

Croatian Eno-Gastronomy

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Croatia

Eno-Gastronomy



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Croatia, Gastronomic Princess of the Mediterranean and Europe

Veljko Barbieri ■

In the mid nineties, during the rescue excavations in Starogradsko Polje (*old town field*) on the island of Hvar, grape and olive seeds were found in one of the funeral urns. Researchers speculated that this was a common residue of agricultural crops from the 4th or 3rd century BC as it was thought that both cultures were connected to the arrival of the Greeks and the establishment of their colonies on the eastern coast. The seeds were sent to the Research Institute of the Old Culture in Phoenix, Arizona to be carbon tested and the results were a surprise to everyone. The seeds of the vines and the olive trees were in fact from the 9th or 8th century BC, that is from the time before the Greek colonisation. They date from the time of the Illyrian rule over the island and the Dalmatian coast. So the Illyrians, the warlike but disunited lords of our coast, inland and islands, also grew grapes and olives back in the ancient times and equally enjoyed wine and food, which they seasoned with olive oil. Later chronicles tell of great feasts and festivities at the Illyrian kings' palaces, which of course continued over the Greek, Hellenistic period, in the already forgotten *Symposion, banquet in Issa, Faros, Tragurion, Salons, Epetion, Epidaurus, and Korčyra* (then the Greek island of Korčula). The feasts and festivities continued over a few centuries later when Rome finally gained control of all these areas, expanding its cosmopolitan culture, cultivation and wine production and bringing its tremendous cuisine based on olive oil. So, thanks to the findings in the small ceramic urns from *Starogradsko* fields, our knowledge about the history of the Mediterranean culture of crop farming has shifted to the early ancient world. Therefore the question of whether there is a genuine Croatian gastronomy and Croatian oenology, inseparably linked with Croatia, is pointless really, because they are both clearly identified as small, but separate parts, sometimes even more clearly recognisable than areas more famous for gastronomy and oenology. It is difficult to find in Europe, on such a small territory as today's Croatia, so pronounced an intermingling of central and southern European, particularly Mediterranean, civilisations and culinary and oenological tradition. It would be more than presumptuous to compare Croatian cuisine and Croatian wine culture with the cuisine and wine traditions of larger nations, but the very diversity and traditions of Croatia identify it as a separate gastro entity.

If we tried to follow Croatia's geographical and cultural traces by going on a journey through time and tastes, and if we started from the eastern Croatian borders, we would first meet the Croatian northeast and northwest, their true oenological and gastronomic accents associated with strong cultural influence, radiating from Western and Central Europe, from the Frankish Empire to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Formed in such a gastro melting pot, in Eastern Slavonia, the most interesting dish is definitely shepherd's stew. Deriving from Hungarian and Pan-

nonian influences, it condenses a soupy experience of goulash and stews with a special kaleidoscope of vegetables and spices, and of course wine, without which this unique dish can neither be prepared nor enjoyed. The dish can be spiced during cooking or later adjusted to taste when already seated at the table, with spices and wine such as *Slavonian Traminac* or *Klikun*, indigenous red and white noble *Riesling* from the cellars of the old *Slavonian Ilok, Vukovar* and *Osijek, Đakovo* and *Vinkovci*. If shepherd's stew and Slavonian wines combine to create a trademark, then the best Slavonian culinary product is certainly *kulen*. This dried sausage with hot pepper, made from the best parts of pork meat, is unsurpassed in these parts of the European continent. The sausage is always accompanied by excellent wines.

Osijek, the capital of Slavonia which neighbours Vukovar, and in particular Đakovo and Vinkovci are also the capitals of stews, pork and poultry, especially duck. As they are hugged by the two great rivers, the Drava and the Danube, they also offer a menu of fresh water fish, giving them special culinary flair. Fish stews and Catfish *perkelt* (*perkelti* can be made with all sorts of meat, diced and stewed with peppers, onions and potatoes), like Hungarian ones but more dense and aromatic, are usually followed by fish broth, dried fish or fish sausages, while the fried carp, probably under the influence of the Ottoman Empire, is served with *đuveč* – oriental rice with vegetables. When Vinkovci's horseradish soup arrives on the table first, it is usually followed by Baranja's *perkelt* and the main course, Đakovo's pork stuffed with smoked meat or ham, vegetables and tongue. All the dishes have a strong and desirable smell. Finally, a variety of thirty or so traditional Slavonian cakes usually served at weddings mark the end of every major culinary and wine festival. This short menu is accompanied of course by Eastern and Baranja wines, for many of which the taste was directly influenced by Hungary, from the great vineyards and cellars in Vilanju near Pečuh, or those immediately along the border in the Hungarian part of Baranja.

In the western part of Slavonia, this theme builds on the extensive dining experiences of immigrants and natives. So it is difficult to deny the roasted poultry filled with quince compote, accompanied by red *Frankovka* or *Portugizac*, their German, Austrian and Czech origins. Bean stew and *sarma* (pickled cabbage leaves stuffed with minced beef) are of Bosnian and Turkish origin, while the unique horse sausages and horse meat, which in Italy has disappeared from the menu, come from the Apennines. The highlands and hills are rich in small and big game, and there is an abundance of fish from rivers and ponds. The culinary simplicity and elegance distinguishes perch in sour cream as the finest dish of Western cuisine, followed by carp and 'drunk' carp baked in butter, fat and wine, poured over with golden wine from the vineyard. This is a true wine region, marked by the famous Roman Vallis Aurea or Golden Požega

Valley, which extends all the way to the famous Kutjevo vineyards and cellars, and the hills that surround the very Požega highlands, Kamensko and the slopes of Papuk. It seems that everything around here evolved around and exists because of wine, while the wine and culinary flagship of Western cuisine is not conceivable without their top varieties, the already mentioned *Traminac*, *Riesling*, *Chardonnay*, *Cabernet* and *Šipelj*. Every meal is followed with a carefully selected wine, creating a special gastro-oenological circle.

Adjacent to Slavonia are Moslavina, Posavina and Banovina. Their original cellars ripen *Škrlet*, *Moslavac*, *Kraljevina*, *Frankovka* and the whole range of afore-mentioned European white and red wines. The cellars have old cauldrons and the area is famous for roast meat platters from these, which are more ancient than the open-fire baked meat and sausages in fat, pepper and, of course, wine, adding more recently various vegetables and baked beans. Rabbit, poultry and game stew are boiled in pans over a fire. Here, geese and ducks can be seen roasting on a spit, especially during St. Martin, when the saint is said to come and baptise the young wine.

Podravina is proud of its festive tables, which offer marinated meat preserved in lard and diced bacon, which connects the province with Međimurje, Croatia's land of fairy tales. In the mist rising over its rivers, forests, groves, fields and vineyards one can listen to a song from enchanted creatures from Međimurje's mythology. The creatures sneak through the flavours of ducks and geese roasted in their own fat, meat from *tiblica* (a bowl characteristic of the Međimurje region used to prepare meat dishes) and pork in sour cream, wine and mushrooms, fish from the Drava and Mura rivers, especially the famous trout in red wine, which along with a dozen kinds of Međimurje pastry, swell on the tables looking like stuffed dwarfs. Everyone is seated or lying on tables, and next to them pushing through come the gourmets and drunkards of old from Čakovec, town of the Zrinski family and Varaždin, a Baroque centre of northern Croatia, an urban centre and the former Croatian capital. They are proud members of one of the most famous baroque

butchers' guilds of Europe, the body that has ruled their city for two centuries.

For them were prepared *old Varaždin rajžleci* (an old dish made of veal stomach), pâtés made from livers and poultry, and veal shank in wine and cream, as well as stuffed goose and duck breast in gingerbread dough. In one whole day of feasting, according to books neatly written by Varaždin's butcher's guild, back in 1693, these gourmet masters, about thirty of them, consumed no less than one whole calf, four pigs, a dozen pounds of cooked beef, a few chickens, pigeons, turkeys, geese and ducks, along with a brace of rabbits, wild birds, lots of sausage, exactly 22 hens, a few ox tongues on skewers and a bunch of snails. If you leave out the desserts, it is noted that on this ancient day, a few hundred litres of wine was drunk, and if the accounts are to be trusted, exactly 360 litres, but that is, to tell the truth, an unbelievable amount.

However, those are extremely delicious and nicely decorated menus depicting palaces and bell-towers of the historical Croatian capital, but also of Međimurje's capital. The wine from nearby Međimurje Štrigova is poured into glasses, the wines gurgle and clinking of the goblets full of indigenous Međimurje *Pušipel* and golden *Muskat* blend with aromas and flavours of excellent and original dishes listed in the famous 17th century cookbook from the palace of the Zrinski family in Čakovec, in which for each recipe, the original baroque culinary experience is explained. The dishes were cooked in the kitchens of this powerful family and relied equally on European influences, especially those from Italy, Hungary and Austria, Germany, Portugal and even Spain.

Zagorje, Zagreb's entrance hall, scattered villages spread over hills is home to baked and fried chicken, turkey with dumplings, strong flavoured soups made with poultry and mushrooms, venison in wine sauces, cooked smoked meat served with a stew of beans and pumpkin, sauerkraut and nettle soup, which accompanied the famous garlic sausage and black pudding, sausage seasoned with garlic and blood. It is also an ancient oenological area whose exquisite varieties such as Riesling, Graševina (a sort





of Riesling), Traminac and Šipon inspire with a fresh dry taste. Zagorje's pork tenderloin with dried plums marinated in imported Chardonnay – a recipe recorded in 16th century gourmet menus – is a bridge to the menus of the Croatian capital of Zagreb.

Old Agram (an old historic restaurant in the green part of Zagreb serving local food and good wine) is a respected cultural and urban representative of Central Europe. From its kitchens and wine cellars the tradition emerges at every step. The palate and taste of Zagreb reflect revised Austro-Hungarian flair, but they also reflect centuries long cultural and oenological experience from Zagorje and closer Turopolje which normally protects the province from the centre, cities like Zagreb from its former metropolises such as Vienna. Of course it is not surprising to anyone that Zagreb's tables are full of minced or fried and breaded meat steaks, preceded by the famous Zagreb's *ajngemahtes*, soup with poultry or veal with root vegetables and peas, and finally Provincial Cordon Bleu, veal, pretentiously stuffed with ham and cheese. It is as if Zagreb wants to emphasize the superiority of its provincialism, as it is really more interesting than its culinary Viennese model. A special place is dedicated to *agramerski ričet* made of beans and barley with smoked meat and veal soup, refined foods and pâtés made of poultry and game, and with them good old tenderloin in wine, and at the feast's end- the original Zagreb cherry strudel, which was adopted by Viennese cuisine too.

Roasted young boar out of the oven, also bathed in wine, and cooked ox tails with homemade Samobor mustard, as well as famous organic chicken dishes, lead us to another baroque Croatian capital, the old town of knights – Samobor. Known for its excellent meat menus in which along with the dishes already mentioned there is a proud smell of grilled pork and grilled pork chops, then old Samobor catfish soup with cream and white wine, stuffed breast of veal and shank from the oven, the strudels and pastry, especially cream cake (*kremšnita*), served with dessert wine, Samobor Bermet and wines from nearby Žumberak and its vineyards.



From here, from nearby Lika and Gorski Kotar region, a whole food and wine world emanates and it seemed that it lived as an ancient legend hidden in the ancient forests, the purest Croatian riverbeds and old fortresses and cities. The entire area is dominated by the city of Karlovac, a military center of Krajina stretching from Ozalj to Rijeka and the Croatian Primorje coast, whose kitchen breathes originality, not only from Austro-Hungarian influences but also the influences of those in Samobor that were left behind by Napoleon's soldiers with their town as well as rural menus from simple egg and flour soups, thick soup with mushrooms and meat soup, Dugoreška's dish, roasted and cooked meat, shank, breast and ham, traditional rabbit in sauce with cloves. They are followed by dishes from a rich fish menu, because this is an area bordered by the clearest Croatian rivers Kupa, Retina, Korana and Dobra, mainly inhabited with pike and perch, catfish and carp. There are also porridge and vegetable stews or beans, fungi, mainly highly prized mushrooms such as *vrganj* and *lisičke*, homemade noodles in imaginative sauces, pies, *bazlamača* (a simple cake made of corn flour, eggs, cottage cheese and cream, typical of Zagorje and Medimurje), kuglof and cakes.

Across the boundaries of Gorski Kotar and the Ogulin part of Lika, there with Ogulin at its centre famous for its array of homemade breads, *smisovnica* (a type of multigrain bread), bread with onions and dry meat specialties from deer and bear, various kinds of meat with Ogulin's renowned cabbage and vegetables and game dishes from nearby Josipdol: deer, venison, boar, rabbit, pheasant, quail and snipe, Lika's roasted lamb and baked potatoes under the bell, as well as an excellent selection of cheeses such as indigenous Tounj's cheese (smoked cheese from Tounj, Lika) and *škrpavac* (a type of haloumi cheese) and mature cheese spreads, served with a cornflour bread or bread baked from the flour of seven different grains ...

However, this is just a list of various foods from the area and they are followed by an army of cakes that wake up the taste buds, while this gastronomic power is accompanied by the honour guard of wines from



Vivodinsko, Ozalj, Ogulin, Duga Resa, Draganići with Raina's Riesling, Muscatel, Traminer, Chardonnay, Franconia, and the especially celebrated ice harvested wines, an oenological tradition.

With those highlighted ancient highland dishes and wines nowhere else in Croatia does one get the feeling that time has stood still than in the regions of Istria and Dalmatia. These two regions stand out as special features of Croatia, the authentic life and gastronomic ambience which have admittedly drawn their inspiration from their exemplars especially Venice, but they knew how to build on them with the strength of their own culinary knowledge and experience. We can begin with Istrian minestrone and jotas, thick soups made of dried/smoked meat and beans, Istrian *žgvaceti* with venison or lamb (a pasta dish with meat stew), various sauces from famous Istrian truffles and asparagus, which are poured over Istrian *fuži* (homemade pasta) and *pljukanci* (homemade tortellini), very similar to old medieval macaroni, or to season fine risottos.

Pazin's famous roasted turkeys with sour apples are baked in the oven, and along with pears and fruit, sausages and smoked pork loin on *gradele* (a type of grill used along the Croatian coast for grilling meat, mainly fish), along with fish, clams and big crabs in risottos with truffles, sophisticated *lešade* (a traditional light meal consisting of cooked fish served with boiled vegetables and fish soup) and *brujeti* (fish cooked in wine) in which the taste of wine and olive oil permeate as gifts of the Istrian soil, with mixed fish and crabs from Istrian waters. These products of sea and land, along the banks of their coastal towns or at the foot of their hills and mountains over which guard famous Istrian castles, are served in various *šugovi* (juices or sauces made of tomato or seafood) dominated by the famous Greek Malvasia imported by the Venetians, but which in Istria has surpassed its role models. In addition to imported Merlot, there is also the indigenous red Istrian Teran with a bitter and strong taste and fragrant color from which the famous Istrian Teran soup, seasoned with cloves and served with toasted bread, is made.

All this along with the inevitable asparagus in Spring, with Autumn chestnuts and truffles, particularly the white ones, strong-smelling and with a distinct taste, like the Istrian cuisine itself, which has managed to turn all those imported techniques and know-how into its own culinary expression. Istrian culinary expression is not only felt in Liburnia, an area at the foot of Učka, in its dishes flavoured with Spring and Summer asparagus and cherries, with famous Autumn chestnuts from Lovran, but also on the islands of Cres, Lošinj and Rab, whose soil also contains the seeds of ancient varieties, notably the original *žlabtina* (an authentic Croatian white wine). This, in parallel embraces the individual civilization, oenological and gastronomic traditions which are based on lamb and goat, while the deep sea whispers tales of big crabs, clams and fish.

But, if on the journey through time and tastes, we try to come up with the menu that consists of a complex series of passages of time, then it is best to look for it in Dalmatia. In Dalmatia, one can still feel the dawn of civilization from which the Mediterranean cuisine originates. Its cuisine is so gentle and classically basic, refined, but sometimes old fashioned in the modern culinary sense, as a mirror of the old Mediterranean. Fish, shellfish and crabs of all kinds, prepared in various ways: baked, boiled in marinades – *na buzare* (cooked in wine in seashells) – which all derive from Dalmatia or cooked in the famous Dalmatian *brujeti*, seemingly similar to the Venetian *broéti* and Provençal *bouillabaisse*s. Followed by vegetables dishes, often mixed beans like French *cassoulet* and preparations made from cabbage, lamb and goat meat, giblets or ancient *pirjanci* (a type of meat stew) such as famous *pašticada*, in its composition of ancient and Byzantine origin, but with a strong Dalmatian emphasis.

