced by strong external press.

Used "I had a dream..." a founding story told in the first person

Márta opens the brand narrative with vulnerability: a Hungarian woman with no wine background, no local roots, pursuing what "must have seemed like a completely crazy idea." This personal, courageous origin story differentiates Pendits from inherited family estates and gives the brand a human face.

Used Pioneer positioning, backed by verifiable firsts

First certified organic estate in Tokaj (2008), first Demeter-certified biodynamic winery in Hungary (2011).

Used Earned external storytelling and elite networks

Membership in Renaissance des Appellations (founded by Nicolas Joly) and frequent coverage in wine and sustainability media position Pendits as a reference point for biodynamic winemaking.

Short commentary

Pendits Winery has achieved what most wineries struggle to do: combine a compelling human protagonist, a verifiable pioneering position and deeply authentic practices. Crucially, these are not separate messages, but form a single, coherent narrative. The founding story is the brand's greatest asset. In a region full of inherited estates that claim centuries of family tradition, Pendits does the opposite. It leads with its lack of tradition. Márta was an outsider with no roots or training, a fact she openly acknowledges. This vulnerability is far more memorable than a heritage claim because it is human, specific and emotionally true. It also reframes biodynamics as not just a marketing choice, but the natural progression of someone who approached wine without preconceptions. The biodynamic identity is unusually credible. While many wineries claim to be sustainable, few plough with horses, gather wild nettles for teas and bottle on fruit days according to the Maria Thun calendar. One visiting critic described Pendits as "the only 100% biodynamic producer in Tokaj" and as someone who "does not work her vineyard, she works for her vineyard".

Hungary: HU-03

Tokaj Pendits

Abaújszántó • Tokaj Wine Region

Family Winery • Founded by Márta Wille-Baumkauff

"Márta is one of the most genuine and humble winemakers I have ever met. She has no interest in competitions or medals. She simply aspires to make quality wine, governed by the vineyard... she is the only 100% biodynamic producer in Tokaj, and 100% self-taught."

- visiting wine critic, The Grand Crew

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 The absence of tradition can be a stronger story than tradition itself

In a region of inherited estates, Pendits leads with the opposite: an outsider with no roots and no training who started from a dream. Vulnerability and courage are more memorable than heritage — because they are human, specific, and emotionally true. A founder's honest "I had no idea what I was doing" can outperform any claim of centuries-old lineage.

2 A verifiable "first" is the most defensible differentiator

"First certified organic in Tokaj (2008)" and "first Demeter in Hungary (2011)" are dated, documented facts no competitor can claim. A pioneer position backed by certification dates is worth more than any quantity of superlative adjectives.

3 When the practice is real, the practice is the story

Horse ploughing, hand-gathered herbal teas, bottling on fruit days — these are not marketing details but the daily reality of the work. When sustainability is genuinely lived rather than declared, describing the practice is the storytelling. Authenticity cannot be faked, and consumers increasingly know the difference.

4 A brand built on one founder must tell its succession story early

When a brand rests on a single charismatic founder's narrative, the handover to the next generation is both a risk and an opportunity. Telling the succession story before it is forced — the trained son continuing the self-taught mother's vision — future-proofs the brand and adds a second emotional chapter to the original dream.

Tokaj Pendits

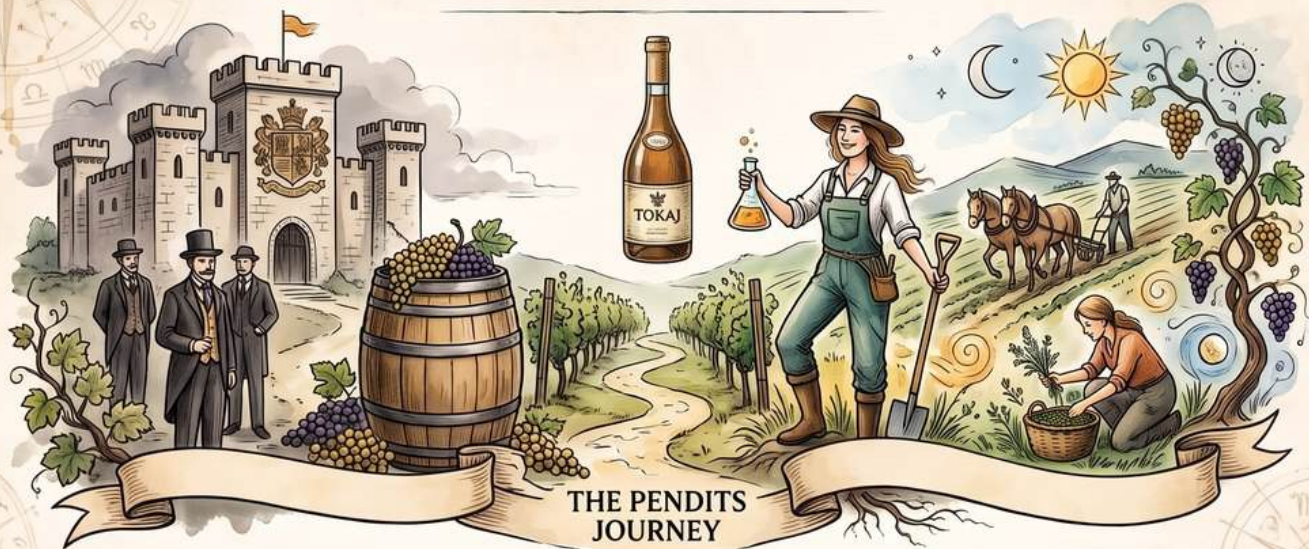
Abaújszántó • Tokaj Wine Region

Family Winery • Founded by Márta Wille-Baumkauff

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to founder-led, sustainability-driven premium wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those built on a pioneer position and a single strong personal story.

Tokaj Pendits: The Alchemy of an Outsider's Dream



THE STORYTELLING PILLARS



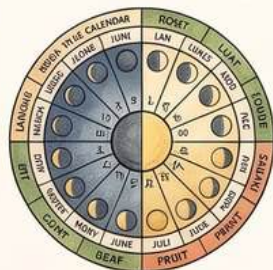
Radical Authenticity in Practice

Using horse-ploughing and hand-gathered herbal teas validates the brand's biodynamic claims.



The Outsider Advantage

Embracing a lack of tradition makes the brand's founding dream human and memorable.



