

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.

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### 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.

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*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.

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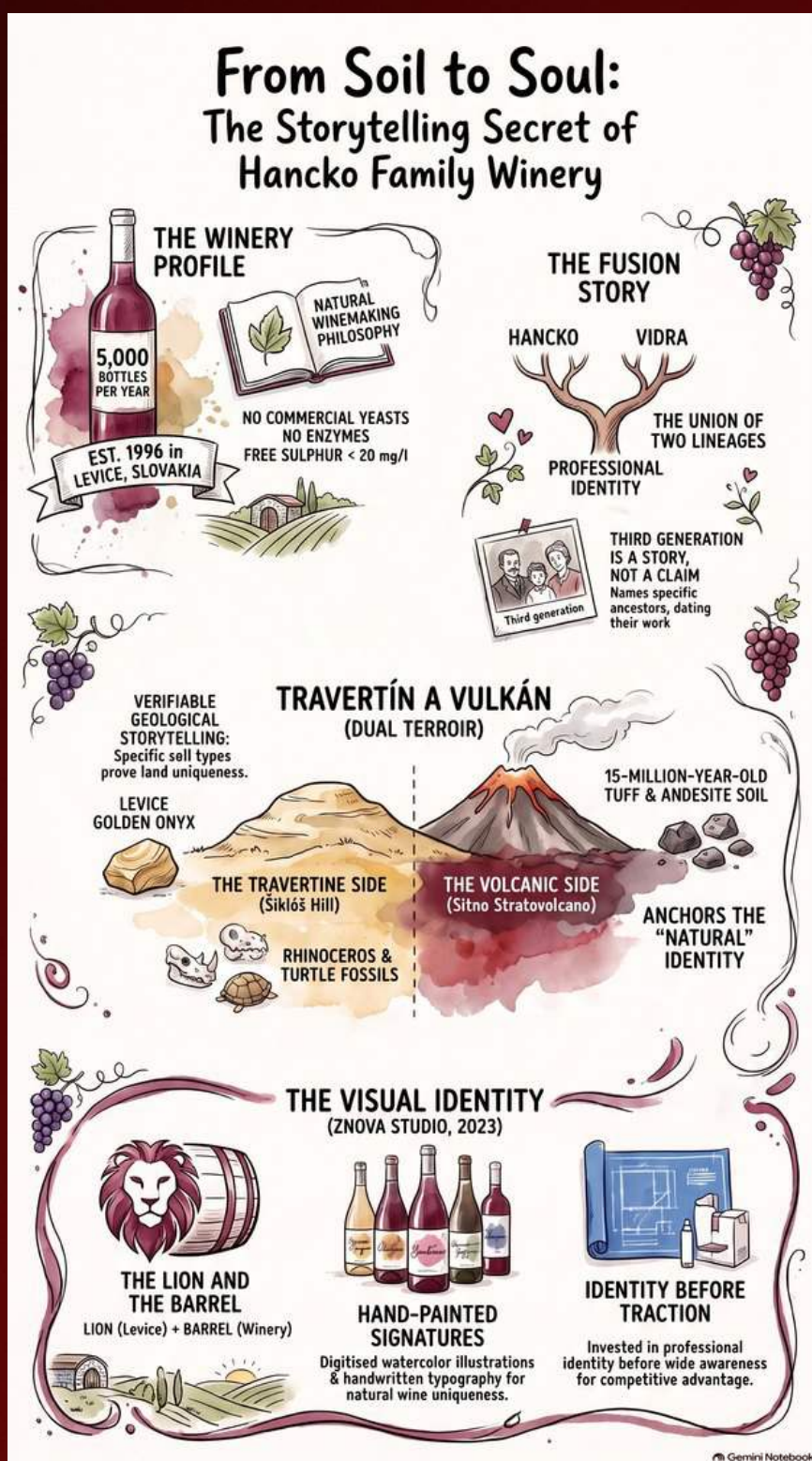
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## Cross-regional applicability

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.



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