

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.

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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.

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"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.

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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.

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