TRADE PORTFOLIO · ESTATE WINES OF BULGARIA



RHESUS

THRACIAN VALLEY WINE

THRACIAN VALLEY RED WINE · SINCE 1996

One family's estate, in the valley where Thracians made wine 3,000 years ago.

IMPORTED BY IVA-BG LLC · DUTY-PAID IN MIAMI



THE NAME

A KING
of Thrace

Rhesus was a king of Thrace, and his story is told in Homer's Iliad, one of the oldest works of Western literature. In the tenth year of the Trojan War he marched south to help defend Troy, in shining golden armor, on a chariot worked in gold and silver, drawn by horses whiter than snow and swifter than the wind.

Later Greek writers added a prophecy: if his horses ever drank from the river of Troy, the city could never fall. That night Odysseus and Diomedes crept into the Thracian camp, killed the sleeping king and drove off his horses before they could drink.

Rhesus never fought at Troy, yet he became a legend in his homeland. Across Bulgaria, archaeologists have found hundreds of stone reliefs of a heroic Thracian horseman, and some historians link this figure to him.

His people were famous across the Greek world for their wine. Homer, Herodotus and other ancient writers describe them. Orpheus, the legendary poet, was said to be one of them. They worshipped Dionysus, and in the Rhodope mountains archaeologists have found a sanctuary where priests poured wine on a sacred altar to read the future.

The Thracians drank from vessels of gold. The Panagyurishte Treasure, a set of gold drinking horns and wine vessels from the 4th–3rd century BC, was found in 1949 near our village of Smilets. *Our vines grow in the same soil those golden cups once held wine from.*

We named our wine after Rhesus: a king of this land, remembered for his courage, his loyalty and his white horses. His crowned portrait, in gold foil, is on every Rhesus label.

"Horses whiter than snow and swifter than the wind."

HOMER'S DESCRIPTION OF KING RHESUS, ILIAD, BOOK X



THE LAND

THE THRACIAN VALLEY
today

The valley runs across southern Bulgaria between two mountain ranges: the Balkans to the north, which block the cold winds, and the Rhodopes to the south. The Maritsa River carries a mild Mediterranean influence inland from the Aegean, and hot summers with long, dry autumns let red grapes ripen fully and slowly. It is Bulgaria's heartland for red wine and the home of Mavrud.

Bulgaria once made wine in huge state-run volumes. Today the industry is rebuilding around quality: privately owned estates that grow their own grapes, and a new focus on native varieties. In the US it is still a discovery, with only around 30 Bulgarian producers on American shelves. *A buyer who lists Rhesus now is early, not late.*

35%	363	10th	~1,300 ha	~30
of Bulgaria's wine comes from the Thracian Valley	registered wine producers, up from 268 in 2018	largest wine producer in Europe, 25th in the world	of Mavrud planted in all of Bulgaria; our estate grows 10	Bulgarian producers with wines on US shelves

Sources: Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture and Food (vineyards, producers; Oct. 2025) · OIV, via BTA (production ranking; Jul. 2024) · C. Gilby MW, JancisRobinson.com (2018 producers; 2020) · SevenFifty Daily (Thracian share, US producers; 2023) · Wein-Plus, after K. Anderson (Mavrud area; 2010 data)



THE SEAL ON EVERY CORK

RUMELIA

Every cork bears the word "Rumelia," and it carries the story of a divided nation. In 1878, the Russo-Turkish War ended nearly 500 years of Ottoman rule over Bulgaria. The first peace treaty drew a large, whole Bulgaria. Within months, the great powers redrew it at the Congress of Berlin and split the nation in two. The south, including the Thracian Valley where our vineyards grow, became Eastern Rumelia, a province under the authority of the Ottoman Sultan.

For seven years its people kept their language, schools and faith, and organized quietly for the day they could rejoin the north. On September 6, 1885, they rose in Plovdiv and declared unification without a single shot fired against the governor, and Bulgaria then defended the union in war with Serbia and won. *We put Rumelia on every cork to honor their courage, patience and persistence.*



THE GRAPE

MAVRUD

Bulgaria's own grape, and the heart of our estate.

THE LEGEND

Bulgarians tell this story about the grape. In the 9th century, Khan Krum ordered every vineyard in the country torn out, believing wine made his people weak. One vine survived, hidden by a mother who made wine from it for her son. When a lion escaped and terrorized the town, that young man, Mavrud, faced it alone and killed it.