Culinary courtesy is included that province in the Mediterranean culinary kaleidoscope made up of ancient sea urchins and raw fish, roast from under metal or ceramic bells, unique bread cakes filled with salted fish from the island of Vis in which it is easy to recognize its ancient Greek origin. Here we dis-



cover the ability of inheritance – in Neolithic lamb tripe, classical tripe and *Brač vitalac* (a tripe type of food made on the island of Brač), goat or lamb meat and giblets on the spit, and good old *tinguli* with venison and poultry, also from Apennine roots, various seafood casseroles like Hvar's broth, which even in its own name reveals links with Greece, continuing the long tradition of Hellenic and Byzantine presence. Since olden times the fish in Dalmatia is roasted on a grill or a spit, like sardines on the islands, while octopus tentacles, cuttlefish and squid are filled with their own flesh, sometimes pieces of shrimps or *pršut* (prosciutto) – the best smoked ham of the Mediterranean. Dried fish and salted fish, was exported for centuries, but also prepared for festive occasions in dishes similar to today's codfish *bakalar* (a cod fish). But, Venice has also enjoyed the Dalmatian *kaštradina*, dried mutton or goat meat with Dalmatian cabbage. *Castrati dalmati* (Dalmatian *kaštradina*) and *Cavoli dalmati* (Dalmatian cabbage) were equally valued as were tongues cooked with cloves and coriander, and above all, the pots of beans and cabbage already mentioned, which along with many other native foods have outgrown their culinary horizon.

According to historians, the emperor Diocletian himself before his death cultivated cabbage in the vicinity of the palace in Split, renaissance gastronomes like Platin and Scappi praised Dalmatian game in wine, olive oil, lemon and rosemary. In the deltas of Dalmatian rivers the *brujeti* of eels and frogs are cooked, they are followed by crayfish in mint and tomatoes salsa. In the Spring, off the Dalmatian tables glide snails in hot pepper sauce, asparagus and artichokes prepared in dozens of ways smelling nicely in pots and pans. Dalmatia is a land of mountain and island lamb and goat, veal, pork and smoked meat, of which the traditional roasting and *lešade* with salsa, capers and coarse salt are prepared.

During harvesting of the famous native wine varieties such as Plavac Mali – decisive and dominant wine of Croatia, as well indigenous as Kaštela's Crljenka and Primošten's Babić, Šibenik's Debit, islands' Pošip, Parča, Bogdanuša, Vugava or Maraština, *polpete*

(meatballs) of mutton are baked, while in the inland the Sinj's *arambašiči*, a domestic version of the Turkish-Bosnian *sarma* compete with its Ottoman model. Then the original Dalmatian inland varieties such as white Zlatarica and honey or red Trnka are served on a table. On the islands the famous cheeses, such as Pag's and Silba's and young sheep's and goat's cheeses, accompany almond and carob cakes, ravioli, fritters and cheese pies, Carnival cakes which arrived in the area with a carnival from Venice and were embodied within the strong local tradition.

In the cuisine of the Dubrovnik Republic the biggest impression on travellers left a green pasta of kale, cabbage and *kaštradina*, pasta *Ragusei dei Verdi*, as they were called by the Apennine's gastronomes, then clams and oysters from Mali Ston Bay, which also celebrated this small southeastern state and its cuisine. These are only small fragments of the great courses illustrated by *rožate* and renaissance pepper biscuits with honey and ammonia or, in the culinary world, a famous cake Makarana made of almonds, eggs and the famous Maraschino liqueur, which inspired even Giacomo Casanova in his amorous adventures, or at his writing desk.

As a final fragment of one never completed menu, created in a split between epochs, which, from dish to dish, from wine to wine, married the gastronomy of Croatia and Croatian oenology.

Sometimes the main idea about the Croatian cultural, oenological and gastronomic regions may have been misunderstood, especially after close examination of Balkan culinary habits. However, the gastronomic variety of dishes and menus, native and imported wine varieties, similarities and differences, influences and originality, slowly started to merge in the same way that spices and ingredients match in good food, food with wine, and the region and its history combine in the original flavors and odors. Such a menu and wine list which reflect our common heritage, Croatian cuisine and Croatian oenology offer a small but distinct and valuable opportunity for study and discovery of the Mediterranean and Europe.





The country of culinary diversity

Željko Žutelija ■

In Europe it is hard to find a country in which, in such a small area, so much diversity exists as in Croatia. Its geographically curved shape, like a horseshoe, demonstrates many distinctions and peculiarities that distinguish the north-western region, belonging to Central Europe, from the southern, more Mediterranean area. Both areas are linked with modern highways enabling travel between them of just a few hours.

The historical turbulence, geographic and climatic features, diversity of cultural heritage, the details of original traditions, customs and habits, the varied characteristics of rural and urban localities, all contribute to the wealth of Croatia's culinary diversity. But in this relatively small area, these differences are often very strongly intertwined, often to the extent that the original cuisine is unrecognisable and subject to influence and cross-fertilisation from one region to another, from rural to urban and from traditional to a new contemporary context.

The gastronomic culture of Croatia is undoubtedly one of the most interesting and richest in Europe, primarily because it unites the richness of Central European, Mediterranean and Eastern cuisine, but also because it is based on an extremely healthy food. Refined European gastronomy connoisseurs will recognize on the plates of the Croatian cuisine achievements of the former rulers of its regions, from Vienna to Istanbul and Venice, but also a precious legacy of people's cuisine, developed in conjunction with the modest possibilities of individual regions.

Essentiality and originality

Regardless of whether it is anchovy, which is considered a food resource of Dalmatia, livestock on the Dalmatian islands and inland, wildlife in the mountain and the lowland part of Croatia or forest fruits in the woodlands of the country, Croatia's gastro culture has always been developed in harmony with the climate of the region and, of course, the material wealth of the population. The necessity and originality of many regional people's cuisines today, in modern conditions, are one of the strongest assets of the national cuisine. Croatia has turned its ecological preservedness into an unforeseen culinary advantage.

Croatia is a country of healthy food, originating mainly from the greenery of naturally preserved landscapes untouched by the harmful effects of excessive industrialization. Because of that, many Croatian culinary delights are unique in Europe and the rest of the world.

Culinary rarities

Mali Ston's oysters *Ostrea edulis*, islands' lamb, a wealth of freshwater and marine fish, shellfish and crabs, one of the best olive

oils in the world, Pag's cheese, Slavonian *kulen* (*hot sausage*), Istrian *Boškarin* (less known type of beef originating from Istria), truffles and asparagus, Dalmatian chard, arugula, artichokes, broad beans, *mišancija* (Dalmatian mixed herbs) and other types of vegetables, smoked ham and bacon from the Dalmatian hinterland, naturally bred Zagorje turkey, rich wildlife and wild berries, potatoes from Lika and Međimurje's cabbage, rarities like *butarge* (*salted and dried fish roe, a rare and precious delicacy*), dried fish eggs, or dried *tabinja* (a rare fish) which many consider more tasty than dried cod – these are the ingredients on which the best Croatian gastronomy is based and which, thanks to tourism, has become well known in Europe and worldwide.

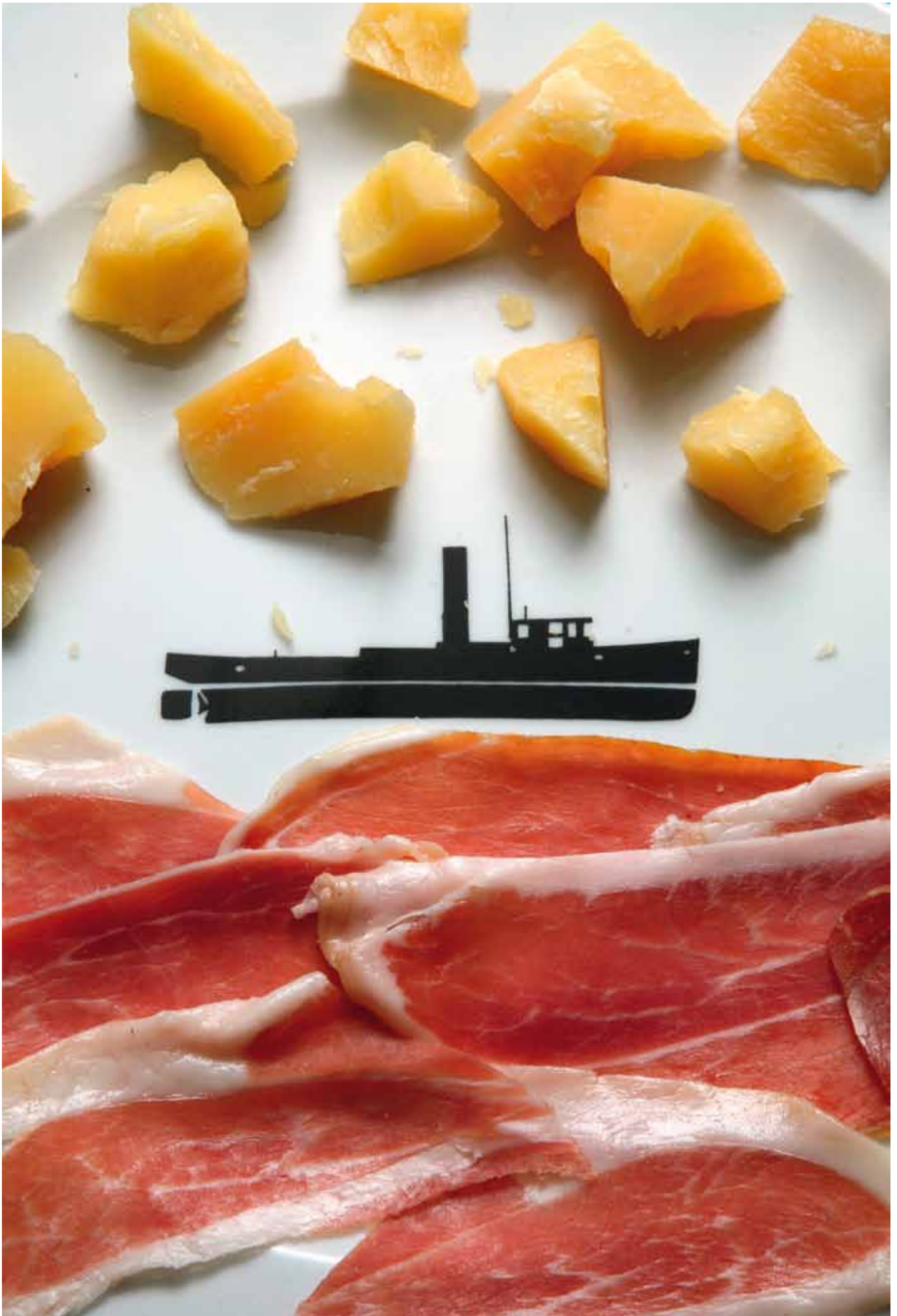
The development of gastronomy has been strongly supported by tourism development, and the partnership of these two disciplines influenced the re-appraisal of the gastronomy and wine culture and its adaptation to modern conditions and needs. Our long neglected cuisine has finally become a treasured and properly valued occupation, and more and more young and educated people get drawn to catering, hospitality, agriculture, fisheries, orchards and vineyards. They are conscious that this is a potentially lucrative part of the Croatian economy in which demand is on an upward curve.

Precious heritage

As in a theatre of the absurd, many historical misfortunes on Croatian soil in modern conditions turned into a national culinary advantage. When the conquerors of its regions in the changed historical and social circumstances retreated, they left behind a valuable gastronomic culture, which today, we have as a legacy. When, due to the political and social climate, we were not developing as fast as today's highly developed European countries, our regions, for a variety of reasons, were spared from ecological disruption and pollution, inevitable accompaniments of rapid development, which in turn promoted the production of healthy food.

A country that is capable of offering on the same menu grilled dishes with an oriental tradition of preparation, sea fantasy dishes which summarize the best Mediterranean ways of preparing seafood and imaginative pasta as well as Wiener schnitzel and strudel along with many irresistible folk dishes of indigenous origin – such a country does not have to worry about its culinary future.

The anticipated development of tourism is an additional accelerator for widespread recognition of Croatian gastronomy and of one of the most attractive European cuisines, all accompanied by a growing range of premium wines which follow the development of Croatian gastronomic culture.



f or health

Why do you enjoy Croatian gastronomy?

Olja Martinić ■

The geographical position of Croatia has determined its traditional cuisine. The Mediterranean diet with the domination of high-quality olive oil is a form of diet that the indigenous population, but also numerous guests prefer. The long tradition of tourism in Croatia spontaneously led to achieving high standards when it comes to the truth and quality of food; and culinary culture is the greatest ally of all those who for whatever reason, choose Croatia for their holiday.

Croatian gastronomic culture is a kind of collage that along with a primarily Mediterranean diet has elements of Eastern cuisine and very recognizable elements of the cuisine from the central, so-called continental Europe.

A rich variety of domestic products and a wide range of traditional dishes have stubbornly resisted modernization and stereotyped patterns of eating, which led to the preservation of the methods of food preparation that do not degrade the nutritional ingredients in food. But, that's not all.

The coast, which stretches over 6000 kilometres, is a natural *salt room* and everyone, who spends their holidays on the Adriatic, really enjoys a sort of salt therapy or halotherapy. *Posolika* (sea salt deposits) generated by the winds colliding with the sea surface and driven by the same wind disperses over the coastal zone and affects the soil composition and the chemical components of the flora and fauna. If we add to this the diet based on local produce and seafood, you are guaranteed to have the perfect holiday with balanced meals of highly nutritional properties.

On the other hand, continental Croatia is full of rivers and lakes and the perfect destination for those who want to be surrounded by nature. It cultivates a large number of crops that represent a rich diet in culinary and nutritional terms. The richness of the soil, abundant water supplies and optimum climate are the reason why farming is based on tradition with very little technological innovations.





1 istria

virgin olive oil, truffles, smoked Istrian ham, *boškarin meat* (meat of indigenous Istrian cattle), wild asparagus, goat and sheep cheese, homemade pasta (*fuži*, *pljukanci*), *maneštra* (thick vegetable soup), a variety of game dishes, pork loin and sausages with sauerkraut, stew with dumplings, seafood – fish (sole!), crustaceans (crabs!) and shellfish from the Lim canal, Labin's krafi, wines Malvasia and Teran ...

2 kvarner

famous Kvarner shrimp – raw, briefly baked, *na gradele* (on the grill), in a stew, added to risotto or pasta, islands' lamb, goat and sheep cheeses, *šurlice* (homemade pasta with eggs), *mineštra*, deer, frogs, snails, dormice, wild berries and an abundance of edible mushrooms, strudels and cakes, fritters and *kroštule* (Angel wings), Rab's cake, Lovran's chestnuts, Vrbnik's žlahtina (wine) ...



6 split

plenty of fish from the sea, broth, lamb, beef stew with dumplings, Sinj's *arambašiči*, frogs legs, ham and bacon, *soparnik*, olive oils, *vitalac* (a traditional dish from the isle of Brač, made of either goat's or lamb's innards), lamb tripe, goat, citrus fruits, artichokes with broad beans, *Vis bread*, fritters and *kroštule*, cherries, jujubes, figs, carob, Imotski's cake, *Vis hib* (minced meat made of figs, brandy and aromatic herbs usually served on special occasions), *varenik* (delicacies made with grape must), wines: Mali Plavac, Dobričić's Pošip, Vugava and Bogdanuša ...



9 central croatia

turkey with dumplings (*mlinci*), free range chicken, rooster or baby chicken, home-cooked ham, chops, pork neck and pork loin, beans with turnips, sauerkraut with smoked meat, black pudding with potatoes and sauerkraut, cabbage rolls (*sarma*), cabbage with square pasta, beans with cabbage, creamy pumpkin soup, cheese and sour cream, cornflour bread, Medimurje pie, wines: Riesling, Pinot Noir, Moslavac Škrlet ...