Future-Proofing the Narrative

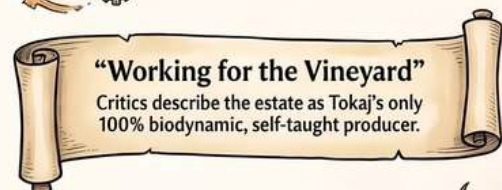
Integrating the trained next generation early ensures the founder's vision survives succession.

VERIFIABLE PIONEERING



Pioneer Positioning

Tangible "firsts" provide a defensible differentiator that marketing adjectives cannot match.



Hungary: HU-04

Korózs Winery

Eger Wine Region

Family Winery · Brand launched 2023



Description of the winery

2023
Founded

20k
Bottles /year

10 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one paragraph

A one-person, fully family-owned organic estate on the volcanic and limestone slopes of Eger - where a viticulture graduate who grew up in his father's vineyard returned to relaunch the family name in 2023, and built a benchmark Syrah that now pours in Michelin-starred restaurants.

Location and origins

Korózs Szőlőbirtok és Pincészet is based in Eger, on Verőszala út, in one of Hungary's most historically significant wine regions. The family's bond with the vineyard reaches back to the 1990s, when Dániel Korózs's father grew grapes as a hobby and the young Dániel spent his childhood among the vines. Later completing a university degree in viticulture and winemaking. After his father gave up grape-growing and sold the marketable plots in 2007, Dániel eventually returned to rebuild the estate himself.

Distinctive position

The winery combines modern winemaking technology with environmentally conscious viticulture. The vineyards have been farmed organically since 2017 and officially certified by Biokontroll Hungária since 2022. The portfolio pairs Eger's traditional cuvées (Egri Bikavér and Egri Csillag) with international varieties such as Syrah and Viognier, alongside Kékfrankos and Kadarka clone selections. Fermentation runs in egg-shaped concrete "breathing" tanks, stainless-steel vessels and barrels, using wild, neutral and cultured yeasts, with a strong emphasis on cleanliness and technological discipline.

Markets and recognition

Korózs runs essentially as a one-person operation with seasonal help and the founder's father, keeping control of the whole process from planting to harvest. The wines debuted in a Budapest restaurant and quickly built a reputation: the Syrah Superior was named best red wine of the Eger Wine Festival and appears on Michelin-starred wine lists in Hungary. The estate is a regular at regional and national competitions and at Eger showcase events such as the Egri Csillag Weekend and the Egri Borszalon. Tastings and vineyard tours are offered by appointment.

Hungary: HU-04

Korózs Winery

Eger Wine Region

Family Winery · Brand launched 2023

Examples of promotional practices

Korózs combines three storytelling threads: a young winemaker's personal journey, a signature flagship wine, and the reinvention of Eger's heritage through organic, modern winemaking.

Used **The Syrah Superior as a signature flagship**

Korózs anchored its identity to one standout wine. The Syrah Superior "the heart of our winery" appears on Michelin-starred lists and won best red at the Eger Wine Festival. A single recognisable hero wine gives a young brand instant premium positioning.

Used **"Premium, organic wines from Eger" - a clear tagline**

The brand distilled its position into one phrase, combining premium quality, organic farming, and place. Organic conviction is framed not just as environmental responsibility but as a quality-driven philosophy shaping every production stage.

Used **The young-winemaker underdog narrative**

Dániel openly tells his story: a kid who grew up in the vineyard, left for Budapest, then returned to rebuild from almost nothing. His framing "an almost unknown kid from Eger" who succeeded is relatable, modern, and emotionally engaging.

Short commentary

Korózs is, in this study, the clearest example of a young brand built on a single hero product and a relatable founder. Where established estates lean on heritage, Korózs leans on the energy of a new-generation winemaker who returned home, rebuilt through hardship, and broke through with one exceptional wine. The Syrah Superior is doing the heavy lifting. It gave an unknown estate immediate credibility in Hungary's competitive premium market. The flagship-wine strategy is textbook. A small, young winery cannot communicate twenty wines equally; Korózs wisely concentrated its identity on one. The Syrah became a "benchmark" that "half of Budapest was talking about," paired with lamb on Michelin-starred lists. This single recognisable product gives sommeliers and consumers an easy entry point to the brand. As an essentially one-person operation, Dániel's authenticity is total, but his time for storytelling is minimal. The most compelling part of his narrative, the rebuild after hail and COVID destroyed his early vintages, lives in press interviews rather than on his own channels. Bringing that struggle-and-triumph arc into the winery's owned communication would give the brand the emotional depth its wines have already earned.

Hungary: HU-04

Korózs Winery

Eger Wine Region

Family Winery · Brand launched 2023

"As I grow older, I feel more fulfilled by the closeness to nature and the vineyard. More and more, I see true value in balance, harmony, and preserving the values and traditions of this historic wine region."

— Dániel Korózs

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 A single flagship wine can carry an entire young brand

A small winery cannot communicate every wine equally. Concentrating identity on one exceptional, recognisable product (Korózs's Syrah Superior) gives an unknown estate instant credibility and an easy entry point for sommeliers and consumers.

2 Let elite gastronomy validate you

Placing a wine on Michelin-starred and premium restaurant lists transfers the prestige of those venues to the brand. For a young winery, a sommelier's endorsement reaches exactly the right premium customer.

3 The underdog story is one of the most engaging narratives there is

"An almost unknown kid from Eger" who returned home and succeeded is relatable, modern, and emotionally compelling. A founder's honest, humble self-framing connects with consumers far more than polished corporate language. Authenticity and modesty are storytelling assets, not weaknesses.

4 For solo operations, the struggle is the story

When a founder does everything alone, there is little time for storytelling, yet the most compelling material (hardship, rebuilding and breakthroughs) has already been experienced. Capturing the crisis-and-triumph arc on owned channels, even simply, gives a brand emotional depth that matches its product quality. The drama is real; it just needs to be written down.

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to young, founder-led, small-scale wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those in traditional regions seeking a modern, premium identity.

The Underdog's Vintage: How Korózs Winery Reclaimed a Legacy



Hungary: HU-05

Karner Winery

Mátra Wine Region

Family Winery



Description of the winery

2020
Founded

5k
Bottles /year

5.5 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one paragraph

A one-person, fully family-owned organic estate on the volcanic and limestone slopes of Eger - where a viticulture graduate who grew up in his father's vineyard returned to relaunch the family name in 2023, and built a benchmark Syrah that now pours in Michelin-starred restaurants.