Krum asked where he had found such courage. His mother brought the khan a cup of the wine. Krum lifted his ban, had the vineyards replanted and named the grape after the young hero.

THE GRAPE

Mavrud is one of Bulgaria's oldest grapes, and it has never strayed far from home: it grows here in the Thracian Valley, around Plovdiv and Asenovgrad, and almost nowhere else. The name comes from the Greek *mavros*, "black," and you can see why in the glass. The small, thick-skinned berries ripen late and give a deep, inky wine with firm tannins and flavors of dark fruit, spice and earth.

ON OUR ESTATE

We grow 10 hectares of Mavrud on the clay soils of Peso Pole, the "Dog's Field," where steady winds keep the vines healthy. It ripens late, so we pick it near the end of harvest: our 2022 came in by hand on November 2.

IN THE GLASS, AND OVER TIME

Open a bottle now and you'll find ripe dark fruit and supple tannins; give it 45 minutes in a decanter. Or keep it a few years and it moves toward dried cherry, leather and savory spice, then tobacco and forest floor as the tannins turn silky. We'd enjoy it through 2032.

PAIR IT WITH

At our table: grilled and roasted meats, roast lamb, braised duck, aged cheeses and earthy mushroom dishes.



THE FAMILY & THE VINEYARDS

FROM TEXTILES
to terroir

Before wine, the Kostov family was in textiles. In 1994, seeing the European textile industry in decline, they decided to invest in something radically different, holding to one principle: take a product all the way from raw material to finished goods. After extensive analysis they chose winemaking. The family had always made wine, though never on this scale.

The land was chosen after a series of terroir studies. Before 1949 these fields were planted with vines, which the communist regime uprooted for livestock farming. The Kostovs brought the vineyards back, joining about 50 separate properties, from 0.05 to 5 hectares each, into two sites. The vines were grown from Bulgarian planting material, and Mr. Kostov took part in the planting himself. The estate is still family owned and run, three decades on.

PESO POLE · 33 HA

“Dog's Field.”

Flat terrain with clay soil: Mavrud, Syrah and most of the Cabernet Sauvignon. Constant winds keep disease from taking hold.

SOUTH PLOT · 23 HA

Bakadik & Brestaka.

South-facing slope with sandy, stony soil: Merlot, part of the Cabernet Sauvignon, Muscat Ottonel and Chardonnay.

WHAT GROWS

Cabernet Sauvignon	26 ha
Merlot	15
Mavrud	10
Syrah	3
Muscat · Chardonnay	1 + 1

FARMED
with purpose

Biodynamic farming: no synthetic pesticides or herbicides, work timed to the lunar and biodynamic calendars, and every cluster picked by hand. A permanent cover crop between the rows keeps the soil alive and holds moisture.

Each parcel is managed on live data: subsurface drip irrigation (Netafim), on-site weather stations, vine water-tension sensors (FloraPulse), leaf-tissue analysis (NOVACORP) and the RIMPRO disease-forecasting model. Every pick is timed by lab analysis of the grapes.

“Because all of the fruit is grown the same way year after year, each wine keeps a consistent style across vintages: when the 2022 sells out, the 2023 carries it on.”

ESTATE VINEYARDS, VILLAGE OF SMILETS · 3,600 VINES PER HECTARE · 48 HL/HA






IN THE CELLAR

FROM GRAPE TO BOTTLE,

step by step

Each variety ripens at its own pace, so each is picked, fermented and kept separately. Harvest runs from September to early November. The winery is in nearby Panagyurishte.

01 **RIPENESS** Sugar, acidity and pH are tested; the seeds must be brown and come away easily from the pulp.	02 **HAND HARVEST** 100% hand-picked by local workers into small crates that keep bunches intact.	03 **DOUBLE SORTING** Two sorting tables: whole clusters first, then again after destemming.	04 **COLD SOAK** 3–4 days at 57°F (14°C) before fermentation, to draw out primary aromas.	05 **FERMENTATION** Temperature-controlled stainless steel; the reds ferment for 10–12 days.
06 **DRAINING** Free-run yield is strictly held to 52–55%.	07 **MALOLACTIC** Complete, spontaneous malolactic fermentation.	08 **COLD STABILIZATION** At 21–23°F (–5 to –6°C).	09 **AGING** Current releases rest 6–12 months in stainless steel, which settles the wine naturally, so only one filtration is needed.	10 **BOTTLING** Sterile filtration, then counter-pressure bottling under nitrogen, so no oxygen gets in.

