

## HISTORY OF TOKAJI

The Tokaji region - as most of Hungary - has an extraordinary, rich history. Invasions, treaties and heroic deeds are part of the tapestry of events that make up the fascinating culture of the country.

The Tokaji region and its twenty-eight wine producing villages were classified at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Prince Rákóczi into First, Second and Third Growths. The Russian and French Emperors over the years owned and had special relationships with particular vineyards that produced wines for the Royal tables.

The drinking of Tokaji wines was greatly expanded across Europe by the arrival of Jewish merchant families who were welcomed by local landlords of Mád for their recognised aptitude and knowledge to sell their wines.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, two particular families, the Deutsch and Zimmermanns acquired houses and vineyards in Mád. Records show that the Zimmermann family lived in one of the buildings where Royal Tokaji is now based. The horrendous events of World War II put an end to the close relationships of the Jewish community in Mád when they were deported to the concentration camps in Germany where few survived.

For an eye witness account of the horrors of the Jewish deportation it is worth visiting:

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn512086>

At the end of World War II the Soviets occupied Hungary and nationalised the vineyards creating communist cooperatives bringing appalling hardship. The quality of the wines was severely affected as quantity over quality was the rule. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-90 brought the political changes that were necessary to enable the inhabitants of Mád to start making premium wines and led to the founding of Royal Tokaji.