Location and origins

Karner Winery sits in the village of Szűcsi, in the western corner of the Mátra wine region, on volcanic andesite, rhyolite tuff and black loam slopes. Gábor Karner (a former jazz-rock drummer who still plays in the band Æbsence) began making wine in 2000 with a simple goal: to make the kind of wine he himself would want to drink. He pursued the passion while working night shifts as a watchman, planted Kékfrankos in the Vitézföld vineyard in 2004, and gradually turned an obsession into one of Hungary's most recognised natural-wine estates. Today he runs the 5.5-hectare estate with his daughter Fanni.

Distinctive position

Mátra was historically a region of large-scale industrial wine production. Karner is one of the leading figures in its renaissance. A founding member of the Mátrai Tőkések (Handcraft Winemaking Circle of Mátra, established 2006 with Bálint Losonci and Tamás Szecskő), a group committed to organic viticulture, low yields, and artisanal natural winemaking. The vineyards are farmed organically, the fermentations are spontaneous, and the wines are both unfinned and unfiltered. Since the 2017 vintage, no additives of any kind have been used, not even sulphur. Bottling is done by gravity, with no pumps used.

Wines and reach

Karner is a Kékfrankos and Olaszrizling specialist, producing single-vineyard wines such as "Tavaszi" and "Vitézföld" and the "Otthon" (home) estate blend. The brand logo features an old wine opener, which is a family heirloom with a long history of winemaking. The wines are exported through specialist natural-wine importers (including in the United States) and feature in Budapest's leading natural-wine bars and in international press, from Wine Enthusiast to French natural-wine writers.

Hungary: HU-05

Karner Winery

Mátra Wine Region

Family Winery

Examples of promotional practices

Karner's storytelling is, by the winemaker's own definition, about people rather than products: "consumers do not buy wine.

Used "People buy stories, not wine" as an explicit philosophy

Gábor states the principle openly and builds all communication around it. Focusing on winemaking as a way of life rooted in authenticity and passion, rather than on technical details or awards. The brand leads with the human, not the bottle.

Used The father-daughter partnership as living narrative

Fanni's decision to join the estate created a generational continuity story that resonates deeply, symbolising commitment, trust and the transmission of knowledge. Fanni's own line, that the wines "began to remind me of forest spring water," gives the next generation a distinct voice.

Used A memorable, idiosyncratic founder voice

"Sulphur kills the tiny happiness fairies who live inside the wine" is the kind of line journalists quote and customers remember. A former rock drummer making zero-additive wine is a distinctive personal character competitors cannot replicate.

Short commentary

Karner is, in this study, the winery with the clearest articulated storytelling philosophy. Gábor does not merely tell stories. He names storytelling itself as the heart of the business: "consumers do not buy wine, they buy stories." Few winemakers anywhere state the principle so directly, and fewer still live it so completely. Every element of the brand (the people-first communication, the father-daughter narrative, the idiosyncratic founder voice) flows from this single conviction. The founder is a gift to storytelling. A former rock drummer who worked night shifts as a watchman to fund his winemaking obsession, who still plays in a band, and who describes additive-free wine through "happiness fairies". This is a character that writes its own headlines. The personal idiosyncrasy is not decoration; it is the brand's most defensible asset. No competitor can manufacture a Gábor Karner, and the consistency between his personality, his philosophy, and his wine is what makes the story credible.

Hungary: HU-05

Karner Winery

Mátra Wine Region

Family Winery

"Despite the look of things, we aren't doing anything new. On the contrary, we make our wine as they did in the older times — with the help of copper and sulphur in the vineyard, and without using anything in the cellar."

— Gábor Karner

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 The most powerful wine stories are about people, not products

Karner builds everything on a single conviction "consumers do not buy wine, they buy stories." Leading with the human (the journey, the philosophy, the personality) rather than the bottle (tasting notes, awards, technical specs) creates the emotional connection that drives loyalty.

2 An idiosyncratic founder voice is an unrepeatable asset

"Sulphur kills the tiny happiness fairies" is memorable precisely because it is personal and strange. A distinctive character (drummer-winemaker) gives a brand a voice no competitor can copy.

3 A genuine philosophy beats a sustainability slogan

When natural winemaking reflects a real life philosophy rather than a marketing trend, it becomes credible storytelling. Karner's "wine made from grapes" conviction shapes every decision in vineyard and cellar and consumers can tell the difference between a lived value and a label claim. Authenticity cannot be faked, and it is increasingly what buyers reward.

4 A founding movement turns one winery's story into a region's story

Co-founding the Mátrai Tőkések ties Karner to the larger narrative of Mátra's renaissance from industrial bulk wine to artisanal terroir. Belonging to a credible collective lends the movement authority and embeds the brand in a larger narrative, a pattern observed among the strongest wineries in this study.

Hungary: HU-05

Karner Winery

Mátra Wine Region

Family Winery

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to small, founder-led natural wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those with a strong personal character and a tasting-led, direct-to-consumer model.

Karner Winery: The Art of Human-Centric Storytelling



CZECH WINERIES

Czechia: CZ-01

Vinařství Čech

Tvrdonice, South Moravia

Family Winery · Founded by Jan Čech



Description of the winery

1996
Founded

120k
Bottles /year

25 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A family winery in the folklore heartland of Podluží, South Moravia, where a son took over his late father's cellar and, in his very first vintage, won more awards than the winery had ever seen, carrying "Moravian wines from Čech" onto podiums across four continents.

Location and origins

Vinařství Čech is based in Tvrdonice, in the Slovácko subregion at the southernmost tip of South Moravia. A village famous for its folklore, traditional costumes, and the annual "Podluží in Song and Dance" festival. The winery traces its origins to 1996, when founder Jan Čech began producing wine under the earlier company name ČEBAV. In 2010 the family business took its current name. When Jan died in 2011, his son Petr Čech took over and in his first vintage won the most awards in the winery's history. The estate farms roughly 25 hectares of its own vineyards in the Tvrdonice and Týnec cadastral areas.

Distinctive position

All vineyards are cultivated under a certified organic (BIO) regime, with wines produced in organic quality since the 2017 vintage; the wines are also vegan-friendly. The winery's identity centres on vineyard management as the foundation of wine quality using flowering, species-rich herb mixes between the rows to attract beneficial insects that naturally regulate pests. Whites are made by controlled fermentation, reds in vinifiers, and part of the range is aged in barrique barrels. The portfolio spans Sauvignon, Veltliner, Riesling, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir among whites, and Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Moravia, Zweigeltrebe and Dornfelder among reds.