3 lika karlovac

river (trout) and sea fish, well known Lika potatoes, basa, catfish and *škripavac* cheese (similar to haloumi), smoked cheese, sauerkraut with meat (dried or fresh) and sausages, lamb, venison, mushrooms, berries (blueberries, wild raspberries, blackberries) apples, pears, prunes and nuts, local honey, donuts, Lika plum brandy, Gegić wine ...

4 zadar

Pag's cheese and lamb, broad beans and artichokes, Swiss chard, arugula, zucchini, cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes and all the rest from Zadar's hinterland, islands' olive oil, oily and white fish, grilled fish, boiled fish or in a stew, marinated and salted oily fish, sardines and tuna, prosciutto, Nin's pork, Maraschino and cherry maraska, wines: *Debit* and *Maraština* ...

5 šibenik

white and oily fish (anchovy, mackerel and tuna), shellfish (lobster), mussels (scallops), Miljevac's ham, bacon, and various kinds of sausages, excellent cheese from *mišina* (traditional cheese making methodology of this region), bread (*kruh ispod peke*), lamb and *kaštradin* with cabbage, beef stew with homemade gnocchi, *soparnik* (mangold pie), beans, pasta, veal, turkey and rooster in the oven (*krušna peč* – bread oven), olive oils, grapes and herbal brandy, wines: Babić, Maraština and Debit ...

7 dubrovnik zagreb 10

Ston's oysters, butarga, squash, vegetables from Konavle fields and Neretva river delta, olive oil, green menestra, macaroni with meat sauce, fish, lobsters, shrimps or prawns, Žrnovski's macaroni, eels, frogs, tangerines, birds such as coots, arancini, flan, kotonjata, mantala, Prošek (Croatian dessert wine), wines: Plavac Mali, Pošip, Malvasija from Dubrovnik, Grk and Maraština ...

on Zagreb's table you can find food from Mediterranean, Slavonia, Zagorje, Prigorje, but also from neighbouring countries: beef or veal soup with homemade noodles, *ajngemahtes* (Croatian chicken chowder), stews of cabbage and leeks, *ričet* (barley porridge boiled with beans), broach, fried chicken, stuffed peppers, *sarma* (minced meat rolls wrapped in-sour cabbage leaves), pig tripe, beans with sausages, lamb's lettuce, beetroot, Samobor's cream cake, poppy cakes, sweet rolls, wines: Kraljevina and Portugizac ...

8 slavonia

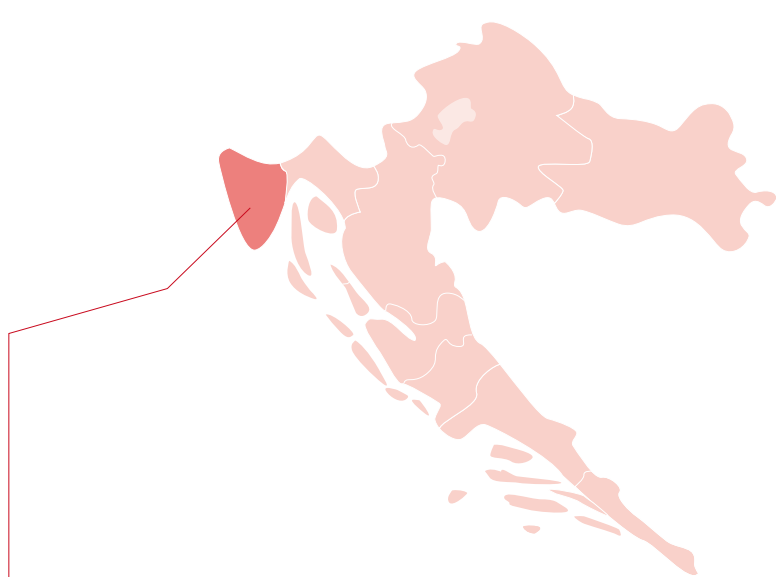
freshwater fish (carp, perch, catfish), *kulen* (sausage), *kulen's seka* sausage, homemade sausages, bacon, crackling, geese and ducks, deer, various species of mushrooms, fruit and vegetables, red peppers, *salenjaci* (traditional Slavonian cookies made with pork fat), walnut cake, poppy seed cake, various types of cakes, gingerbread, honey cakes, *medvjede šape* (bear paw shaped cookies), vanilla cookies and peaches, plum brandy, wines: Riesling, Traminac and Frankovka ...



*Istria is a land
of wine, olives,
truffles and
welcoming hosts*

1

istria



1 From a *terra incognita*, **ISTRIA** was transformed into the Promised Land in a very short period of time. It became the leader of regional development and an example of gastronomic and oenological achievements, becoming a role model for many other areas in Croatia. How did the *unknown* develop into the *Promised Land*?



In Mediterranean, but also wider European relations, Istria is branded as the area of wines, olives and truffles, superior gastronomy, developed wine culture, authentic model of agritourism and traditionally successful coastal tourism in towns such as Pula, Rovinj, Poreč, Umag, Novigrad and many smaller places. How did Istria transform into a region of very attractive living and a growing economy, recently becoming populated not only by people from other parts of Croatia, but a growing number of foreigners, too?

It turned its least populated and somewhat forgotten, and green countryside of Istria, into its strongest and most go-ahead natural resource. The essence of the development philosophy of this region and Istria's future is based on it. The initiators of the strategic development of Istria were the first to realise that the inner part of this peninsula represents the hidden treasure yet to be discovered. They figured out that the successful development of coastal tourism will largely depend on reviving the neglected parts of Central Istria.

Many old olive groves and vineyards were restored. Large areas of deserted land were planted with young olives and vines, fruits and vegetables. The inhabitants recognised the value and potential of this extremely fertile red Istrian soil and a high quality base for development of contemporary agriculture was soon developed. Focusing mainly on olive production and wine growing, it led the revival of the gastronomic and oenological scene.

Small family-run wine cellars and taverns revitalised traditional recipes, and the Motovun Forest with its Mirna River and black and white truffles became one of the most

Did you know?

A white truffle (*Tuber magnatum Pico*), of 1.31 kg, found by Giancarlo Zigante in the River Mirna valley on the 2nd November 1999, is recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records. It was 19.5 cm long, 12.4 cm wide and 13.5 cm high. It was eaten at the Marino wine cellar at Kremenje, at a gala dinner held on the 12th November 1999.



visited and famous forests in Europe. The elite gastronomic offer now includes seasonal specialities: meat of *boškarin*, indigenous Istrian cattle weighing up to one ton, and wild asparagus. Country farms and restaurants offer Istrian *prosciutto* of extraordinary quality, home-made sheep and goat cheese, home-grown eggs, home-made pasta, traditional pickled foods, honey, vegetables grown in village gardens, various venison dishes, pork cutlets (*ombolo* or *zarebnjak*) and sausages with pickled cabbage, *žgvacet* (stew or moussaka) with gnocchi, veal prepared under *čripnja* (steel or clay dish), Istrian red wine soup with olive oil, salt, pepper and toasted bread, crabs from the Pula local waters served with salad, sweet ravioli *à la Labin*, tea cakes (*cukerančići*), etc. Istrian estates (*stancije*) were reconstructed, preserving the authentic architectural characteristics of ancient building tra-

ditions and they now provide visitors with superior comfort while offering authentic food, faithfully reflecting the identity of this region and its rich gastronomic heritage. The gastronomy was developed on the foundations of centuries-old tradition, modernised with new recipes and imaginative combinations featuring both Mediterranean and Central European cuisines. Istrian olive oils win most prizes in all important world festivals and competitions, while Istrian wines receive high marks from world-renowned wine experts and critics in respected professional wine journals. Wine and olive trails give impressive insights into the regional wealth, while festivals (such as Vinistra in Poreč, Open Days for visitors all over Istria and Days of Olive Oils in Vodnjan) give a strong incentive for faster and more quality development



of wine-growing, wine production and olive growing. *Malvasia* became a wine trade mark of Istria, recognised in a wider region. New generations of viticulturists and wine-growers systematically improve the quality offering of this important Istrian brand.

Guests of the Istrian estates are offered delicacies which reflect the identity of the region.

Istrian gastronomy offers a wide palette of the most diverse delicacies; from *fuzi* with truffles (home-made Istrian pasta), venison and *boškarin* with *pljukanci* (home-made Istrian type of gnocchi), asparagus *fritaje* (a type of omelette), pasta, prosciutto smoked and dried in the original Istrian manner, bacon and other meat products, to sea specialities; fish, crabs and shells from the Lim Channel. Extraordinary biodiversities, mountain ranges from Učka to the Mirna River valley and the coastal belt all packed into the relatively small Istrian territory. This is an inexhaustible source for the creation of an imaginative gastronomic and wine offering.

The former flight of the population from the countryside turned into an emigration exodus, has now changed into a mass and ongoing return. First-class olive-growers, wine makers, winegrowers, oenologists and caterers, are becoming valued entrepreneurs. Small family-owned hotels win the highest awards in the hotel industry category on a regular basis. Refurbished estates are being equipped for the highest standard of tourism. The white truffle (*Tuber magnatum*), found in the Motovun Forest, entered the Guinness Book of World Records, as a rarity, being the largest, precious tuber ever found in the World (1.31 kg). Goat cheeses from the Kumparička estate stand shoulder to shoulder with world renowned cheese products. Oysters and mussels from the Lim Channel will impress discerning gourmets. If we combine the Istrian gastronomic and oenological features with the beauty of the almost untouched countryside of the peninsula, its coast and islands, and in particular, the Briuni National Park and Učka Park of Nature, it becomes obvious that Istria presents one of the most attractive European regions. It moves away from the idea of *terra incognita*, coming closer to being a land of truffles, wines, olives and helpful, warm hosts, who will proudly offer the wealth of the Istrian soil and traditional heritage to their guests. On the other hand, Istrian restaurants, most of which preserved the romantic atmosphere of the old taverns, compete in the quality and diversity of their offer. Some of them match the high achievements of the European catering industry. The most popular of them are the Giannino, San Rocco, Monte, Blu, Pepenero, Morgan, Batelina and Vodnjanka.

By many of its geographical features, Istria will remind you of Provence or Tuscany. Culture in the revived Istrian towns, such as Motovun, Grožnjan, Buzet, Grimalda and Svetvinčenat, contributed to the popularisation of Istria as an unmissable cultural destination. The shows at the Ulysses Theatre in Brijuni, film festivals in Pula and Motovun, summer concerts in Grožnjan and the Amphitheatre in Pula are internationally recognised cultural events, positioning Istria on the cultural map of Europe.

However, the majority of visitors are delighted with Istria because of its wine, olives and truffles – its brand-making features. The Istrian gastronomy, with its brave mix of the traditional and avant-garde, offers its guests memorable specialities, allied with wines of the Istrian climate, affirmed and recognised in the international wine arena. These are the reasons for touring Istria with plentiful gastronomic and oenological curiosity, armed with sufficient patience to discover new and so far unknown pleasures in the hidden corners of this beautiful, promised land, and to satisfy the highest hedonistic criteria.

health

■ Istria is a Croatian region, surrounded by the sea, thus its cuisine is mostly based on the fruits of the sea. Change of seasons and the Mediterranean climate, as well as the conditions at sea, dictate the type of seafood to be chosen at a given time. Plenty of fresh fish and famous shrimps are available for most of the year and they are a perfect choice for a healthy heart, particularly the Omega 3 fatty acids, obtained from seafood which protect the heart and vascular system.

Zinc (Zn), the mineral found amply in seafood, is of vital importance for the immune system. The amount of zinc in the body is related to vitality and replacement of lost energy; revitalisation.

Shells, limpets and fish are surely the primary choices in Istria, for they are full of minerals.

Exotic taste and an extravagance of truffles are a temptation for all those ready for a gastronomic adventure.

A strong point in the gastronomy of Istria is made by olive oil, which presents a perfect choice for energy and good health.



Groceries

Goat cheese

Brill

Truffles

Istrian prosciutto

dishes

Fritaja (a type of omelette)

Pljukanci (home-made Istrian pasta) with asparagus and truffles

Bitter orange cake

Bouillabaisse (*brudet*) of dry-smoked octopus

Fried shark



Wines

■ Istria is the largest peninsula in Croatia and its most western winegrowing region. Its geographic position is excellent, and is almost fully surrounded by the sea. It has a mild Mediterranean climate, with significant continental influences. This area is also very interesting and diverse from the geopolitical view; it is situated within three states, between the east and the west, in touch with many different peoples and on a crossroads of different cultures. Its rich and turbulent history, Istria nowadays uses to its advantage – it is a multi-cultural environment, open and progressive in many segments of human life and work.

All of that had its impact on the development of vineyards and wine-growing, the history of which dates far into ancient times. It is thought that the first vine was brought by the Greek colonists, several centuries before Christ. Istrian viticulture was developing through the centuries and its peak occurred at the end of the 19th century, together with other parts of Croatia, before the appearance of the vine-pest. Today, Istria is one of the most important Croatian winegrowing areas. Wine is not only an important agricultural product, but also an integral part of the tourist offer. As proof of this, everyone who comes to Istria by car can see; after passing the 5 km long tunnel through the Učka Mountain, one of the first signs: *Istria – the land of good wine.*

Wine-growing fields and production conditions

Istrian vineyards are situated in three winegrowing areas – western, central and eastern Istria. The whole peninsula is characterised by vast differences in its landscape – its vineyards are situated at all altitudes, from sea-level to 400 m above the sea. Climate is also diverse. The average annual temperature in Poreč and Pula is high (13 – 14 °C), with a moderate amount of rainfall (of about 850 mm/year). Central Istria experiences a more significant influence from the continental climate and thus, the average annual temperature in Pazin is just above 11 °C, with a significantly higher amount of rainfall (>1000 mm/year). But, besides these large differences in environmental conditions, the most significant and notable difference is in the soil particularly and obviously its colour. Istria is thus often divided into the *Red* (red soil, *terra rossa*), and *White* (flysch soil, *terre bianche*). It is the diversity of the environmental conditions that leads to the high number of grape varieties being successfully grown in this area. Istria is a specific

region where we find an equal distribution of continental and Mediterranean varieties. Many of them achieve supreme results and significantly contribute to the fullness of Istrian wine's nose and taste.

Istrian varieties and their wine

Until the middle of the last century, red varieties prevailed in Istria. Today, the leading variety in the assortment is the *Istrian Malvasia*, a white variety dominant in all winegrowing fields. It belongs to the large group of malmseys, with some fifteen varieties of different characteristics. They are found all over the Mediterranean, and their common name often relates them to Greece, i.e. its historic port of Monemvasia in the Peloponnese. Still, all the research indicates that this particular malvasia is unique and it is most probably the indigenous Istrian variety. It has been grown in Istria for centuries, and its sudden rise happened after WW II, with the increase of interest in white wines. It is a polyvalent variety, used for production of all types of wine, from sparkling to soft, desert wines. The quality of the wine strongly depends on the growing circumstances, and particularly the quality of the soil. The best varieties of malvasia come from high terrains and soft, flysch grounds. We find it in all quality categories – from table to supreme wines. Nonetheless, the vast majority of malvasia comes from dry wines from ordinary picking, with a discrete, pleasant type of aroma, which reminds us of the locust flower, and is of good constitution with a full, balanced taste. It represents the basis of production and is the base wine for almost all Istrian wine makers.

Chardonnay, white and grey *Pinot* are world-known varieties, with excellent results in Istria. The specific climate of Istria has a favourable impact on the characteristics of the wine, and they mature into wine of full and medium strength, but aromatic with a balanced taste. The same qualities can be noted with white *sauvignon*. This environment provides for its flavour to be fully expressed. In comparison to the colder parts of the continent, where *sauvignon* varieties are lighter, with an intensive flowery flavour, the wine here is fuller and the bouquet is more complex. The white *Muscat* wine holds a specific place within the assortment. It is usually found here under the name *Muscat Momjanski* (named after the area in which it is found, Momjanština). In particular, Momjan, a picturesque place in Western Istria, has a tradition of cultivating this particular variety, and is known for production of some of the best Croatian dessert wines.



These are usually much flavoured, semi-sweet or sweet wines, produced from regular picking or some traditional procedures typical of the production of dessert wines. In this way, the grapes are usually left on the vine to become over ripe, possibly until the end of October or November, or are additionally dried after picking. *Teran* (or *Terrano*) is the leading red variety in Istria. It gives usually well coloured, aromatic wine, pleasant and fresh, with a tart taste. The best *Teran* wine is produced in central Istria, around Motovun. In good years, and with moderate vinification, these wines are among the best this variety can give. *Refosk* (*refosco*) is a type of variety close to *Teran*, and was therefore considered for that wine for a long time. Still, they differ. *Refosk* is less prominent, but gives wine of similar characteristics and is also considered a native variety and a trade mark of red Istrian wines.

