

## Zahradníček's blog for English speaking students

### Part twenty four: Beaujolais Nouveau, or St. Martin's Wine?

In November, it is already too late for *burčák*. Is it time for new wine of the recent year.

In some countries, there exist long traditions about the new wine. Probably the most famous is the "Beaujolais Nouveau" in France. In Czechia, the tradition is not so old, but it started to be already very popular, too. Czech tradition is connected with the St. Martin's day, what is the same day as the Remembrance Day, that means 11<sup>th</sup> November. St. Martin is a person of Christian (mostly Catholic) tradition, but also a real person Martin of Tours, that lived between years 317 and 397 A. D. in the Roman Empire, or in its part what is today France. He was a soldier that did not hesitate to use force; but the Christian legend says that he donated a half of his own coat to a poor man. So he is usually drawn as a soldier on a white horse, cutting his coat into two parts.

St. Martin's celebrations are often started by an actor dressed in a costume of a Roman soldier, coming to a public place (like the *Náměstí Svobody* – Freedom Square in Brno) on a white horse. By the way, the horse's colour is also traditional, although there is obviously no real evidence about the colour of the horse of the real Martin of Tours was white. It is probably rather a Central European tradition – in Czechia and surrounding countries the first snowflakes often come in mid-November, that means, around St. Martin's day. So the "white horse" is just a symbol for the white snowflakes.

Recently, St. Martin's day is not only a day of the first snow, but also a day of St. Martin's wine (*Svatomartinské víno*) and St. Martin's goose (or duck) that is served in many restaurants around this day.

As to the wine itself, there exist authorities that keep vigilance about the quality of the St. Martin's wines. Only some grape varieties are allowed to be served as St. Martin's wines; they should be Moravian and Czech wines, and it should be Müller Thurgau, Frühroret Veltliner and Moravian Muscat for white wines, St. Laurent, Blauer Portugieser or Zweigelt for clarets and rosés, while only St. Laurent and Blauer Portugieser are allowed as St. Martin's red wines. If you come 11<sup>th</sup> November to the Freedom Square, you would see one hundred specimens, but all of them should belong to one of these varieties. And they are specially selected so that they can be offered at the feast.

Of course, no everyone is happy with these new wines. The same as for *burčák*, some wine experts say that there is nothing good on these very young wines. They consider their taste to be unpleasant and "not yet cultivated". On the other hand, new wines (not regarding if it is Beaujolais nouveau or St. Martin's wine) are the first opportunity for wine fans to taste the specimens from the new year, and so they can better predict the quality of the wines for future. Surprisingly, even on the action following *after* the main feast (in Brno, "Svatomartinské vinnosti", in 2019 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November) you can meet wineries that have many specimens of wine, but no young wine. Typical winery like this is *Winery Bukovský* that has a winery on Úvoz street, but in November (and also in December) you can meet its kiosk in the city. And you can even meet its owner Antonín ("Tony") Bukovský playing his violin with friends directly on the Freedom Square.

In any case, the St. Martin's wine is an opportunity for people to meet together, either on a square or in a restaurant, to taste young wine and of course, also some good food. Even on the Freedom Square you can meet potato pancakes, Slovak small potato dumplings called *halušky*, usually served with the sheep cheese *bryndza*, eventually also sausages, smoked cheese or traditional Hungarian *kürtőskalács* – another funny story, it has its origin in Hungary, but many Slovaks believe it to be "traditions Slovak" (especially in the city of Skalica, not far from the Czecho-Slovak border) and even some Czechs consider it to be "traditional Czech food".

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