Markets and recognition

Producing around 90,000 bottles a year, Čech has built a strong record at international competitions - the IWSC and Decanter World Wine Awards in London, Vinalies International in Paris, AWC Vienna, Mundus Vini, and the International Wine Competitions in San Francisco and the Finger Lakes, plus a Grand Gold at Michelangelo in South Africa and platinum in the USA. Wines are distributed through a wide network of wine shops across the Czech Republic, into gastronomy, and to private customers. The motto is simple: "Moravian wines from Čech."

Czechia: CZ-01

Vinařství Čech

Tvrdonice, South Moravia

Family Winery · Founded by Jan Čech

Examples of promotional practices

Čech combines online and offline storytelling, but its approach is rooted firmly in traditional, in-person channels with four recurring themes: family, place, ecology, and awards.

Used Family identity as the emotional core

The winery is still a family business, and it continues the work of its founder, Jan Čech. The story of a son honouring his late father and succeeding in his first vintage is a powerful, authentic narrative communicated through both words and visuals.

Used International awards as external validation

By communicating its success in prestigious competitions across four continents, the winery is building a narrative of quality and credibility, and positioning itself as a respected global participant rather than a local family business. Awards serve as signals of third-party trust.

Used Ecological values told through vivid imagery

Instead of simply stating 'organic', the winery describes its vineyards as being enriched with flowering herbs that attract beneficial insects and naturally control pests. This concrete, visual language transforms a certification into a living narrative of the harmony between people and nature.

Short commentary

Vinařství Čech is a strong example of layered, consistent storytelling anchored in place and family. The winery weaves four recurring themes: family tradition, regional folklore, ecological values, and international recognition. This consistency is the winery's greatest strength. Customers encounter the same core messages whether they read a label, attend a tasting, or visit the website. The ecological storytelling is notably well-executed. Rather than relying on the BIO logo alone, the winery describes its practices in vivid, concrete imagery: rows enriched with flowering herbs, beneficial insects arriving as natural pest control, biodiversity maintaining vineyard health. This is exactly how sustainability should be communicated. The winery's storytelling is rooted in the cellar and the tasting room its strongest but least scalable channel. Online platforms remain supportive rather than central, which means the moving founder's story and the vivid ecological narrative reach only those who visit. Developing the father-son succession into a fuller narrative, and carrying it (with the ecological imagery) onto digital channels, would let this genuinely emotional story reach the wider audience the wines already reach through competitions.

Czechia: CZ-01

Vinařství Čech

Tvrdonice, South Moravia

Family Winery · Founded by Jan Čech

"The winery was founded and made famous by Jan Čech — a winemaker in body and soul, who now unfortunately looks down on us only from wine heaven."

— Vinařství Čech, on its founder (d. 2011)

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 Consistency across themes builds a memorable identity

Čech weaves four recurring threads (family, place, ecology, awards) through every touchpoint, so customers meet the same core messages on a label, at a tasting, and online. A layered but consistent story is more memorable than a single message repeated, or many messages told once. Coherence is the multiplier.

2 Describe ecology in pictures, not certifications

"Rows of flowering herbs attracting insects that protect the vines" is more powerful than "certified organic." Concrete, visual language turns a compliance fact into a living narrative the customer can picture.

3 Awards let a small producer borrow global credibility

Competing at international competitions and communicating the results positions a small Moravian family winery within a global context it could not otherwise claim. For mid-sized producers, medals are the fastest external validation available.

4 A succession story is one of the most human narratives a winery has

The emotional power and authenticity of a son taking over his late father's cellar and honouring his legacy by succeeding is undeniable. When a brand is based on such a story, it should be fully developed and openly told, rather than being left as a passing reference.

Czechia: CZ-01

Vinařství Čech

Tvrdonice, South Moravia

Family Winery · Founded by Jan Čech

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to family-run, award-winning, tradition-rooted wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those strongest in-person but under-developed online.



Czechia: CZ-02

Víno Marcinčák

Novosedly • Mikulov Wine Region

Family-owned Organic & Biodynamic Winery



Description of the winery

1990
Founded

200k
Bottles /year

110 ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A family organic winery in Novosedly (in the prestigious Mikulov sub-region) the largest organic grape grower in the Czech Republic, and, since 2025, the first Demeter-certified biodynamic winery in Moravia, turning three decades of ecological commitment into a living brand narrative.

Location and origins

Víno Marcinčák is a family-owned and operated organic winery based in Novosedly, in the Mikulov wine sub-region of South Moravia, the warmest region of the Czech Republic. Established in 1990 and led by winemaker Petr Marcinčák, the winery farms over 110 hectares of its own vineyards across seven wine-growing municipalities, producing around 200,000 bottles annually from 100% estate grapes, all hand-harvested. The Novosedly vineyards sit on a geological subsoil comparable in character and age to the Médoc region of Bordeaux.

Distinctive position

Since 2008, Marcinčák has been one of the largest organic grape growers in the country — and it presents itself as the largest organic wine producer in the Czech Republic. Farming uses ecological and biodynamic practices with no herbicides, synthetic fertilizers, or pesticides. The family makes its own vermicompost (composting with earthworms) and biodynamic preparations such as "Vermistar," a vermicompost-and-herb extract, and harnesses renewable solar energy. In 2025 the winery achieved Demeter certification (one of the strictest global biodynamic standards) becoming the first certified biodynamic winery in Moravia.

Wines, recognition and hospitality

The portfolio is broad (Riesling, Grüner Veltliner, Pinot varieties, Pálava, Cabernet Sauvignon, Zweigeltrebe and more) with specialities in straw wines, ice wines and naturally sweet wines. The wines have earned awards across multiple continents (Paris Sommeliers' Association, Asia Wine Trophy Double Gold, Berliner Wine Trophy, Great American, Finger Lakes). Founder Petr Marcinčák is a leading member of the European Order of Knights of Wine. The estate also runs the family Lavender Hotel Marcinčák and a year-round tasting cellar.

Czechia: CZ-02

Víno Marcinčák

Novosedly • Mikulov Wine Region

Family-owned Organic & Biodynamic Winery

Examples of promotional practices

Marcinčák is, in this study, the clearest example of a winery running a genuinely multi-channel storytelling operation: combining strong online presence with in-person experience and packaging.