Cabernet Sauvignon, *Cabernet Franc* and *Merlot* are world-known varieties, and they are widespread in Istria where they achieve excellent results and are used on their own or as a *cuvée*. They are grown all over the peninsula, but the best vineyards are found in the western, warmer part, close to the sea. The largest plantations are around Poreč. Their wines are full, medium strong, well coloured and with a discrete, distinctive flavour. Red *Pinot* is less well represented, but it gives good wines. They are fuller and of better colour than those from inland. It gives the best results in the production of Istrian sparkling wines, together with *Chardonnay* and Istrian malmsey. *Hrvatica* (a woman of Croatia) is a less represented variety. It is considered an indigenous variety, gives a good crop and its wine is in the middle quality range. *Borgonja* is another variety considered as autochthonous, although, for a while, it was thought to be identical

to the French *Gamay*. Still, genetic research has discarded this hypothesis, and has established that this variety is identical to *Frankovka* (a dark-skinned variety), i.e. the *Blaufrankisch* or *Lemberger* variety. It gives good, red wine, of moderate fullness and colour, very appropriate for everyday use with many Istrian traditional dishes. The *Muscat Ruža* of Poreč is a local synonym for a more famous Austrian *Rosenmuskateller* or the Italian *Moscato Rosa*, an old variety of rather particular features; it gives excellent, mostly dessert wine, whose bouquet reminds us of roses. The wines are semi-sweet or sweet, of very intensive bouquet, moderately coloured and of full taste, balanced and with very long ending. Besides the varieties mentioned above, which form the majority in the vineyards of Istria, we can also mention *draganela*, *brajdenica*, *opačevina*, *dolcin*, *duranija*, *surina* and some other varieties, which are today almost forgotten. They are not used separately, but as part of a mixed, mostly old plantations. We consider them the native varieties and measures have been taken lately to revitalise them.

Principal producers

According to many indicators, Istria is one of the leading Croatian wine-growing regions. The number of producers is on the rise, and the areas covered with grape-vines are expanding. Most of them are located in western Istria and the majority are small wine cellars, companies and family farms. During the 90s of the last century, a *new Istrian wave* started from here. A few young producers started production in a new, modern way and have quickly risen to the Croatian peak. They are successful on the world markets today and their products are often given excellent marks and receive awards. Among them, distinguished are the Matošević (with famous, recognised malva-

sia Alba and *Alba barrique*, Grimalda, excellent *Cuvée Chardonnay*, *Sauvignon* and Istrian malvasia) and Kozlović (with Santa Lucia, from the location of the same name, is one of the most sought after malvasias, and semi-sweet *Momjanski Muscat* in the category of dessert wines), but also Coronica and Trapan, who have been attracting world attention lately with their malvasias. There are also the Pilato, Degrassi, Arman and a dozen other less known, but perceptive wine makers.

The largest producers are the Agrolaguna and Istravino. They offer many varieties of wine of moderate price and good and excellent quality (particularly *Merlot* and *Cabernet Sauvignon* of the Agrolaguna, and *Teran Dajla* of the Istravino). It is important to mention also the wine maker Roxanich and Franco Arman, whose wines have recently been positioned among the best Istrian *teran* wines. Some of the best Croatian sparkling wines are produced in Istria, under the name of Misal, where we find several sparkling wines produced in a traditional procedure of bottle fermentation. Besides the usual varieties of *chardonnay* and *red pinot*, produced in the traditional, champagne method, the native Istrian varieties are also being vinified, making those wines rather specific and interesting.

The Association of Vine and Wine Growers, Vinistra, is largely responsible for the development of vine-growing and wine making in Istria. They organise regular exhibitions of wine, Vinistra, (at the beginning of May) and the international competition, The World of Malvasia, which is a sort of a world championship of wine produced from different malvasias. They have initiated the programme Malvasia IQ, the system for awarding a specific marking IQ (Istrian Quality) to the best malvasias. In this way, they promote and raise the quality of the most important Istrian wine.





*The area of Kvarner is
the home of shrimps,
one of the biggest sea
delicacies in the world*



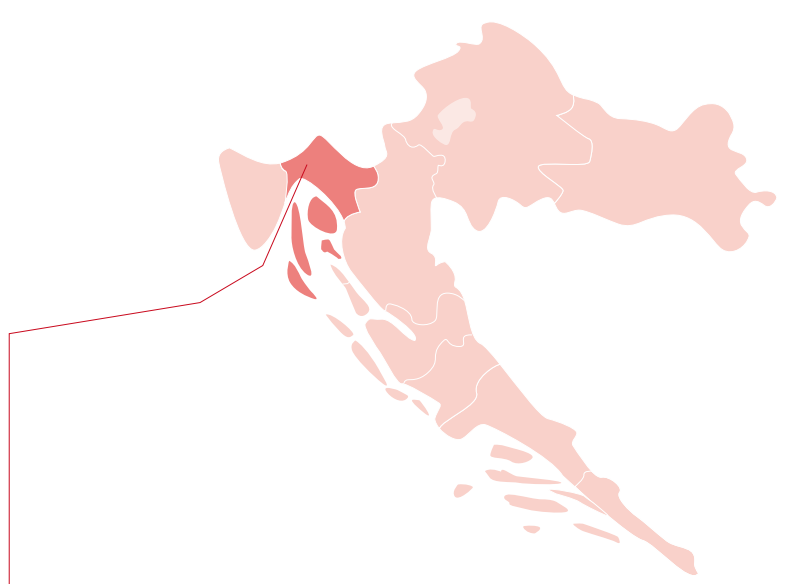
2

kvarner



Did you know?

Kvarner gastronomy is embracing the famous Lovran chestnut from the slopes of Učka Mountain. This is a much valued variety of chestnut and it is the basis of the seasonal offering of sweet delicacies made from this fruit. Every autumn, the festival of chestnuts, called *Marunada*, takes place in the town of Lovran, celebrating the season of the chestnut and offering a wide range of delicacies made of or with chestnuts.



2 **KVARNER** area offers several restaurants singled out for their consistent quality standards and constant innovations with seasonal features.



Even if the famous Kvarner shrimp was the only thing Kvarner gave to the Mediterranean gastro-culture, it would have been enough for its place at the gastronomic map of the world. Many experts in gastronomy and gourmands have no doubts: the Kvarner shrimp or the shimp from the area under the Velebit Channel originally comes from Norway and has become domesticated in the area of Kvarner. Its quality is extraordinary and its extremely delicate, gentle texture surpasses all crabs and, many would agree, even the lobster and *hlap* (a type of lobster) and the pretty rare sea-spider from Pula's local waters. It lives on the muddy soil, but excessive catching is threatening this species. The king of crabs can be prepared in several ways, and some of the master chefs consider that its basic preparation includes a 2-minute cooking in mildly salted water with a bit of olive oil. Served with sprinkled olive oil and a few drops of lemon, shrimp's fascinating taste is preserved. Its genuine taste is also preserved by short barbecuing and many will opt for *buzara* (stew), scampi risotto or pasta with scampi. Any way of preparation of a large, fresh shrimp brings one of the biggest, global sea delicacies to the table. Devotees of the original authenticity of taste eat shrimps raw sprinkled only with a few drops of lemon juice.

The area of Kvarner, and specifically the Opatija Riviera, has several restaurants singled out with consistent quality and constant innovations with seasonal features. The tables of those restaurants will offer the most quality seasonal fruits and vegetables, and sophisticated sweets, along with imaginatively prepared fresh fish, shells, molluscs and crabs. At the sea side, one will find the



Lovers of the original authenticity of taste eat shrimps raw sprinkled only with lemon juice.

Plavi podrum (blue cellar), Le Mandrac and Tramerka (in Volosko), restaurants Bevanta, Laurus (in Opatija), Johnson (Mošćenička Draga). The best known gastronomic destinations on the slopes above the Kvarner are restaurants and hotels Kukuriku (in Kastav) and Draga di Lovran in the town of the same name. Catering competition in Kvarner resulted in an extensive range of cuisine and a strong tendency towards authenticity in the menus and thus the whole of the Kvarner area can be considered as the peak of Croatian catering.

Delicacies of Kvarner's islands (Krk, Lošinj, Cres and Rab) are strongly represented in Kvarner's gastronomy. This is specifically the case for lamb 'à la islands', which is of extraordinary quality firstly due to variety of pasture, enriched with *posolica* (traces of salt on the grass from the action of sea winds), and micro-climatic characteristics of the Velebit Channel. Smaller island producers of goat and sheep cheeses, usually family farms, continuously improve and enrich the gastronomy of Kvarner with their products. A specific type of pasta, locally called *šurlice*, is prepared on the Island of Krk, while a type of cream soup of fennel, called *mineštra*, is prepared on the Island of Lošinj. Krk is the homeland of *Vrbnička žlahtina*, a famous sort of white wine originating from Kvarner, coming from the area Vrbnik. Along with other delicacies from Rab, comes Cake of Rab, a dessert of fine taste and desired on tables in many prestigious restaurants.

The Kvarner gastronomy is embracing the famous Lovran chestnut from the slopes of Učka Mountain. This is a much valued variety of chestnut and it is the basis of the seasonal offering of sweet delicacies made from this fruit. Every autumn, the festival of chestnuts, called *Marunada*, takes its place in the town of Lovran, celebrating the season of chestnut and offering a wide range of delicacies made of or with chestnuts. Thanks to its entertaining and gastronomic features, it has grown into a real tourist attraction.

The coastal area is firmly connected to its hinterland, and the Mediterranean cuisine is enriched by continental specialities of the Gorski Kotar, the area known for its game, frogs, snails, dormice, wild fruit and plentiful edible mushrooms. During the summer heat, the visitors of Kvarner have the option of an easy escape into a fresher zone: only a half an hour drive by motorway takes them to the attractive tourist destinations in Gorski Kotar. They can visit the Risnjak National Park, or enjoy

the lakes, tasting specialties offered in the restaurants in Fužine, Lokve and other locations. The long tourist tradition of the Kvarner Riviera, with Opatija as its centre, along with many other towns recognised as coastal resorts, has developed an exciting and sophisticated gastronomy, with prevailing Mediterranean cuisine, but also a strong influence of the traditional cuisine from the areas bordering the coast.

The elements of the central European cuisine, specifically when looking at the confectionery element, are harmonised with typical Mediterranean menus, that are dominated by fresh fish and sea-food. *Štrudel* (a type of pastry) is equally favoured as *fritule* (a type of doughnut) and *kroštule* (a type of sweet pastry). Closeness to Italy and centuries-long connection between Italy and Kvarner have had a strong impact on the gastronomy. The harmonious penetration and completion of traditional recipes, imaginative pasta with sea fruits, vegetables and mushrooms, as well as risotto, eliminates the

gastronomic borders between the western and eastern coasts of the Adriatic sea. Fast tourism development strengthens the tendencies of gastronomic internationalisation, opening its doors to new culinary experiences.

The area of Kvarner is a true paradise for navigators, and they have the opportunity to discover not only the hidden bays with virgin beaches, but also small family-run wine cellars and restaurants, offering local, seasonal specialities and, for some folk, almost forgotten dishes. These are the places where you can experience the Adriatic coast as it once was and as many would like to see it today. This is especially true when talking about the gastronomy, where the folk cuisine is facing more demand and value.

The Kvarner shrimp, symbolising the peak of Kvarner's gastronomy, will become more rare, and with the time will have to be added to the list of more accessible seafood such as anchovies, sardines and other Adriatic treasures, which are often unjustifiably left out of family and restaurant menus.



health

■ Anything you order during your Kvarner travels, will bring the pleasure of taste, but also guaranteed fast recovery and replacement of energy we mercilessly waste in our fast lifestyle.

We are witnesses of the negative impact that stress has on our body and soul. Stress and free radicals are the root of accelerated ageing, but also many degenerative changes. If we take an occasional break and spend quality time while on vacation, we can significantly decrease the unwanted footprints left by the daily turbulence of life. Asparagus (vitamin C, carotene, iron, phosphorus, potassium, asparagines, arginine), citrus fruits (terpene, flavan-3-ols, glucaric acid), wild fruits and nuts (fatty acids Omega 3, minerals zinc, calcium) are just a few foods which contain nutritive components, and can postpone degenerative processes in the cells.

Visiting Kvarner, you get a chance to enjoy natural *anti-ageing* food with perfect gastronomic pleasure.



groceries

Asparagus
Chestnut
Ramsons
Blackberries
Lemon, orange

dishes

Squid with swede
Bouillabaisse (*brudet*) of dry-smoked octopus
Lemon risotto
Bitter orange marmalade
Grilled scampi

Wines

■ The Croatian coast is a very interesting area for the grapevine; a narrow coastal line between Istria and Dalmatia, between the mountainous Croatia and cold, continental climate and Kvarner's isles with its typical Mediterranean atmosphere. Every traveller visiting this region, immediately notices its differences in landscape, climate, vegetation and the way of life within a relatively small space, where it is possible to spend the morning skiing at the Mt. Platak, and a few hours later enjoy the sea under the warm sun. The production and availability of wine are diverse and it is possible to find *chardonnay*, *pinot* and *frankovka* of almost continental freshness in the *Vinodol* area (from Križišće to Novi Vinodolski), while islands also grow typical *southern* varieties, such as *cabernet sauvignon*, *merlot*, *syrah*, and recently the *plavac mali* (small blue grapes).

The history of grapevine cultivation is very old and goes back to ancient times. The Greeks were probably the first who started producing wine, but the most important for the development of viticulture were the Romans. Proof of this is found in numerous documents, including a record of Lucan, a Roman poet, who speaks about the fight between Caesar and Pompey on the Island of Krk, and of the wooden barrel made of alder, which Caesar's soldiers used to escape from the surrounded island. This leads us to conclude that the inhabitants of this area used wooden barrels before the Greeks and Romans did. The latter are recorded as more important for the development of viticulture, although they kept and transported their wine in clay amphora.



Wine-growing fields and production conditions

In accordance with Croatian wine legislation, the area of Kvarner belongs to the wine-growing Croatian coastal region, and the most significant areas are at the sea side (the wine growing fields cover the whole coastal area from Lovran to Vinodol), as well as the islands, starting with Krk and Rab. Other islands have mostly smaller family farms and the Island Susak is worth mentioning because it emerged from the alluvium of sand, and at the beginning of the 20th century, the grape-vine covered up to 96% of the area of the island, i.e. everything except the villages (there was no vine-pest on the island). This demonstrates the significance of this culture for the economy of Kvarner's islands.