HARVEST DATES

WINE	PICKED
Mavrud 2022	November 2, 2022
Merlot 2022	September 29, 2022
Select 2023 · Syrah	October 2, 2023
Select 2023 · Merlot	October 4–5, 2023
Select 2023 · Mavrud	October 16, 2023

The Select Blend is made only from finished, fully matured wine, drawn in proportion from each single-variety tank; it was bottled March 16, 2026. Because the fruit is grown the same way every year, each wine keeps its style from vintage to vintage. A barrel-aged **Rhesus Reserve** sample is available for tasting.

THE WINEMAKERS

Lachezar Karakashev, winemaker at the estate since 2012, trained in wine technology at the University of Food Technologies in Plovdiv and has worked at every level of production. He makes the Rhesus style: ripe, dark fruit from our own estate grapes, fermented and aged in stainless steel rather than oak, so the wines stay fresh, with soft, polished tannins and a dry finish.

Dimitar Dokuzanov, consulting winemaker, brings more than 25 years of work with wineries across Bulgaria. He was named Oenologist of the Year in 2018 by Bulgaria's Union of Oenologists, the country's highest winemaking honor, and chairs juries at wine competitions nationwide.

THREE

Estate Reds



MAVRUD 2022

100% MAVRUD

The discovery wine: Bulgaria's native grape, grown almost nowhere else.

Deep ruby with violet reflections. Ripe blackberry and plum, layered spice and a hint of dried fruit. Full-bodied, firm acidity, velvety texture and a long, structured finish.

PAIR WITH

Grilled meats, roast lamb, braised duck, aged cheeses, mushroom dishes

Alcohol	**14.0%**
Residual sugar	**3.2 g/L**
Aging	**Stainless steel**
Drinking window	**2025–2032**
Production	**6,700 cases**



SELECT BLEND 2023

MAVRUD 40% · MERLOT 35% · SYRAH 25%

The lead wine and the best introduction to the estate.

Ruby red, with a gentle aroma of ripe red fruit. Mavrud's dark spice rounded out by Merlot and Syrah: a velvety, balanced palate and a fresh, elegant finish.

PAIR WITH

Roasts, desserts, or on its own

Alcohol	**14.5%**
Total acidity	**4.84 g/L**
Residual sugar	**2.5 g/L**
Aging	**Stainless steel**
Production	**8,400 cases**



MERLOT 2022

100% MERLOT

The familiar entry point, from estate fruit grown in the Thracian sun.

Deep ruby, with aromas of ripe black fruit. Smooth and rich on the palate, with a balanced, soft texture and a long, polished finish.

PAIR WITH

Red meats, pasta, soft cheeses

Alcohol	**14.5%**
Total acidity	**4.55 g/L**
Residual sugar	**3.0 g/L**
Aging	**Stainless steel**
Production	**8,400 cases**

ALL THREE: PGI THRACIAN VALLEY, BULGARIA · HAND-HARVESTED ESTATE FRUIT · 750 ML, 6 BOTTLES PER CASE



FOR RETAILERS

WHY STOCK
Rhesus

Stands out on the shelf
A crowned Thracian king in gold foil on a black label: a bottle customers pick up and ask about.

A discovery for curious drinkers
Mavrud is Bulgaria's own grape, grown almost nowhere else: something new for regulars who like to explore.

A story in one breath
A Homeric king, 3,000 years of Thracian wine, one family since 1996. One sentence from your staff sells the bottle.

Farming practices customers ask about
Biodynamic, hand-harvested, 30-year-old vines, low yields.

An easy range to build
Mavrud to discover, a familiar Merlot, and the Select Blend between them: dry, food-friendly reds ready to drink now.

We help you sell it
Staff tastings, in-store tastings and wine dinners on request.

FORMAT	THE WINES	ORDERING	TASTINGS
750 mL 6 bottles per case	Mavrud 2022 · Merlot 2022 Select Blend 2023	Through your distributor; ask us for yours	Staff samples on request

RHESUS
THRACIAN VALLEY WINE
IMPORTED BY IVA-BG LLC

Anton Piltchev
727-504-0393 · anton_piltchev@rhesuswine.com
rhesuswine.com