Used **A genuine multi-channel content operation**

YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, website and PR articles work together with offline tastings, guided tours, exhibitions and student excursions. Few small-to-mid wineries in this study operate storytelling this consistently across both digital and physical channels.

Used **The Demeter journey told as a story, not a badge**

Rather than simply displaying the certification, an Instagram post narrated the journey to Demeter (the effort, time, and commitment required) combining facts with emotion, pride with authentic visuals. This turns a milestone into a narrative that builds trust and signals distinction.

Used **The founder as the human face of the brand**

Frequent posts featuring Petr Marcinčák humanize the brand, share vision and values, and strengthen emotional engagement. The visible presence of a real person (a Knight of Wine) behind the label builds trust in a way an anonymous corporate brand cannot.

Short commentary

Víno Marcinčák is, in this study, the most digitally sophisticated storyteller and a rare example of a winery that has scaled organic production without abandoning a personal, values-driven narrative. Where many wineries in this guide have strong stories trapped in the tasting room, Marcinčák actively pushes its narrative across YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, PR and in-person events simultaneously. The result is a brand that behaves less like a producer and more like a media operation with a clear editorial line: nature, family, transparency, and distinction. By showing vineyard work, harvest, and cellar processes, Marcinčák converts curiosity into trust. Modern consumers, especially eco-conscious ones, increasingly want to see how things are made, and a winery that opens its doors digitally satisfies that demand while differentiating itself from opaque competitors. Combined with the visible presence of the founder, this makes a large operation feel personal.

Czechia: CZ-02

Víno Marcinčák

Novosedly • Mikulov Wine Region

Family-owned Organic & Biodynamic Winery

Marcinčák became the first Demeter-certified winery in Moravia, joining a small biodynamic group that also includes a Czech producer (Kutná Hora) and a Slovak one - Strekov 1075, profiled in this guide as SK-04. A rare, verifiable Visegrad-wide biodynamic peer network.

— Demeter CS, 2025

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 Narrate the journey to a certification

Marcinčák told the story of achieving Demeter. The years, the effort, the emotion rather than simply adding a logo. A certification communicated as a narrative builds trust and signals distinction; a certification displayed as a badge is invisible. The work behind the credential is the story customers connect with.

2 Behind-the-scenes transparency turns curiosity into trust

Showing vineyard work, harvest, and cellar processes lets audiences understand how the wine is made and understanding builds credibility. In an age of eco-conscious buyers, opening the doors (digitally) is one of the most effective trust-building tools a winery has, and it differentiates from opaque competitors.

3 Run storytelling as an operation, not an afterthought

Marcinčák maintains a consistent editorial approach across YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, PR and in-person events. Treating storytelling as an ongoing, multi-channel operation with clear, recurring themes, rather than sporadic posts, is what elevates a brand from the forgettable to the memorable. Consistency and cadence are as important as content.

4 At scale, the personal narrative must work harder, not disappear

A large organic producer risks losing the "family and nature" credibility that small wineries hold naturally. Marcinčák counters this with the visible presence of the founder and constant behind-the-scenes content. The bigger the operation, the more deliberately it must prove that scale has not compromised its values.

Víno Marcinčák

Novosedly • Mikulov Wine Region

Family-owned Organic & Biodynamic Winery

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to organic and biodynamic wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those scaling production while maintaining a values-driven, multi-channel brand.



Czechia: CZ-03

Vinařství Krásná hora

Slovácko Wine Region

Family-owned Biodynamic Winery



Description of the winery

2000
Founded

50k
Bottles /year

14ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A small family winery in Starý Poddvorov, South Moravia, farming French varieties on a slope first planted by Cistercian monks in the 13th century - an early biodynamic pioneer, named Czech Winery of the Year in New York, whose label is treated as the single most important carrier of its story.

Location and origins

Vinařství Krásná hora is a family winery based in Starý Poddvorov, in the Slovácko subregion of South Moravia. The current form of the winery took shape after the family took over the business in 2000, with a deliberately slow, long-term vision: not rapid expansion, but a sustainable winery that could become the centre of family life. The vineyards sit on the south-west-facing Krásná hora ("Beautiful Hill") slope with loess subsoil, where the first vines were planted by the French Cistercian monastic order in the 13th century. This heritage explains the focus on traditional French varieties: Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Merlot.

Distinctive position

The winery farms organically and uses biodynamic principles, avoiding synthetic herbicides and pesticides, fertilising with its own compost and herb-sown inter-rows. Organic farming has been the approach since the 2009 replanting; from 2014 the family adopted full biodynamic preparations. Sitting on the 49th parallel (the same latitude as Alsace and Burgundy) at the very limit of viable grape-growing in Central Europe, the estate keeps yields low (around 1 kg per vine) and hand-harvests into small crates. Production is around 50,000 bottles a year.

Markets, style and architecture

Around 70% of production is exported to more than 20 countries (Denmark, Great Britain, Ireland, the USA, Canada, Japan and Poland among them) with a European-oriented style of dry, elegant, individual wines. In the Czech Republic the wines go mainly to wine-focused restaurants and bars. A defining feature of the winery's identity is its award-winning contemporary architecture. Designed in collaboration with architect Tomáš Havlíček, it harmonises modern design with the wine landscape. It also features a restored 200-year-old vineyard shed, which is the oldest in the village.

Czechia: CZ-03

Vinařství Krásná hora

Slovácko Wine Region

Family-owned Biodynamic Winery

Examples of promotional practices

Krásná hora holds an unusually reflective, self-aware view of storytelling — treating it not as marketing but as the natural continuation of its winemaking philosophy.

Used **The label as the brand's primary "business card"**

The winery identified its label (not social media or the website) as the communication tool customers meet most often. The 2022 identity redesign added space for a personal dedication and visual motifs drawn from the winery's architecture (the luxfer-window motif), making the bottle itself the lead storyteller.

Used **Ecology as the main story, not a side note**

Sustainability is the central pillar of communication. The framing is honest and specific: the goal of organic and biodynamic work is not to "save the world" but to build healthy, resilient vineyards for future generations (an authentic, long-term-responsibility narrative).

Used **Relationship-first storytelling philosophy**

The owner is explicit that tasting the wine is not enough. The goal is a trust-based relationship that brings customers back. Storytelling is treated as a continuation of the product, building long-term loyalty rather than one-time sales.