The vineyards are located mostly on karst fields and on terraces to a lesser extent. The most famous of them are in the area of Bakar, where the production of the first sparkling wine in this area started. It was the famous "Water of Bakar" (copper water – *Bakarska vodica*). The soil is very diverse; from heavy red soil to light flysch and sand. The differences in climate between the coastal area and islands are also very marked. In Rijeka there is about >1500 mm/per year of precipitation, while Susak has about half of that, i.e. around 800 mm. Temperatures also vary, but the annual average is around 14-15 °C. All these differences result in the development of a large number of varieties

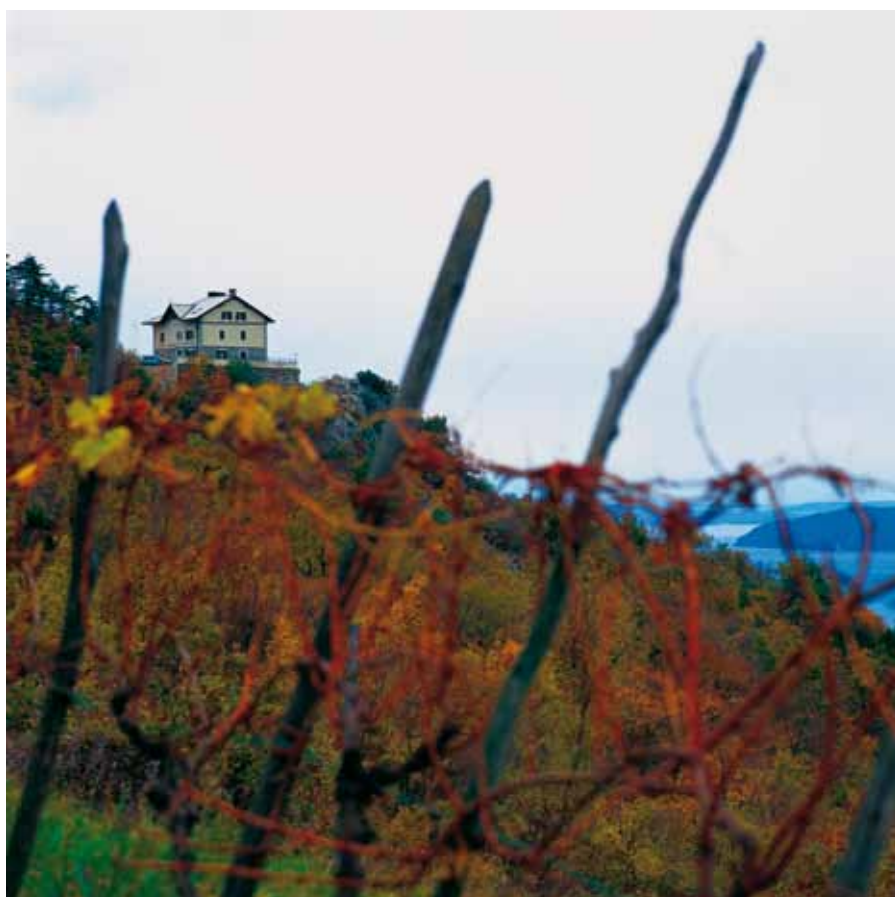


and production of different types of wine. The largest areas today are on the Island of Krk, at the Vrbičko polje (*the field of Vrbnik*), with the majority of producers located there. In recent years, they managed to revitalise quality vineyard areas, both on the islands and in the coastal area. This area is characterised by smaller plots of vineyards and family production, from where only a handful reach the market of a greater quality.

Varieties and their wine and the most prominent producers

The most important variety in the area of Kvarner is *Žlahtina*, which is the fundamental wine of almost all producers. It is considered a Croatian native variety with a long history in this area and it became a much sought-after wine on the local market some 20 years ago. Its popularity continues and it is very wide-spread and presents the economically most important variety. It is the result of excellent correlation of characteristics of the variety and environmental conditions, and thus its wine conquered the market with good organic features, becoming the basis for wine-growing. Unlike heavy and strong southern wines on one side, and easy, but often harsh northern wines, *Žlahtina* brought to the market a good combination – it gives fruity, fresh, elegant and rather drinkable wines, making an excellent compromise between north and south. The largest areas are found on the Island of Krk, in Vrbičko polje, where almost all producers are located. The most famous and by quantity the largest wineries are the Katunar vinarija Inc., Frajona Inc., Agricultural Cooperative (PZ) Gospoja and PZ Vrbnik, as well as Neda and Šipun from Vrbnik. It is also important to mention Vupik d.o.o. from Novi Vinodolski. Apart from *Žlahtina* it also produces *Chardonnay*, *Cabernet Sauvignon* and *Frankovka* named *Morčić*. *Chardonnay* is produced by several other producers and several years ago some other world-known varieties were also planted, such as *merlot*, *syrah*, *pinot*, and white *sauvignon*. It is important to mention *Istrian Malvasia*, as a domestic variety, but it is less present here than in Istria. Another sort is *Plavina*, which is locally referred to as *Brajdica crna*. The popularity and high quality of wine in this area tend to be confirmed also by *Plavac mali*, a variety from middle and southern Dalmatia. The first plantations were made on Krk and Rab islands, and the first wine is eagerly expected.

Sparkling wines are traditionally produced here and the oldest of them is the *Bakarska vodica*, natural sparkling wine (*methode rurale*), using the grapes from indigenous varieties: *belina*, *žumić*, *vrbić* and *žlahtina*, grown on the famous stone terraces, above the town of Bakar. Its production was well-known and large before, and has been almost completely abandoned. In recent years, attempts

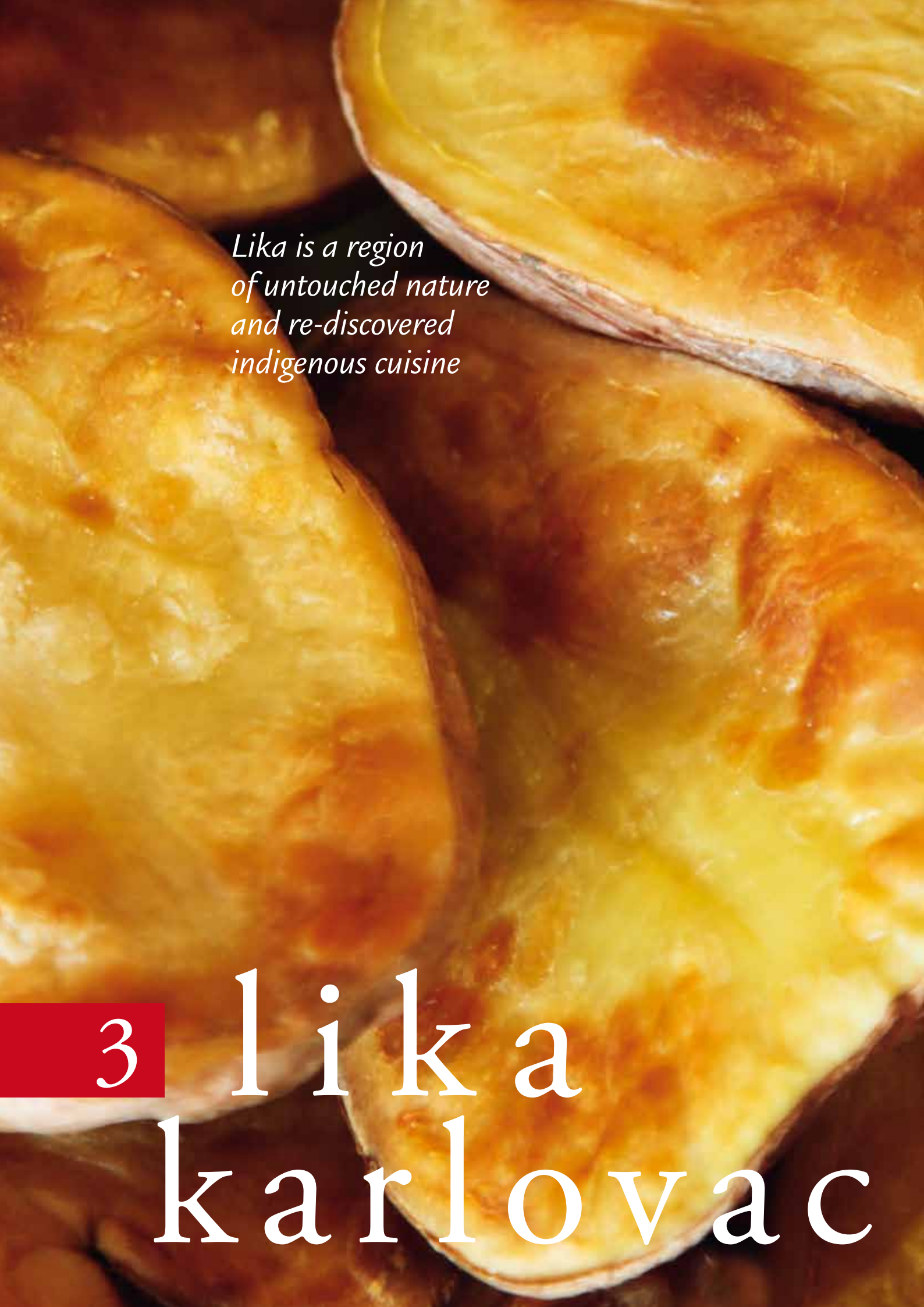




have been directed towards rehabilitation of the variety. The Istravino company produces *Bakarska vodica* as a carbonated wine (with the marking “Special”), and as a sparkling wine produced in the classic way (marked “Prestige”). Apart from the *Bakarska vodica*, there are several other producers who produce sparkling wine, and it is therefore possible to find *Porin* (with white pinot and *žlajtina*, using the *Charmat* method), 1288 (a classic method of bottle fermentation – *chamenoise* method, giving a sparkling wine named by the year of the Law Codex of Vinodol, which

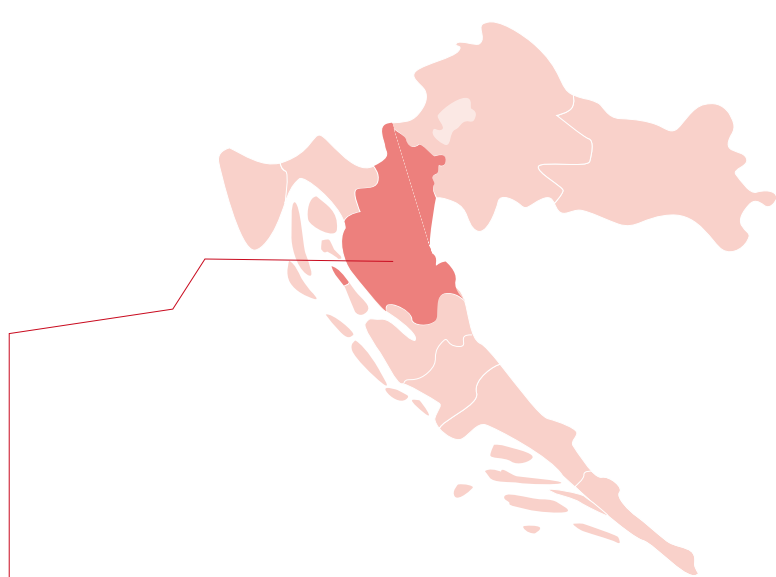
is an important historic document). As a rare wine, it is important to mention Valomet, a natural sparkling wine produced in a classic method from *žlajtina*, but then kept for maturation in the sea for more than a year, at a depth of thirty metres giving excellent conditions for maturation. Apart from being responsible for the excellent characteristics of the sparkling wine, the long period in the sea is also responsible for the original design of the bottle, which is covered by layers of corals and shells, which accounts for the very high price of this wine.

The area of Kvarner is rich in autochthonous varieties of grapevine, which have been absent from production for many years. During recent years, there have been attempts to revitalise them, supported by the market orientation to move towards native original products. Some of them show excellent characteristics (*vrbić, žumić, sansigot, trojščina, kamenina, jarbola*) and are very interesting for producers. Several producers have started new plantations with these varieties and their first wines are resulting from this.



*Lika is a region
of untouched nature
and re-discovered
indigenous cuisine*

3 l i k a
k a r l o v a c



3 This region has a unique **CONNECTION OF THE SEA AND LAND**. Being close to each other, they offer a selection of sea and river fish (especially trout, the gastronomic trademark of the region). This has great tourist potential and not only in the gastronomic sense.



This is one of the least populated regions in Europe, whose untouched landscape is cut by the motorway, linking the continental parts of Croatia to the towns on the Adriatic, and being perhaps the most beautiful and exciting motorway in Europe. This area has not been fully revealed as a gastronomic heaven, where the preparation of food is based on healthy nutrition and ancient recipes from the area.

When we say “Lika”, we usually immediately think of trout, a noble and extremely tasty river fish, living in the mountainous springs and unpolluted rivers. It is the gastronomic trademark of this region, whether it is being prepared on the grill, in a stove with potatoes and herbs, or breaded in corn flour.

Wild trout, whose quality and taste differ from the domesticated one, lives only in clean waters and Lika, with its low population and untouched nature, crystal clear rivers, such as Gacka, and clear mountain springs, represents an exceptional area in the whole Europe.

The trout contains a small amount of cholesterol and is recommended to people suffering from heart and vascular diseases, and in dietary therapy. As a source of valuable proteins, the trout, even if consumed in small quantities, satisfies the total daily need for essential amino acids, and is recommended to everyone who is under greater physical or mental strain.

In the national gastronomy, the potato from Lika has reached the status of a cult ingredient. The incomparable quality of the white and red potato from Lika, depending on whether it is intended for cooking or roasting, brooks no argument among chefs and nutrition experts. Lika is the ideal area for

Did you know?

In the national gastronomy, the potato from Lika has reached the status of a cult ingredient. Lika is an ideal area for cultivation of it, from its climatic features to its soil composition. White and red potatoes from Lika are of unattainable quality. Chefs say that its quality provides for it to be served as a side dish, but also as a dish on its own.

this food, due to its climatic features and the composition of the soil.

It is unsurprising that the potato is plentiful in the gastronomy of Lika; it features equally in cooked and baked foods, and not only as a side dish, but often being the core meal. Potato *police* are particularly popular – those are thin slices of potato, salted with coarse sea salt and then baked in the oven. The best oven for baking this type of potato is either an old wood-stove, or a bread oven. This baked delicacy can be covered with sour cream or any other dairy product, and is eaten in combination with the famous cheese from Lika, *škipavac* (squeaky cheese, similar to Haloumi cheese), made of cow milk. It merits the name because of its grainy structure and the sound it makes when being eaten.

Smoked cow cheese is also very tasty. Before the motorway was built, this cheese and

other delicacies of the region were sold on stands by the road side.

Lika is an agricultural and cattle-breeding area and only recently has become a tourist destination, and an ideal area for the cultivation of healthy food. Dairy products from the countryside households provide the quality which comes from excellent pastures, especially around Mt. Velebit, which are rich with aromatic herbs, and in the cattle-breeding tradition of this area.

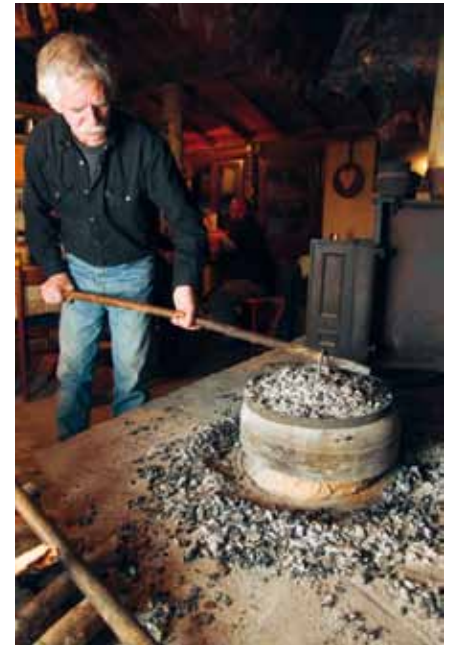
Lika is equally attractive regardless of the season. In the summer, this is an area with comfortable freshness, while in winter, when its inhabitants are cut off from normal communications and the rest of the world particularly those living in the farthest mountainous areas, it offers a unique atmosphere. Such a climate influenced the development of a specific gastronomic culture, adjusted to

the conditions of the season and even sometimes to the extreme weather conditions.

During the winter, another speciality of Lika is put on the table. It is pickled cabbage / sauerkraut, combined with dry or fresh meat, mostly pork or young beef, sausages and other smoke-dried meat products.

The lamb from Lika is also one of the gastronomic features of the region, and it matches the quality of the lambs from the islands. It is prepared in the same way as in other areas, either on a rotisserie, in an oven with potatoes, under *cripnja* (steel or clay dish), or cooked with vegetables. The quality of the pasture, specifically on the northern hillsides of Mt. Velebit, guarantees the development of quality sheep-breeding and cattle-breeding in general.

The forests of Lika are a true treasure trove of different edible foods: mushrooms and





During the stay in Lika, one should try different types of home-made honey, produced by excellent beekeepers in the pastures and forests of Lika.

wild fruits, such as blueberries, wild raspberries, blackberries, etc. The orchards of Lika grow apples, pears, plums and walnuts. During the mushroom season, this *forest meat* presents an important part of the nutrition of the local population, but it also became more popular in the restaurants and country farms, which have quickly adjusted to the specific tourist needs. A tourist searching for the authentic offering of food and drink will find a unique destination in Lika, not often found in Europe. Internet pages offer traditionally-built houses in Lika, with modern equipment, suitable for a stay in an oasis of

quietness, in fresh air and surrounded by untouched nature.

The National Park Plitvice Lakes, a main tourist centre of this region, is a unique natural phenomenon with international fame, visited by millions of tourists from all over the world. The whole experience is complemented with the specialities of Lika cuisine on offer in the region's restaurants.

