

## Zahradníček's blog for English speaking students

### Part seventeen: “*Burčák*”, or “*Částečně zkvašený hroznový mošt*”?

Today we are not going to solve ethnical or any other “big” problems. We are just going to speak about a yellow or red, mildly alcoholic beverage, sold in streets of Brno between mid-August to the end of October.

The orthodox viniculturists do not understand the popularity of this beverage. They consider it to be just an intermediate product between the crude grape-juice and a wine, suitable just as an indicator of quality of the future wine. But people like it, especially young people in big cities with no personal experience with making wine.

Well, first of all, we have to make clear, what is “*Burčák*”, and what is “*Částečně zkvašený hroznový mošt*”.

“*Burčák*” is the traditional September beverage, that contains much less alcohol than wine and is quite sweet, what is risky, because you drink it like juice, but still contains some alcohol, so you might be surprised by being drunk although “you did not drink anything “really alcoholic”.

It also contains huge amounts of yeasts, so apart from being drunk you also may suffer severe intestinal dysmicrobia, if you would drink it too much.

On the other hand, if you don't drink it too much, it is fine and relatively safe, especially when drinking it from genuine wine producers and not from re-seller who might have products of unsure quality.

That is exactly the reason why Czech law limited use of the term “*Burčák*” to a beverage made of local grapes and fulfilling some limitations. All beverages that do not fulfil it (e. g. they are made of Slovak or Hungarian grapes) should be labelled as “*Částečně zkvašený hroznový mošt*”. Of course, it does not mean that “*Částečně zkvašený hroznový mošt*” is something *a priori* bad; it might even taste better than *burčák*, especially if the summer is not very sunny and Moravian grapes are too acid to give a good result (while the Hungarians use to be more sweet, as Hungaria has warmer clima in average). Translation of “*Částečně zkvašený hroznový mošt*” is simply “Partially fermented grape must”, what is the precise description of this beverage, but of course, it also describes *burčák*.

If you want to taste a good *burčák*, do not buy it on a street; it is usually better to buy it in a specialised wine-shop, especially if it is owned directly by a winery. Another and maybe better way is to make a trip to the wineries; it is just 20–50 kilometres from Brno to very nice places in South Moravia, where you can spend all evening drinking *burčák*, but also local wine, and although even here it is not sure that all grapes are local, you can be at least quite sure that the beverage is made of grapes and not apples or something else.

If you finally decide that *burčák* is not the beverage you like, you may wait for the real wine. Brno (and many other cities in Czechia) have their tradition similar to French “Beajolais Nouveau”. In fact, the tradition is not very old, but it is here and people got used to it very quickly. The “new wine” is called “Svatomartinské”, that means “St. Martin's wine” and it is forbidden to sell it before 11<sup>th</sup> November. That is the day when St. Martin comes on his white horse (according to the tradition – white horse can be also understood as possibility of the first snowflakes), and many cities have huge celebrations of St. Martin, his wine and also his goose, what is another part of that tradition. In Brno, at 11 a. m., náměstí Svobody is a main place for the event: an actor playing Martin comes on his horse, music is playing, and one hundred selected wineries are allowed to sell the St. Martin's wine. You might be surprised that only some breeds are sold; but that is logical, because only some breeds are early enough to give a mature wine already in November. There exists even a list of breeds that can be offered. They contain some white breeds (Frühroter Veltliner, Müller Thurgau and Moravian Muscat) and some breeds used for rosé and red wines (St. Laurent and Zweigelt). No other breeds or their cuvees can be found here.