Short commentary

Krásná hora is self-aware storyteller. A winery that has thought carefully about what storytelling is and is not. Its central insight is counter-intuitive and valuable: the story does not create the emotion. The wine's quality and the personality behind it create the emotion; the story then helps the customer remember and articulate it. This is a mature, honest understanding that separates Krásná hora from brands that treat narrative as a substitute for substance. Most wineries treat the label as packaging and the website as communication. Krásná hora inverts this: the label is the primary storytelling surface because it is what customers encounter most often. The 2022 redesign - adding a space for personal dedication and echoing the architecture's luxfer-window motif turned the bottle into a coherent brand statement. This is a sophisticated recognition that the most-seen touchpoint deserves the most storytelling investment. With 70% of wine exported to 20+ countries, the winery's own admission that digital channels are secondary leaves a gap: the depth of the Krásná hora story (heritage, biodynamics, architecture, Winery of the Year) could travel much further with a digital presence matching the quality of its label.

Czechia: CZ-03

Vinařství Krásná hora

Slovácko Wine Region

Family-owned Biodynamic Winery

The 2022 identity redesign was not merely aesthetic - it embedded the winery's architecture into the label (a motif inspired by the building's luxfer window) and added room for a personal dedication, so that continuity and evolution are communicated in the same object the customer holds.

— On the label redesign

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 The label is often the most-seen storyteller

Customers encounter the label far more often than the website or social media. Krásná hora treats it as the brand's primary "business card," embedding architecture motifs and space for a personal dedication. The most frequently seen touchpoint deserves the most storytelling investment - yet it is the one most wineries treat as mere packaging.

2 The story doesn't create the emotion — quality does

Krásná hora's mature insight: the wine and the personality behind it create the emotion; the story helps the customer remember and articulate it. Storytelling is a complement to substance, not a substitute for it. A great narrative around a mediocre wine fails; a good narrative around an excellent wine becomes unforgettable.

3 An authentic "we did it first" is undeniable differentiation

Grassing inter-rows in 2009, before it was standard, is a verifiable early-adoption fact. When a practice later goes mainstream, the early adopter earns a genuine trendsetter story. Real innovation, documented as it happens, cannot be copied retroactively by competitors — it is one of the most defensible narratives a winery can own.

4 Frame sustainability honestly, not grandiosely

Krásná hora says its goal is not to "save the world" but to build healthy, resilient vineyards for future generations. This modest, specific framing is more credible than sweeping environmental claims. Honest, concrete sustainability language earns more trust than idealistic slogans — consumers can sense the difference between conviction and marketing.

Vinařství Krásná hora

Slovácko Wine Region

Family-owned Biodynamic Winery

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to design-conscious, sustainability-driven, export-oriented wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those treating label and architecture as core storytelling assets.

The Bottle is the Storyteller: The Philosophy of Vinařství Krásná hora

HERITAGE AND TERROIR



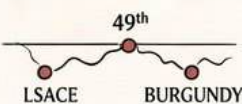
Rooted in 13th-Century Monastic Tradition

The vineyards are located on the Krásná hora ("Beautiful Hill") slope, where French Cistercian monks first planted vines over 700 years ago.



Life on the 49th Parallel

Situated at the same latitude as Alsace and Burgundy, the estate operates at the northern limit of viable viticulture in Central Europe.



A Slow, Long-term Vision

Since the family took over in 2000, the goal has been a sustainable winery as the center of family life, rather than rapid commercial expansion.

THE STORYTELLING PHILOSOPHY

“The story doesn’t create the emotion—quality does.”
The winery believes substance must come first; the story simply helps the customer remember and articulate the emotion the wine provides.

The Label as the Lead Storyteller

Inverting traditional marketing, Krásná hora treats the label (not the website) as its primary tool, as it is the most frequent consumer touchpoint.

How a small Moravian winery blends 13th-century heritage with modern biodynamics and a unique “label-first” storytelling philosophy.

THE BIODYNAMIC ENGINE

14 Hectares,
50,000 Bottles

A small-scale production focusing on quality over quantity, with yields kept low at approximately 1 kg of grapes per vine.



A Pioneer in Organic Farming

The winery began organic farming in 2009 and transitioned to full biodynamic preparations in 2014, avoiding all synthetic herbicides.



Biodiversity in the Rows

The estate maintains soil health by fertilizing with its own compost and planting herb-sown inter-rows between the vines.



Architecture in the Hand

The 2022 redesign features a “luxfer-window” motif inspired by the winery’s award-winning contemporary architecture.



Honest Sustainability

Their narrative avoids grandiose claims about “saving the world,” focusing instead on the practical goal of building resilient vineyards for future generations.

Czechia: CZ-04

Vinařství Špalek

Znojmo Wine Region

Family-owned Organic Winery



Description of the winery

1992
Founded

50k
Bottles /year

12ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A three-generation family BIO winery in Nový Šaldorf near Znojmo, farming a single famous hill (Kraví hora) with a story built on one clear promise: "We are bringing life back to Kraví hora."

Location and origins

Vinařství Špalek is a family-owned organic winery in Nový Šaldorf, in the Znojmo wine subregion. The roots reach to 1945, when grandfather Josef Špalek arrived from Valašsko; his son František took over in 1970, and the family officially founded the winery in 1992 - father and two sons. Today it is run across three generations by František, Marek Špalek and Petr Ilgner, with most of the team drawn from the family itself. The winery farms roughly 12 hectares of its own vineyards on the celebrated Kraví hora ("Cow Hill") near Znojmo, a site sitting on the boundary of two major geological units (the ancient volcanic Bohemian Massif and the sedimentary Carpathians), lending the wines a distinctive mineral character.

Distinctive position

Since 2012 the vineyards have been farmed organically (certified BIO from 2015), with part of production using biodynamic principles. Špalek was the first winery in the Znojmo region to introduce gravity processing of grapes in a new cellar built to a historic Šaldorf design. The winery emphasises its own grapes, terroir, and minimal intervention. It is a founding member of several local associations (the Nový Šaldorf Winemakers' Guild, Šaldorf Cellars, and VOC Znojmo - the Czech Republic's first appellation system). In 2015 it was named "Small Winery of the Year."