As Lika touches the Gorski Kotar, the gastronomic influences of the two regions are interconnected. Lika, in the same way as Gorski Kotar, is an area with a hunting tradition, and game is frequent on the menus of the local cuisine. It is prepared mostly with bacon being inserted into the meat of rabbit, doe or wild boar, and left for a few days in a marinade. Afterwards, adding spices, it is cooked on a slow fire, and served with bread balls.

During a stay in Lika, one should certainly try different types of home-made honey coming from pastures and forests, produced by supreme beekeepers from Lika, known for their expertise in picking the best locations to position their beehives.

Speaking of sweet foods, the Lika menu will reward with the simplest desserts, made of just a few recognisable ingredients, such as Lika fritters. Raised dough is fried briefly in hot oil, and served with a coating of fine sugar.

The variety on offer in the restaurants in Lika, from the National Park Plitvice Lakes (Borje), to the *Gačanska konoba* (wine cellar of Gacko), Čamara, Braje, Makija, Zlatne potkove, etc., is complemented with the cuisine by the sea, with Boškinac hotel, restaurant and winery (close to Stara Novalja), on the Island of Pag, as the most distinguished, being one of the leading small luxury hotels on the Adriatic coast. The variety makes this region an ideal area for oeno-gastronomic adventurers. In combination with the fresh air and luxurious nature, the local folk specialities are given royal gastro qualities.

Lovers of home-made brandy (*rakija*) should not miss the *šljivovica* (plum brandy) from Lika, made in a traditional way, which the hosts are very proud of.

Lika people are very hospitable and will share all they have with their guests, from smoke-dried meat delicacies to cornmeal mash with sour cream.

Ever since European motorcyclists started discovering the charms of the less famous regions, Lika has been attractive to these adventurers with its landscapes and cuisine.

Sometimes it is fishing on the Gacka River, and at other times, it is the winter atmosphere with lamb on the rotisserie in the fireplace, or warming up next to an old wood-stove, while meat with pickled cabbage is being cooked, or Lika potato *police* fried on top of it. An eventful and gastronomic stay in Lika transforms into a long remembered experience.

■ The traditional cuisine of this region is strongly in touch with nature, and its main base is in the forest fruits and different river delicacies.

The main nutritional determinants are in forest fruits, which thus have stress-reducing benefits.

Consumption of the traditional meals of this region, rich in taste and aroma, bring plentiful phytochemicals, herbal sterols and other eliminators of bad symptoms resulting from stress.

Blueberries, blackberries, cornelian cherry, wild strawberries consumed in small amounts free your body from free radicals and offer pleasure regardless whether consumed fresh, in jams and marmalade or as ingredients in cakes.

This area is famous for its cattle breeding and it offers meat dishes with the aroma of rich, green pastures.

groceries

Blueberries and blackberries

Trout

Basa (catfish)

Wild game steak

Mountain mushrooms

Sour milk

dishes

Organic marmalade

Home-made bread

Deer backstrap with blueberries

Soup from Lika (with lamb's liver)

Žganci (white and yellow cornmeal mush)

■ This tourist region of Croatia stretches from the low area north of Karlovac, over the mountainous areas of Lika and Velebit, to the sea. There are not many vineyards here. They are found only in the area of Ozalj and Vivodina, and in the coastal part of the region, including a part of the Island of Pag. The continental lowlands and mountainous areas, which make up the major part of this tourist region, are not suitable for profitable wine-growing, mainly due to low winter temperatures. Nonetheless, the southern and western hillsides of the Žumberačka Gora, and slopes of Mt. Velebit, from Senj to Starigrad, covering a narrow coastal area, are the regions where we can find grapevines, but only in smaller, family farms, without a significant economic presence. Wine-growing has been increasing there too lately, and the production is attracting more attention. In the Ozalj-Vivodina area of winegrowing fields, a wine route has been recently opened with the attempt to bring it closer to visitors and promote wine with the rich gastronomic offering. On the Island of Pag, whose western part belongs to this tourist region, the grape-vine is traditionally cultivated and the offer includes the famous cheese from Pag, along with the wine. The cheese is part of the regular assortment of the island's products, and a part of the everyday menu of its inhabitants.

Conditions for production of grape and wines

The largest part of the region takes in the mountainous area, and includes the central mountainous massif with no favourable conditions for grape-vine growing. An exception is in the warmer, southern and western areas of the Žumberačka Gora, where the average annual temperature is an acceptable 10-11 °C, with an average precipitation of about 1100 mm/year. In the coastal part of the region, due to the closeness of the sea, there are much better conditions in terms of temperature, but strong sea winds, unfavourable geological relief and lack of available agricultural areas in this area, limit development and growing. The western part of the Island of Pag, and especially the area around Novalja (Novaljsko Polje), offer favourable conditions to the grape-vine and wine-growing here is a traditional industrial sector. The climate is Mediterranean with plenty of sun and high temperatures (an annual average of > 15 °C), and despite the high total annual precipitation (> 1000 mm/year), summers are always dry. The areas along the sea are less favourable due to the

lack of fertile soil and the presence of (salt) *posolica*, which, carried by strong winds, can cause significant damage.

Varieties and their wine and the most important producers

At the Ozalj-Vivodina wine growing fields, we find some typical continental varieties – the inevitable *graševina*, aromatic white *sauvignon* and yellow *Muscat*, as well as Rhine Riesling, *chardonnay* and *pinot*. Among the red varieties, besides the *pinot*, there are also *frankovka*, *portugizac* and *zweigelt*. Smaller family wineries prevail. In recent years, they raised the quality of their wine and are now winning prizes at various exhibitions. The most notable wine producers today are Frlan (*grey pinot*, *yellow Muscat*), Ivan and Darko Vrbaneč (*chardonnay*), Wine cellar Vivodina, Mirko Vrbaneč, and others.

On the Island of Pag, and in the rare coastal vineyards, the native varieties are grown, such as *gegić*, *maraština* and *plavina*. In recent years, new varieties were introduced, those which found their place in these rather mean conditions: *chardonnay*, which gives the wine typical fullness and strength, white *sauvignon*, which loses a part of its light notes, normal in continental wine growing areas, but gains the note of mature fruit, and usually delights with the fullness of taste. *Cabernet sauvignon* and *merlot* have also become a part of the assortment and manifest a large part of their potential – they give intensively coloured wine with a pleasant bouquet and significant fullness. Unfortunately, there are not many producers who produce wine for the market, since this is usually a family production with a limited amount of wine offered to buyers during the summer holidays. Still, we should mention the winery Boškinac in Novaljsko Polje. This is a producer with a contemporary approach to wine growing and a very quality offer. This is a medium size cellar, situated within the hotel, and wine can be tasted exclusively there. They produce several wines, and it is worth mentioning the excellent pairing of *cabernet sauvignon* with *merlot*, recently listed among the best Croatian red wines. The blend of *chardonnay*, *sauvignon* and autochthonous *gegić* is very interesting. This is a wine produced in a contemporary manner, and many would agree that this is a successful mix of bouquets and tastes of these very different varieties. Otherwise, *gegić* receives special attention by the producer and it gets offered as a variety wine, produced in several ways.





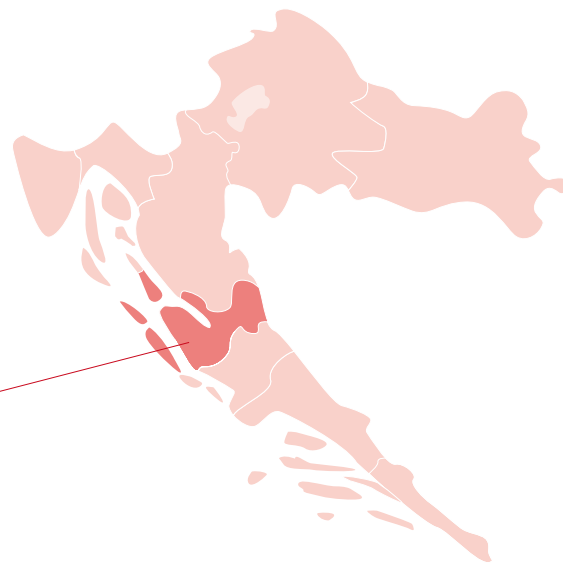
4 zadar

dalmatia

The diversity of cuisine in the Zadar area is based on the riches of the sea and variety of fruits of the earth from the Ravni kotari district

Did you know?

The cheese from the Island of Pag is one of the best dairy products in the world. It is produced in the traditional manner, from the milk of the autochthonous breed of sheep from Pag, which feed on the pasture rich with aromatic herbs, and *posolica*, brought by the winds from the Velebit.



4 The gastronomy of the **ZADAR** part of Dalmatia is defined by a sophisticated harmony of rich fruits from the land and a variety of sea-fruits in a unique composition of excellent dishes, where each ingredient preserves its specific features, and where the mix gives such taste that is immeasurable by ordinary culinary standards.



Even with all its differences, founded on the wealth from the sea on one side, and the inexhaustible possibilities of the fertile Ravni Kotari on the other, the gastronomy of the Zadar area of Dalmatia is still branded by one product from the island only, praised to the status of a gastronomic cult. The cheese of Pag with its unique quality and rather recognisable, specific taste, is the most famous and appreciated Croatian dairy product. The unique micro-climate features of the Island of Pag, specific vegetation rich with aromatic herbs and improved with *posolica* brought by the winds from Velebit, breeding of the indigenous breed of Pag's sheep and a long tradition of cheese production, together with the vast experience of the dairy producers ensure that the supreme quality of this product will be preserved as a permanent gastronomic legacy of this island.

The cheese from Pag, which can stand shoulder to shoulder with the best hard sheep cheeses in the world, is an inevitable ingredient in the most ambitious menus, offering the best from this area. The island of Pag, and its towns Pag and Kolan, are the centres for cheese production. The tradition of production and its ancient recipe are transferred from one generation to the next and preserved as a family legacy. The new generations are maturing and wanting to gain market acceptance for their product. Pag is also known for its excellent lamb, the quality of which equals the sheep milk from which the cheese is made. It is based on a very specific pasture containing all the micro climate and vegetation features of this unique island. The lamb is prepared on a rotisserie or grilled, baked in an oven



with potatoes or slow-cooked in a dish with young peas, making the speciality locally called “lamb with *biži*”.

Zadar has skilfully included all the features and advantages of the areas gravitating towards it into its own gastronomic offering. Vegetables and fruits of utmost quality come to Zadar market from the Ravni Kotari, promising somewhat forgotten tastes and aromas. Broad beans and artichoke, chard, rocket, zucchini, cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes and other vegetables grown on the fertile soil of Zadar, combined with excellent island-made olive oil, are the prime examples of healthy, Mediterranean nutrition. Kali, a fishing base on Ugljan island, with excellent fishermen known from the Adriatic to California, is famous for the rich daily offering of white and blue fish at Zadar’s fish market.

Sardine, former prime food for folk in Dalmatia, is regaining a significant place in the modern gastronomy, in which blue fish has often been neglected.

The chefs of Zadar are true masters in the preparation of grilled fish, cooked fish-stew (bouillabaisse), but also marinated and salted blue fish. Tuna is becoming more popular in recent years, thanks to the Japanese, who consider the Adriatic tuna as the fish of the highest quality in the world, and use it in sushi and other Japanese specialities.

There are several different recipes for bouillabaisse, with minor differences, but with one thing in common: mixing several types of fish and slow-cooking them with a moderate addition of herbs and using excellent olive oil from the Ugljan island. Polenta is the usual side dish with bouillabaisse.

The hinterland of Zadar provides prosciutto from Poserdarje, a delicacy with many international awards, which owes some of its quality to the winds from Velebit. The other part of the quality lies in the preparation which includes drying in cold smoke.

Refined lovers of sophisticated drinks will be thrilled with *Maraschino*, a liquor made from the famous cherry *marasca*, coming from Asia, deep-rooted in the area of Zadar, which is the name given to the Zadar factory for the production of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

Maraschino is an original brand from Zadar with a long tradition, celebrating this city all over the Mediterranean and in the world. It originates from the pharmacy of the Dominican convent in Zadar, where it has been regularly prepared since the 16th century, under the name of *Rosoglio*. The tourists consider it an authentic souvenir, which they gladly take back home with them.



Sardine, which used to feed the commoners of Dalmatia, is gaining an important position in the modern gastronomy.

The gastronomy of Zadar's part of Dalmatia is defined by a sophisticated harmony of rich fruits from the land and a variety of sea-fruits in a unique composition of excellent dishes, where each ingredient preserves its specific features, but in the mix gives such taste that is unattainable by ordinary culinary measures. New gastronomic favourites complement the restaurant menus in Zadar. Among them, there are the Foša, Niko, Roko, Kornat, Pet bunara (offering meals with marasca cherry), and the Pece (in Vinjerac) and Zrinski (on the Pasman Island). Zadar offers a unique cultural, historical and religious heritage to its visitors, but also some examples of avant-garde architecture and fine arts, presenting rarities all over the

world, such as the Sea Organ and Greeting to the Sun. There are also smaller towns around Zadar offering gastronomic pleasures enriched by the aroma and taste of the area. In Nin, a historic town with salt-works, there is a *ninski šokol*, a smoke-dried meat product made from pork neck, dried in the winds from Velebit. There is also *sukošanski maneštrun* in Sukošan; cooked root-like vegetables with bacon and pasta. Islands offer octopus salad with lentils or octopus under *čripnja*.

Sardines, of high nutritional value and of low price, are becoming a success even in elite restaurants. What used to be the food of the commoners of Dalmatia, is now becoming the queen of trendy menus.



■ The ideal geographic and agronomic position of Zadar provides the conditions for a menu full of sea-fruits and organically grown vegetables and fruits, from an area with plenty of sun and water.

A sufficient amount of green, bitter vegetables and all other ingredients found along the coast, protect the health of the bone structure. Herbs on the islands have a specific taste coming from the soil structure, and also the fact that the bay is under the influence of *posolica* (a salty meteorological phenomenon, when small drops of salt water are carried by the wind to the soil). The structure of vegetation gives a special taste to the meat of animals raised on the island pastures. It needs to be mentioned that those pastures are scarce, but alive with Dalmatian herbs rich with very light oils. Dalmatian herbs are both for seasoning and medication.

Sprinkled sea drops, sea salt and iodine penetrate the soil, the vegetation and animals, and analysis of the types cultivated in areas where the wind brings *posolica*, compared to other areas, shows higher amounts of chlorine, magnesium, sodium, iodine, lithium, zinc, manganese, and specifically selenium.

groceries

Cheese from Pag
Marasca cherry
Samphire, pickled
Smoke-dried shark

dishes

Cheese from Pag with samphire
Marasca and cheese cake
Maneštra made of cuttlefish
Octopus with lentils
Gnocchi with prosciutto

■ Zadar, the largest city and the administrative, cultural and economic centre of northern Dalmatia, has excellent conditions for the development of agriculture: excellent climate, a fertile and spacious hinterland, and a traditional preference towards production. Wine production has historically been one of the most important cultures, but in the last several decades, this area did not follow the trend in Croatia of mass development of small family wine cellars and this created a wrong impression on the suitability of this area for wine production. Fortunately, the situation has been changing recently, and significant areas are being planted, along with the introduction of new varieties and technologies. Notable wines are appearing and winning awards, making firm steps towards the top of the Dalmatian provision.

Wine was produced in this area more than two thousand years ago, of which there is much archaeological evidence. Whether it was the Greeks, such as in the other parts of Dalmatia, or the domestic Illyrians who knew about grapevines and wine before them, remains unknown, but it is certain that production was significantly improved by the Romans, who established a colony Idassa (*Jadera*), under the direct order of Julius Caesar.

Natural conditions for production

Everyone who comes to the area of Zadar either by road, sea or air, will note that this is a very interesting landscape, laced with many fields, upslopes and water surfaces – the Adriatic Sea, Zrmanja River, Karin Sea, Novigrad Sea, and Vrana Lake. In addition to the mild climate, all this created excellent conditions for the production of grapes and wine. Today, alongside the rich autochthonous assortment and introduction of some world famous and recognised varieties, there are many interesting wines, which usually blend with the richness of the natural resources and modern technology.

In accordance with Croatian vineyard legislation, this tourist region includes two wine growing areas: Zadar – Biograd and Benkovac—Stankovci. The area includes the fertile Ravni Kotari in the hinterland, as well as the coastal strip and islands. The largest areas are in Ravni Kotari, at the Nadinsko Polje and the area of Benkovac, where large vineyards of former social enterprises were cultivated in the 70s of the last century. Today, new areas are being cultivated closer to the sea, not far from Zadar, and on the islands.

