



Frankie is a sales manager for Top Selection, covering the northern home counties, East Anglia and parts of the Midlands

I'm from Hungary and I sold a piece of land in the Teleki Grand Cru in Tokaj to fund my move to the UK 20 years ago. My family were farmers and when privatisation happened in Hungary we were claiming back lots of lands, but the infrastructure just wasn't there. I was always a rebel and said to my parents: "You picked up the wrong baby, I was born in south London, I want to listen to The Specials". I needed to come to see the Cockney Rejects, West Ham Utd and buy a pair of Dr Martens and other accessories to look the part. I arrived on a Tuesday and ran out of money by the Friday before I could do any of those things.

I went to military school and later got a job as a butler in a hotel. That's when I met people who suggested I should be a sommelier.

My wife and I lived in Trinidad for a while and that's where I started working for a well-respected wine merchant, Joseph Fernandes. He and my wife encouraged me to do my WSET.

I joined Top Selection in 2019. I'd had my own wine shop in St Albans, ThirtyNine 10. Top Selection were one of my main suppliers. I loved their portfolio and the company's founder, Akos, is a fellow Hungarian and role model for many Hungarians in the UK trade. So when the shop closed I jumped at the opportunity to work with Top Selection. Being a poacher-turned-gamekeeper gives me a great understanding of my customers and their challenges. I work hard to give them the wines and service that adds genuine value to their businesses.

I love my job because I travel to all these beautiful places in the UK. I see historical buildings and churches and I visit market towns where I meet brilliant people who share our love for the wine and for history.

Top of my list for the independents right now is Ulmus. It's our own brand of wines made by some of the best boutique winemakers in the world. The Ulmus Bull's Blood from Hungary is top notch. It's made by János György in Eger and it's really exciting to be able to offer something to the indies that is totally unique, from a famous winemaker with a story to tell.

As a Hungarian from Tokaj, I am really proud to represent two projects from the Szepsy family. The first is Hun, a dry Furmint made by the 18th generation, István Szepsy. The wine is made from the younger vines and it just has partial malolactic ageing. It's crisp and fresh, a really energetic Furmint in a beautifully designed bottle that offers an alternative to a

younger generation.

The second wine from Szepsy is a late harvest Tokaji: Cuvée Anastasia. The grapes are harvested from the Nyúlászó Grand Cru vineyard and the majority of the blend is Sárga Muskotály. It is beautifully floral and dances on your palate. You feel the weight but you don't feel the sugar content – it is the most amazing wine.

I took a group of retailers and sommeliers to Szepsy and I'd booked some accommodation for us all in the town. I was talking to the owner when his father-in-law walked in dressed up as a medieval knight. He convinced us all to go with him to the castle to the medieval festival. He drove us up a really steep, cobbled hill. We were flying around in the back of this minibus, and then the madness began. One participant in the sword fighting started taking it personally, then another man almost got shot by an arrow. It started to feel like we were in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

I'm doing an English course at my local college and writing a presentation about the legend of Tokaji Aszú. We are so proud that it was the drink of European royalty, musicians, composers, artists and poets. I probably inherited this love of history from my uncle. He is a very well-known historian who discovered the first written record of botritised berries in Tokaj.

I'm still into the punk rock scene and I go to see bands like GBH and Madball. I also like dirt bikes, so if anyone has a few speedway tickets ...



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