Wines and experience

Beyond classic white, rosé and red wines, Špalek is known for experimentation: ice wines, sur lie wines aged on yeast in oak, liqueur wines (Šaler), tread-grape wild-yeast natural wines (Edelspitz), and the family red cuvée Gryllus. Producing tens of thousands of bottles a year (around 90% sold domestically) the winery centres its offer on the experience: tastings in a historic sandstone cellar dug 15 metres underground, holding a wooden beam press from 1784. A sister project even turns grape seeds into cosmetics.

Czechia: CZ-04

Vinařství Špalek

Znojmo Wine Region

Family-owned Organic Winery

Examples of promotional practices

Špalek uses storytelling naturally, as a way to share values and lifestyle rather than as a marketing technique: anchored in family, landscape, and a single memorable slogan.

Used **"We bring life back to Kraví hora" - one memorable slogan**

A single phrase summarises the entire ecological philosophy. Instead of technical information, the winery gives customers a concrete, easily imaginable story: herbal blends sown, biodiversity promoted, birdhouses installed for natural pest control. The slogan makes an abstract approach vivid and repeatable.

Used **BIO framed as a philosophy of life, not a strategy**

The winery is explicit that the switch to organic came from conviction — the right way to care for the landscape and future generations. This honest framing makes the sustainability story authentic and difficult for competitors to imitate.

Used **Emotion through shared values and lifestyle**

The winery understands that customers respond most strongly not to technical wine information but to shared values — family character, working in harmony with nature, a human approach. This creates an authentic image that is genuinely hard to copy.

Short commentary

Špalek is, in this study, the clearest example of a winery that has found one perfect slogan. "We are bringing life back to Kraví hora" does an extraordinary amount of work in a single sentence: it names the place, states the ecological mission, and frames the winery as a caretaker rather than a producer. Most wineries struggle to summarise their philosophy at all; Špalek has distilled it into a phrase a customer can remember and repeat. This is brand-code discipline of a high order. The winery deliberately avoids giving customers technical ecological data. Instead it offers an image: birdhouses in the vineyard, herbal blends between the rows, biodiversity returning to a single named hill. This is exactly how sustainability should be communicated. As a picture a person can see in their mind, not a certification they have to interpret. The abstraction "organic" becomes the vivid narrative "life returning to Kraví hora." With ~90% domestic, in-person sales, the challenge is to carry the cellar's atmosphere and these distinctive proofs into digital channels, so the story reaches beyond those who make the trip to Nový Šaldorf.

Czechia: CZ-04

Vinařství Špalek

Znojmo Wine Region

Family-owned Organic Winery

"Our wines are not about trends, but about honest work, trust in nature, and a long-term vision. We let them mature, ripen and breathe and we believe that those who drink them feel it. Whether you visit us in Nový Šaldorf or open our bottle at home, I hope you find a piece of our story in the wine."

— Marek Špalek

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 One perfect slogan can carry an entire philosophy

"We bring life back to Kraví hora" names the place, states the mission, and casts the winery as a guardian. A single, concrete slogan a customer can repeat is worth more than paragraphs of explanation, and it becomes a brand code that anchors every other message.

2 Make sustainability a picture, not a data sheet

Špalek gives customers birdhouses and herbal inter-rows, not certification statistics. A concrete image the mind can see "life returning to the hill" communicates ecology far more powerfully than technical language. Show the living landscape; don't recite the standard.

3 A distinctive place can be the protagonist, not the backdrop

The sandstone cellar (15 m underground, an 18th-century press) is treated as a central character in the experience, not a mere venue. When a winery has a remarkable physical space, the visit should be built around it as a story, turning atmosphere and history into emotion that tasting notes never could.

4 Extend the story beyond the bottle

Turning grape seeds into cosmetics extends the "waste nothing from nature" narrative into a tangible second product. A well-chosen side project can reinforce a brand's core value and deepen its story provided it flows naturally from the same philosophy rather than chasing an unrelated market.

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to family-run, experience-led, sustainability-driven wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those with a remarkable cellar or landscape and a clear guiding philosophy.

Bringing Life Back to the Hill: The Storytelling Philosophy of Vinařství Špalek

The Winery Profile



3 Generations

A small-scale production model focused on quality and family heritage, rooted in the Znojmo wine subregion since 1992.



A Family-Led Operation

Currently run by František, Marek Špalek, and Petr Iigner, with a team almost entirely comprised of family members.



Small Winery of the Year

Recognized for its commitment to terroir-driven wines and its leadership in the Nový Saldorf Winemakers' Guild.



Kravi hora

The Core Philosophy

"We are bringing life back to Kravi hora."

This single slogan serves as the brand's "code," naming the location, the ecological mission, and the winery's role as a caretaker.

Philosophy Over Strategy

The switch to organic farming (certified BIO since 2013) was born from a conviction to protect the landscape for future generations.

Craft & Experimentation

Gravity Processing & Historic Design

The first in Znojmo to use gravity-fed systems in a cellar built to traditional Saldorf specifications.



The Sandstone Experience

The cellar, 15 meters underground with an 18th-century press, is treated as a central character in the visitor's journey.

Edelspitz



Saler

Beyond the Classic Bottle

Tread-grape natural wines, and liqueur wines.



Zero Waste Cosmetics

Cosmetics made from grape seeds to ensure zero waste



Nature as a Picture, Not a Data Sheet

Instead of technical certification stats, the winery communicates sustainability through birdhouses and herbal inter-rows that visitors can see.

Key Takeaways for Wineries

Make the Place the Protagonist

A distinctive landscape or cellar should be the hero of the story, turning atmosphere into emotion.

Storytelling as a Lifestyle

Authentic branding is built on shared values—family, harmony with nature, and a human approach—which are harder to copy than technical specs.

Czechia: CZ-05

Dobrá Vinice

Znojmo Wine Region

Family-owned Biodynamic Winery



Description of the winery

1992
Founded

35k
Bottles /year

16ha
Own vineyards

Their story in one sentence

A family winery in Nový Šaldorf near Znojmo, widely regarded as one of the pioneers of biodynamic and natural winemaking in the Czech Republic - farming inside a national park, and the first Czech producer to make wine in Georgian qvevri amphorae, an 8,000-year-old tradition.

Location and origins

Dobrá Vinice is a family-owned winery based in Nový Šaldorf near Znojmo, in the South Moravian wine region. It was founded by Petr Nejedlík in 1992 and became one of the earliest champions of biodynamic and natural winemaking in the country cultivating grapes in harmony with nature long before ecological farming became a regional trend. Petr Nejedlík, a pioneer who inspired a generation of younger Czech winemakers, passed away in 2023; the winery he built with his wife Andrea continues to carry forward his philosophy and reputation among Czech and international natural-wine enthusiasts.