The climate is typically Mediterranean, warm and mild, with a colder and windy hinterland. The temperature is around 16-16.5 °C in the annual average, with about 900 mm rainfall. Summers are hot and without rain, and drought is very frequent. There are different soils here, depending on the position they range from stone and shallow soil in the karst area, to the deep, fertile brown or red soil in the fields.

Varieties and their wine and the most prominent producers

Over the last few decades, several large social companies existed in this area and managed wine production. Large areas were planted and new sorts were introduced, mostly from France (*Grenache*, *carignan*, *ugni blanc*). But, as the ownership structure changed after the last war, and there was no full recovery of the private areas, this area has gone through a downturn when it comes to the development of family cellars and private wine-making initiatives. Only in the last several years, did several producers emerge in significant, new areas and with very interesting wines.

When looking at white wines, this area is traditionally growing indigenous Croatian varieties, such as *debit*, the leading white variety. It gives average table and quality wine, and can be found in almost all domestic wines. It is frequently grown together with *marashtina*, an old Dalmatian variety which was recently found to be identical to the Italian type *malvasia del Chianti*.

It gives quality wines, but it can be found occasionally on the market as pure variety wine – regularly mixed with other varieties. *Chardonnay* was introduced in the latter years and is spreading in the area, in spite of the fact that it matures rather early and that its wine is often quite strong and with a high percentage of alcohol. *Trebbiano toscano (ugni blanc)* was introduced into the assortment some forty years ago and it has given good results. It often comes with *debit* and *marashtino*, freshening the wine, due to its ability to preserve a significant amount of acid in the grapes. *Posip* has been present recently and its initial results are extraordinary – it shows very good variety characteristics in this area, too. When it comes to other white varieties, several other native varieties can be found, but not as variety wines in the range. As for the red ones, there is also a dominance of the autochthonous varieties, such as *plavina* (regular ingredient of local mixed red wines, with a soft and mild taste), and



babić, a variety well known in the Šibenik area, with good characteristics on stone and poor soils. Other indigenous varieties that are traditionally planted are *lasina*, *zadarka* and *svrdlovina*, but they do not have any significant impact on the market. The true renaissance in the production and offering of red wine in the area of Zadar comes from the introduction of the French varieties – *grenache* and *carignan*, introduced during the 70's of the last century, as well as *merlot*, *cabernet sauvignon* and *syrah*, present in recent years. Outstanding potential is seen here and the best red Zadar wines bear those names. A new variety

in this area is *plavac mali*, the most important Croatian autochthonous red variety, but so far mostly present in central and southern Dalmatia.

On the former large producers of wine, today only Badel 1862 and its winery Vinarija Benkovac continue with production, traditionally making a very good *rosé* made of *Grenache* and *carignan*. They planted large areas with varieties *cabernet sauvignon*, *merlot* and *syrah* (located in Korlat), and the first produced wines had excellent characteristics. When it comes to the smaller producers, one can mention the Wines of the island of Pag (Denis Rako), who was among the

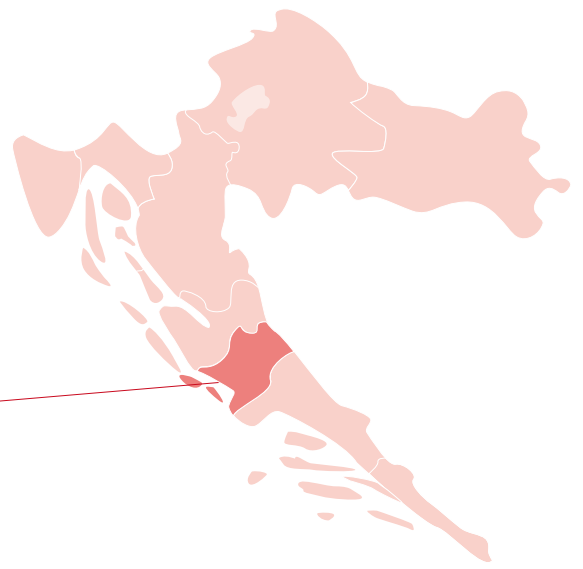
first of the private producers, then Gegić's wines (local varieties with *cabernet sauvignon*, *merlot* and *vranac*), and a few new ones, are just appearing on the market now. Among those, there are Jurjević's wines, with *posip* and *syrah*, from the island of Silba, then the Figurica by Mladen Anić from Smilčići (*marāština*, *cabernet sauvignon*, *syrah*). A very good *trebbiano toscano* is produced by the Zlatko Kaštelanac. There is an excellent *cabernet sauvignon* by Šime Škaulj from Nadin, and new wines are received from many others, whose names will soon be found on the wine maps of this region and further afield.



*The Šibenik area
of Dalmatia is
known for its
harmonious mixture
of continental and
Mediterranean
cuisine*

5 šibenik

dalmatia



5 The gastronomic culture of the **ŠIBENIK** area comes down from the hinterland to the coast, resembling the falls of the Krka River and creating a unique national gastro-park, in which traditional and contemporary gastronomic heritage are united, and which has spread from rural areas to the hidden island bays.



The national parks Kornati and Krka are not the only natural phenomena to thrill the visitors of the Šibenik part of Dalmatia. As the Krka River, with a magnificent display of its rich waterfalls demonstrating the power and beauty of a karst river, enters the sea, the gastronomic delicacies of Šibenik's hinterland flow into the gastronomic wealth of the Šibenik archipelago, an area rich with white and blue fish, crabs, shells and molluscs. Lovers of good food cannot miss the harmonious mixture of the two, apparently different, cuisines, where the first one is dominated by typical continental features, and the second contains all the finesse of sea flavours and aromas. Jointly, they form the Mediterranean gastro-rhapsody in this area demonstrating an exchange of varied macro-climate and morphological diversity in a small area.

The hinterland of Šibenik, and specifically the area of the Miljevac plateau, is an almost ideal climate with cold and windy winters, producing maybe the best prosciutto in the whole of Dalmatia. The local country households prepare it in the traditional way: bacon (*pancetta*) along with all types of sausages and other meat products are smoked on holm-oak and dried by the wind. This combines all the advantages and specificities of this area and reveals a long tradition of ancient gastronomic customs.

The prosciutto is often eaten with another speciality typical of the Dalmatian hinterland – goat cheese from *mišina* (a bag made of animal leather), and bread under a clay or steel dish, prepared with various cereals ground in old mills.

Lovers of young lamb will be offered this speciality prepared in several different ways.

Did you know?

The hinterland of Šibenik, and specifically the area of the Miljevac plateau, is an almost ideal climate with cold and windy winters, producing maybe the best prosciutto in the whole of Dalmatia. The local country households prepare it in the traditional way: smoked on holm oak and dried by the wind.

The most popular is lamb on a spit, which attracts visitors to Boraja. Equally delicious is barbecued lamb, lamb under a steel or clay dish, made with potatoes and vegetables, or lamb roasted with potatoes or on its own. Side dishes with cooked lamb are seasonal vegetables, cooked with the meat, but the most favourite combination is one of cabbage, collard greens or white cabbage. Gourmets, who love local specialities, should not miss lamb tripe, barbecued lamb liver or lamb stewed with onions. In late autumn, and during the winter months, the Šibenik hinterland offers beef or young beef with cabbage or collard greens, where meat and vegetables combine their tastes. A favourite dish is *kaštradina*, i.e. smoke-dried mutton combined with cabbage. Traditional households will provide bread made under a clay or metal dish, with flour containing all types of cereals.

Pašticada (a stewed beef dish) with homemade gnocchi is the most favourite Dalmatian dish and a gastronomic speciality for all gourmets. Many are accustomed to discuss for hours whether prunes will be included in the *pašticada*, or of the original recipe will omit them.

One of the folk, traditional dishes is going through a true gastronomic revival: it is *soparnik* or *soparnjak*, which is a salty pie filled with chard and olives, prepared in a traditional manner. It is a culinary star, occupying an important place in ambitious menus. It is baked under a clay or metal dish, and this typical speciality is now frequently offered as an appetiser in prestigious restaurants.

The locals will usually prepare *pasta-fažol*, beans with smoke-dried beans and pasta, as



A traditional peasant dish is soparnik or soparnjak; a culinary hit in top restaurants.

well as *paštašuta*, stewed beef with homemade pasta.

The hinterland of Šibenik is famous for its excellent lamb, prepared in various ways, and also home-reared veal, turkey, and rooster. They are prepared by roasting in a bread oven.

Fans of sea specialities will be able to enjoy excellent white fish, and also oily fish, such as sardines, anchovies, mackerel and tuna, whose popularity is on the rise. Shellfish is prepared *na buzaru* (stewed), but also barbecued, and some gourmets will appreciate scallop shells au gratin (*Jakove kapice*), baked in the oven. The peak of gastronomic hedonism is enjoying fish specialities in any of the bays of the Kornati islands, which a poet described as the most beautiful fleet of ships ever to have anchored at a sea. These places offer fresh fish right out of the sea, in a wonderful ambience which sailors claim to be one of the most beautiful on the whole of the Mediterranean.

Lovers of fresh water river fish have a chance to taste mountain trout either grilled or baked with potatoes, of supreme quality and of memorable taste, coming from the beautiful karst Krka River.

The local grape brandy (*loza*) and *travarica* (herb brandy), with fresh figs in the summer, or dry figs in the winter, act as an excellent aperitif, an introduction into serious gastronomy and a good opportunity for endless discussion on different brandies and their aromatic additives.

The wine range is dominated by two varieties: red (*babić*, characteristic of the Šibenik part of Dalmatia) and *rosé* (locally called *opolo*), with a long tradition in this region.





Šibenik and its surroundings have many good restaurants: Pelegrini in Šibenik, Cantinetta (in Skardin), Zlatna ribica (gold fish) in Brodarica, Tik Tak (in Murter), Opat and Zakan in the Kornati Islands and many others.

When touring the cultural and historic monuments of Šibenik, especially the Cathedral of Sv. Jakov (St. Jacob), a masterpiece of Juraj the Dalmatian from the 15th century and a monument of culture protected by UNESCO, many will conclude that the area with such a rich cultural tradition and an extremely valuable spiritual

heritage, must have a rich gastronomic legacy too. And they would be right.

The gastro culture of the Šibenik area comes down from the hinterland to the coast, resembling the falls of the Krka River, creating a unique national gastro-park, where the traditional and the contemporary gastronomic heritage are united and which has spread from rural karst clearings to hidden island bays. Nature has rewarded its inhabitants, and they take what is best from nature, offering it to those who want to join them in the enjoyment of unsurpassed attractions of the Šibenik area of Dalmatia.



■ This is an area where the sea and a river come together, and where the smell of ozone is felt for miles, feeling salt particles arising from the sea.

The falls of the Krka River and its water nurturing rich vegetation and providing relaxation are appreciated by all who experience them.

The heavenly ambience of the National Park Krka is confirmed by 1267 plant species of which 72 are native to the area. This distinction is also in the soil, which is actually the humus, and this area offers an abundance of food from biological cultivation and from wild mountainous fruits.

The Šibenik archipelago is ideal for oily fish with the level of salt in the water, but also its temperature. Sardines from the sea reach their optimal size, but also have an agreeable mixture of fish oils, which gives them a specific taste. Tuna fish, octopus, mackerel and other fish, contribute to the gastronomy of the coastal area and on the islands. Considering the fact that this is the area where a river joins the sea, the large amount of date shells and other shell fish is no.

Heavenly scenery and tastes from the gods.

groceries

Date shell

Conger eel

Sardine

Monkfish

Jujube

Jakovska kapica (sea shells)

Smoke-dried ham

dishes

Conger eel bouillabaisse

Limpet pasta

Sardines grilled over old vines

Braised beef with dumplings/
gnocchi

Fillets of anchovy in lemon
juice

■ Šibenik area has always been related to the grape-vine, and this industry makes a significant contribution to the economy even now. The first glimpse of the landscape reveals an interesting area for wine-growing; there are many slopes and karst fields, and the closeness of the sea, the Krka River and the Prokljansko lake are favourable for the climate.

The growing of the grape-vine in the Šibenik area started more than two thousand years ago, and the Romans, as in other areas, brought a renaissance to this industry. As well as probably bringing varieties and technique of growing, they are also responsible for growing in the hinterland. Unlike the Greek colonists, who stayed in the islands and the coast, the Romans spread the grape-vine into the countryside and cultivation started in Drniš and Knin, and all other areas where the conditions were favourable.

Besides very favourable natural conditions for production, the wine was traditionally used in everyday nutrition, and it is no wonder that large attention is paid to wine in the area of Šibenik. Many documents bear this out and about a hundred years ago *prošek* (prosecco, traditional Dalmatian dessert wine, made of dried grapes) was sold as a medicine in the pharmacies of Šibenik.

Natural conditions for production

The area of Šibenik includes a part of the Dalmatian coast around the town of Šibenik – from Pirovac and Skradin to Trogir and the area around the towns of Drniš and Knin. The Rulebook on vineyard areas in Croatia states that this area belongs to the region of northern Dalmatia and consists of six wine growing areas: Pirovac – Skradin, Knin, Promina, Drniš, Šibenik and Primošten. Due to climatic features, this area is quite diverse and produces a number of different wines. In the countryside, the vineyards are mostly grown in karst areas, on deeper soil and there is a significant impact from the colder, continental climate on the traditional growing of white varieties. The coastal area and islands dominate with red varieties, usually on appropriate vineyard positions. Often stated as an example of that is the Primošten wine growing area, where the grape-wine is grown on raised, sloping, stone terraces, and the famous Primošten *čipka* (lace) is an example of the excellent harmony between the vineyards and landscape. This image is often shown as a monument to the hardwork and dedication of the local population to the grape-vine. The largest areas of vineyards are found today in the area of Primošten and Promine, as well as Drniš (Petrovo Polje).

Climate varies considerably and the temperature in Šibenik is of average >15 °C annually, while in Drniš it is about 13 °C. On the other hand, rainfall is higher inland (>1000 mm) than on the coast (less than 800 mm). The soil is also different and, as in other Dalmatian areas, we find deep brown and red soil in the fields, and shallower, poor soil in the coastal area with a lot of rocks. Nevertheless a large part of this area is suitable for the grape-vine, and the differences in the environmental conditions contribute positively to the characteristics of the wine.

Varieties and their wine, and the most prominent producers

Babić is surely the most important Šibenik variety today, often associated with this area. The reason for this is the exceptional wines and varieties from the terraces of Primošten; the area from which the superior quality of *Babić* is obtained. These are intensively coloured red wines, of full and strong taste, with beautiful aromas of matured fruit. Several producers of the supreme *Babić* continue this long tradition, while the contemporary technology and the expert approach in the development of the vineyards along with the efforts of the local community contribute to the preservation of this landscape, and point to a brighter future for these wines. We can say that the *Marastina (malvasia del Chianti)*, is the most important white variety in Šibenik, although it used to be even more visible in the past than it is today. It produced famous wines, especially dessert ones, but it needs sites with extraordinary features, of which less and less are available today, and they usually host red varieties. There are not many producers of pure variety wines, and they are usually blends encouraging improvement in the quality of other varieties. *Debit* is the most widespread white variety, giving usually medium quality wine, but some producers, with low yield and modern technology in the cellars, achieve significant results with this variety. It is mostly present in the Prominsko wine growing area, but has spread out to the whole region in recent years. Among other white varieties, we can find *trebbiano toscano (ugni blanc)*, a variety introduced some thirty years ago), *rkaciteli* (a type introduced from Georgia during the 70's of the last century), and *trbljan (kuć)*, but they are usually not produced individually, but come with blends.

As with the neighbouring Zadar regions, *pošip* has recently being planted as an indigenous variety from Korčula, along with the world famous *chardonnay* whose first results were in accordance with its high expecta-



tions. The second most important red variety after *babić* is *plavina*, which gives soft, easy and medium strength wines, mostly being a blend variety, but there are several variety wines also available on the market. *Lasina* belongs to the group of forgotten and rediscovered autochthonous varieties, taking quite a small portion of the assortment. It is much appreciated and close interest in the wine produced from it is growing, causing intensive planting. A few variety wines of *lasina* can be found today. *Merlot* is one of those varieties which fully justified its expectation, so we find several wines of this variety, with excellent characteristics and it has found its place both in the hinterland and on the coast. When it comes to other red wines, there are *Cabernet sauvignon* and *Syrah*, which make an integral part for any assortment and which

have also met expectations. *Plavac mali* used to be only occasionally present in this area, but today it is found grown in large areas, and it is expected to show its excellence in the Šibenik area, as well.