Distinctive position

The winery farms roughly 15-16 hectares of vineyards in and around the Podyjí National Park (one of the most environmentally valuable landscapes in the Czech Republic) in the villages of Popice and Konice. The Palaeozoic subsoil (quartz, granite, clay and flint) gives the wines a distinctive mineral character. Farming follows biodynamic principles: no synthetic pesticides or herbicides, natural preparations (nettle, horsetail), organic manure, hand work, and many vineyard activities timed to lunar cycles. Yields are intentionally kept very low (reduced below 45 hl/ha), and all harvesting is done by hand.

Winemaking and reputation

Dobrá Vinice is defined by minimal-intervention winemaking: spontaneous fermentation with indigenous yeasts, limited or no filtration, and minimal or zero added sulphur. It was the first Czech winery to introduce Georgian qvevri amphorae (clay vessels buried in the ground) used alongside oak and acacia barrels. Producing around 35,000 bottles a year, the winery is a regular at international natural-wine fairs, and its flagship Cuvée Národní Park (National Park) has become an iconic Moravian natural wine.

Czechia: CZ-05

Dobrá Vinice

Znojmo Wine Region

Family-owned Biodynamic Winery

Examples of promotional practices

Dobrá Vinice uses storytelling as a natural extension of its winemaking philosophy — communicating authenticity, respect for nature, and connection to place rather than conventional marketing.

Used **Pioneer of biodynamic and natural winemaking**

The winery's strongest theme: being among the first Czech producers to embrace biodynamics and natural wine, following conviction long before sustainability was fashionable. This positions the brand as a visionary. A story built on courage and long-term commitment, not commercial success.

Used **Nature as the central character — a national park**

The vineyards within Podyjí National Park are presented not as production sites, but as living ecosystems that influence the identity of the wines produced there. The focus is on healthy soils, biodiversity and natural cycles, portraying wine as a direct expression of nature rather than a manufactured product.

Used **Ancient craft — the Georgian qvevri story**

Being the first in the Czech Republic to make wine in qvevri amphorae connects modern consumers to an 8,000-year-old tradition. This single, ownable detail communicates craftsmanship and authenticity while sharply differentiating the winery from industrial production.

Short commentary

Dobrá Vinice is archetypal pioneer brand. A winery whose entire identity rests on having been first, and on having been first out of conviction rather than calculation. Founded in 1992, it embraced biodynamics and natural wine when neither had any commercial logic in Moravia, and it introduced qvevri amphorae to Czech winemaking before most Czech drinkers had heard the word. This is the most defensible storytelling position a winery can hold: you cannot retroactively become a pioneer. Being the first in the Czech Republic to bury Georgian clay amphorae and make orange wine in them gives Dobrá Vinice a single, memorable, verifiable detail that does three things at once: it signals craftsmanship, it connects to an 8,000-year-old tradition, and it separates the winery from industrial production. A brand built so completely on a visionary founder's personal narrative faces a real question when that founder is gone. Following Petr Nejedlík's passing in 2023, the winery's storytelling task is delicate and important: to honour the pioneer's legacy while making clear that the philosophy, the people, and the practices continue. Handled with care, the founder's story becomes a foundation rather than a full stop.

Czechia: CZ-05

Dobrá Vinice

Znojmo Wine Region

Family-owned Biodynamic Winery

"Our wines are not about trends, but about honest work, trust in nature, and a long-term vision. We let them mature, ripen and breathe — and we believe that those who drink them feel it. Whether you visit us in Nový Šaldorf or open our bottle at home, I hope you find a piece of our story in the wine."

— Marek Špalek

Lessons learned - key takeaways

1 Being a pioneer is the most durable brand story there is

Competitors can copy practices, but they cannot claim to have done them first. Dobrá Vinice embraced natural wine and biodynamics out of conviction, decades before they were fashionable. An authentic "we were here before it was a trend" is an asset that strengthens with time and cannot be manufactured retroactively.

2 One ownable practice can carry the whole authenticity story

The Georgian qvevri (a single, concrete, verifiable detail) signals craftsmanship, connects to an 8,000-year tradition, and differentiates from industrial production all at once. A specific, memorable practice communicates authenticity far better than the abstract word "natural", giving customers something concrete to remember and retell.

3 Let the landscape be the protagonist

Farming inside a national park and naming the flagship wine after it (Cuvée Národní Park) casts nature (not the producer) as the hero. Tying wine to a named, recognised place transforms abstract "terroir" into a story customers can picture, and frames the winery as a steward of a valued environment.

4 A founder-led brand must plan the continuity story

When a brand rests on one visionary's personal narrative, succession is its greatest vulnerability. The pioneer's legacy should be honoured while clearly communicating that philosophy, people, and practices continue. Told well, a founder's story becomes a foundation for the future rather than a chapter that closes, but the continuity must be made as visible as the origin.

Dobrá Vinice

Znojmo Wine Region

Family-owned Biodynamic Winery

Cross-regional applicability

Every lesson above is directly applicable to pioneer, founder-led natural and biodynamic wineries across Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia — particularly those with a distinctive practice and a strong sense of place.

Dobrá Vinice: The Pioneer's Path to Natural Wine

The Pioneer Spirit & Legacy



Founded in 1992 as a Biodynamic Visionary

Embraced natural winemaking long before ecological farming became a regional trend.

The First to Introduce Georgian Qvevri

Revived 8,000-year-old traditions using clay amphorae buried in Moravian soil.

"Our wines are about trust in nature and long-term vision."

A philosophy centered on conviction rather than commercial calculation.

Nature as the Protagonist

Farming Inside Podyjí National Park

16 hectares of vineyards located in one of Czechia's most environmentally valuable landscapes.



Quartz

Flint

Granite

Palaeozoic

Mineral Character

Subsoils provide a distinctive, non-manufactured mineral identity.

Yields
Kept Below
45 hl/ha

Low-yield, hand-harvested grapes ensure a direct expression of the natural ecosystem.



Resources

Primary qualitative data: Semi-structured interviews with winery owners and managers, Fieldwork conducted January–March 2026 in Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Hungary.

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We hope this publication will inspire wine producers, researchers, educators, and consumers to appreciate the role of storytelling in promoting sustainable wine production and preserving the unique cultural and environmental heritage of the Visegrad region.