When it comes to the producers, there are two large ones (Vinoplod from Šibenik and Dalmacijavino from Drniš), and a number of medium and small family-run cellars, which started production about a decade ago. Vinoplod Inc. from Šibenik is surely the most famous with its supreme *Babić*, but offers also other, cheaper wines. There are *Merlot* and *Cabernet sauvignon*, and *Plavina*, in addition to several other table or cheap wines, they produce a very good brandy – *Komovica*, *Lozovača* and *Travarica*. Dalmacijavino Inc., the wine cellar in Drniš, produces a very good *Merlot*, *Debit* and *Plavina*. Using modern

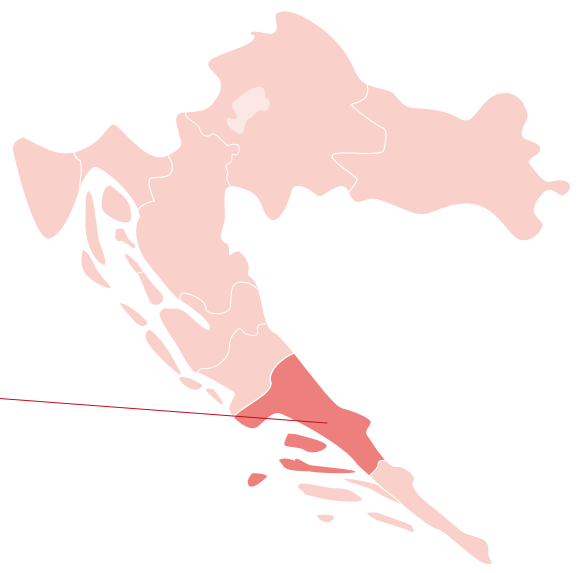
technologies, the winery Bibich produces an excellent *Debit*, and it is important to emphasise a few red wines, and the dessert *prosecco* *Ambra*, a sweet wine produced with traditional technology from *debit* and *marastina*. Several other small producers must be mentioned who are present in the market, such as Duvančić and Džapo (*Debit*, *Marastina* and *Lasina*) in the wine growing area of Promina, and Piližota, Gracin and Gašperov (*Babić*) in the Primošten wine growing area.

A long tradition of growing grapevines, many varieties and favourable natural conditions, result in the production of excellent and very diverse wine, and the Šibenik region nowadays represents a very important area. Still, in view of its potential, it is certain that it is going to play an even more important role in Croatian vinegrowing and wine-production in the future.



*Since the era
of Diocletian
until now the
gastronomy of
the Split area
of Dalmatia
has been one of
the best in the
Mediterranean.*

6 split
dalmatia



6 All the best and most indigenous from the **SPLIT REGION**, from the sea and the wealth of islands, to the continental hinterland, used to end up on the tables of Split. The return process did not fail: refined cooking, as part of the civic culture of Split, had its impact on rural cuisine, enriching it with new and sophisticated recipes.



A sequence of magnificent islands close to Split, from Šolta and Brač to Vis and Hvar, together with the Split hinterland with its natural wealth and diversity, have contributed to the development of one of the most charming cities of the Mediterranean, full of valuable monuments. Consequently, it became the peak of gastronomic culture which has been developing since the Roman era. As an important part of the heritage of civilisation, this gastronomic culture has obeyed high criteria and imperial demands. Today, when the Croatian coast and islands are increasing as a tourist world star, it satisfies ambitious tourist expectations and needs. To understand the Mediterranean culture at the table, it is necessary to go back into the past, at least for a moment.

In the history of civilisations, the Roman Empire, among other things, is remembered for its luxurious gastronomic culture of a powerful empire, which took the best parts of the cuisine from the countries it conquered. This is particularly true for the eastern Roman provinces, where gastronomy was on a much higher level than the western European provinces of the empire. Legendary feasts at the Roman Court are still visualised when speaking of gastronomic luxury or when wanting to warn of the dangers threatening those who are immoderate in consumption of food and drink.

Considering this historical aspect, it is then clear that the Roman Emperor Diocletian did not choose Split to build his magnificent palace there, just by chance more than 1700 years ago. The palace now represents one of the most important late Roman monuments and the current cultural and historic core of the Dalmatian metropolis.

Did you know?

The Split fish market, or peškarija, is a luxurious exhibition of the wealth of the Adriatic Sea. It is a cult location where the inhabitants of Split, bargaining in a typical Dalmatian ritual of supply and demand, dependent on the availability of fish and shellfish, create the daily menu to be served for lunch or dinner.



The area of Vis is known for lobster catches and its crab should definitively be tasted with pasta or prepared with salad.

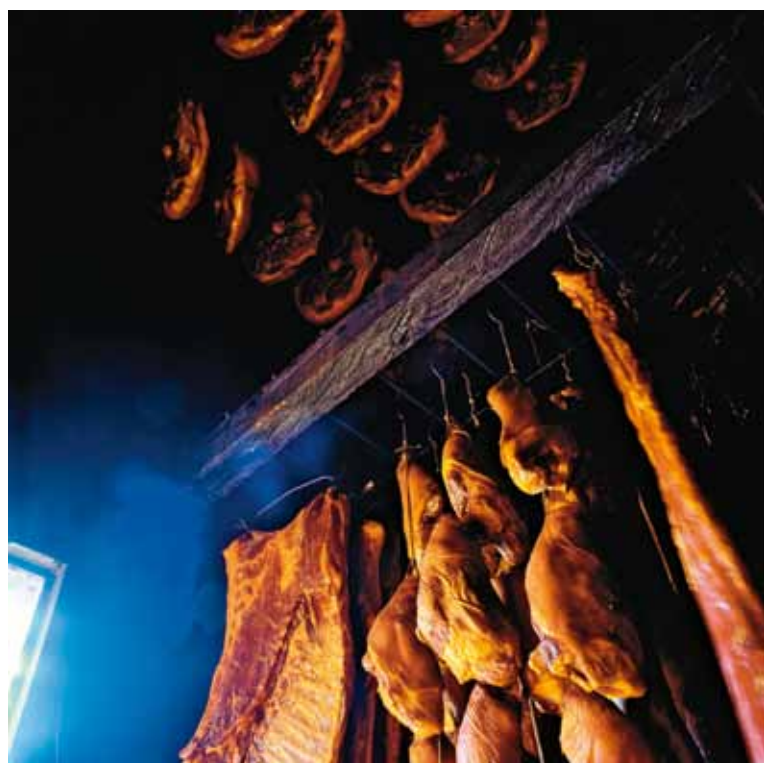
All that is best and most autochthonous from the surroundings of Split, used to end up on its tables, but it also created a return process: refined cooking, as part of the civic culture of Split, had its impact on rural cuisine, enriching it with new and sophisticated recipes.

The biggest attraction of all for many tourists will be the visit to the picturesque fish market in the old part of the city, where all the wealth of the Adriatic Sea is exhibited during

the morning hours. Lovers of fish, crabs, shells and mollusc will sometimes start an uncontrolled and thoughtless spending spree, simply difficult to resist.

The fish market or *peškarija* is a place where, depending on the daily offer, the daily menu is created. The *peškarija* promotes the typical Dalmatian ritual of supply and demand and bargaining, and the fishermen at the stone counters proudly exhibit their impressive catch.

Next to the *peškarija*, there is a cult restaurant Nostromo, where everything you see in the market, gets prepared in innovative and creative ways. The breadth of the gastronomic offering in Split includes locations with a traditional menu (the Hvar wine cellar), and also an extended Dalmatian cuisine, retaining substantial principles of its tradition (the Adriatic Grašo).





The culture of eating in the Split part of Dalmatia is founded on a firm connection with the sea, continuity of a gastronomic heritage, which is transferred from one generation to another, and on a strong belief in healthy food coming from the hinterland. Whether it is dory, sea bass, scorpion fish, dentex, or grilled gilthead, octopus, squid, cuttlefish, bouillabaisse, or fish soup, crabs, shells, salted anchovies or grilled mackerel, the menus of Split are dominated by the largest variety of sea food. Equally appreciated is the lamb on rotisserie, or under a clay or steel dish, stewed beef (*pašticada*) with gnocchi, *arambašiči* (a type of kebab) from Sinj, deep fried frog legs, snails au gratin, prosciutto and bacon of the Cetinjska Krajina, boiled vegetables with excellent olive oils from the islands...

Each island in the area of Split has its own native products, recipes and unique specialities. On the Island of Brač, they will offer you *vitalac* lamb giblets wrapped in offal and grilled on a spit, lamb tripe or a young goat on a spit. The people from Brač will not forget to praise their excellent citrus fruits, oranges and mandarins. On the Island of Hvar, they will offer you *gregada*, a meal of various fish, prepared with onion, slow cooked in a clay dish. During the season, one should not miss artichoke with broad beans and *biži* (young peas), one of the best specialities of the Dalmatian cuisine, a method of showing who the true culinary master is.

Extremely comfortable Pojoda, with its exquisite and excellent service, is a restaurant that comes before other good restaurants in the town of Vis, on the Island of Vis. One should try the famous flat bread à la Vis (*pogača*). Sailors hurry to get their bargains in the morning, along with their *viški hib* (sweet bread), a dessert made of ground figs. The inevitable lobster with pasta, or prepared in salad is another incomparable dish, because the area of the Island of Vis is famous for their expert methods of catching this large crab. The people from the Island of Vis, the same as those from Brač, always recommend their citrus fruits, and experts claim that the lemons from Vis are the best in Dalmatia. The majority of res-

taurants offer stewed shells (*buzara*), with bread made under a clay or metal dish. Dipped into the sauce of the stew, it turns the meal into a Roman-like feast.

Those enthusiastic for peasant meals will not be able to miss the *šporiki makaruni* (pasta titled "dirty macaroni"), or grilled seasonal vegetables, white and black risotto, *fritule* and *kroštule*. Among fruit, there are cherries and peaches from Kaštela, wild raspberry and blackberry, jujube, fresh or dry figs, paired nicely with homemade fruit brandy (*Travarica*) or *Lozovača*. A glass of fine *prosecco*, goes very well with the cake à la Split, a biscuit with chopped almonds, figs and raisins.

Each island in Split's local waters has its own wine to offer. The southern sides of Brač, Vis and Hvar are known for *Plavac mali* and the respected wineries of this area. A significant white wine is the *Viška vugava* (*Vugava* from Vis).

It is possible to taste exotic specialities in some places, such as *sea eggs* (meereserier), sea urchin, limpet soup, fried *vlasulja* (type of sea greens)... All dishes, from the peasant to the sophisticated ones, are paired with the area that produced them.

Sailors are able to reach restaurants hidden in small island bays, especially those on the favourite coastal routes around the Pakleni Islands (Meneghello, Palmizana), around Brač (Pipo in Luke bay), Vis (wine cellar in Stončica and Mala taverna), or Lastovo (wine cellar Triton in Zaklopatica). In addition to their magnificent ambience, these island-based restaurants offer supreme sea menus.

The gastronomy of the Split area of Dalmatia is closely connected to Italian cuisine, which had a centuries-long impact on Dalmatian cuisine. Menus often offer a variety of pasta, gnocchi, tortellini, ravioli, macaroni, *paštašuta*, *pašta fažol* and other specialities with pasta. Starting in Roman times and until today the Dalmatian cuisine has preserved the most significant Mediterranean tastes and aromas, and old recipes were modernised with new culinary techniques. Millions of tourists who visit this attractive area every year are witness to this being one of the best parts of the Mediterranean Sea. One of the area's trump cards, ever since the era of Diocletian, was and still is gastronomy.



health

■ The city of palaces has emerged under the Marijan forest. This is a perfect place for living, based on its micro climate. A large number of sunny days, optimal wind directions and typical Mediterranean vegetation, make Split a perfect choice for vacations, but also for living. Like an incubator, this is a breeding ground of expert sportsmen, and those interested in leisure sports can live their life-long fantasies here.

On the top of the Zlatni rat beach, in Bol on the Island of Brač, two of largest tidal streams come together and thus the saying that the north and south Adriatic kiss here. Perfect winds drive the sails, but also build the waves for surfers.

Winds, which make the air endlessly clean, make a perfect backdrop for sporting activities, with a perfectly comfortable climate, allowing for sufficient time in the open. Being anywhere in Split is like being in a natural *halo-room* (salt room).

The influence of Mediterranean nutrition, typical of Split, is visible in the development of sport and this connection is seen from probing the chemistry of food.

The Mediterranean nutrition is rich with alkaline, which leads to faster recovery after any sporting activity and stress, which make the body acetous and prone to injury.

groceries

Sour durmast oak

Varenik (non-alcoholic nectar)

Lobster from Lastovo

Carob

Chard

dishes

Wild rabbit

Vitalac

Samaštrani (sort of marinade) tongue

Carob cake

Gregada (fish, shells and mollusc)

Wines

■ The region of Split is surely in one of the most important Croatian wine areas. It covers the coastal area from Trogir to Ploče, the islands of Čiovo, Šolta, Brač, Hvar and Vis, and the hinterland with the areas around Sinj, Imotski and Vrgorac. According to Croatian wine legislation, it covers a part of the vine-growing area of middle and southern Dalmatia and the whole area of the Dalmatian Zagora. Central Dalmatia is the area where developed ancient cultures can be found and this is the place where many varieties of Croatian and world grape-vines were born, as well as the place where the wealth of nature and civilisation of the Mediterranean is felt the most. Central Dalmatia is where some of the best Croatian wines are produced.

This area is where the start of grape-vine cultivation in Croatia started – the first record, according to all sources, is from the 2nd century before Christ, when the great Greek writer Athenaios quotes the historian Agatarhid in its *Deipnosophistai* (the feast of the sophists): "... on the Island of Vis, at the Adriatic Sea, which makes wine better than any other it can be compared to". There is more evidence showing that central Dalmatia is the crib of wine-growing in this territory. The grape-vine later spread inland, and during all those years, it played an important role in the life of its population. The significance of wine-growing in this area is illustrated also by the fact that the phenomenon of the vine-pest, a disease that destroyed the vineyards toward the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, led to an economic crisis and the migration of people overseas.

Wine growing is a very important industry, because the natural conditions of central Dalmatia provide for production of different and very high quality wines. In recent years, there is a growing number of small producers who are changing the reputation of Dalmatian wine, largely damaged during the time of socialism. The family cellars are becoming small and medium wineries, and the use of modern technology is providing for the establishment of vineyards in excellent locations. With a large number of autochthonous varieties and the wealth of natural conditions, this area is returning to the path of its former glory, and the wines are achieving awards and attracting the interest of buyers.

Natural conditions for production

The environmental conditions in this region are diverse due to large differences in the climate of the coastal area and islands on the one hand, and inland on the other. The average annual temperature is from around 13



°C (Sinj, Imotski) to over 16 °C (Split, Vis). There are even larger differences in rainfall. The annual average on the islands is about 750 mm, and it is much higher inland. The soil in these wine growing areas are same as in the neighbouring areas – red and brown soil on limestone, of different depths and variable rockiness.

The largest areas are found in Imotsko, Sinjsko and Vrličko fields and on the islands: Hvar and Vis. Large areas have been cultivated in the coastal area in recent years. White varieties are dominant in this area, and the wines have different characteristics, due to the significant impact of a colder, continental climate. The islands mostly grow red varieties, and the famous, sea-facing positions often grow only *plavac mali*. Significant among those locations are Ivan Dolac and Sveta Nedjelja, on the southern side of the Island of Hvar, and Bol on the Island of Brač, which



receives additional light from the sea, as well as warmth and freshness, which regularly gives red wines of superior characteristics.

Varieties and their wine and the most important producers

We find the largest number of indigenous varieties in this area, which is understandable considering the rich history and diversity of the natural conditions here. In addition, there are also foreign varieties and we can thus say that Central Dalmatia has the richest assortment of grape-vines in Croatia. *Plavac mali* is the undoubted leader among the red vines, and it is a proven Croatian autochthonous variety. It covers almost all of the warm, sea-facing positions, where it reaches superb quality. Its wines are intensively coloured, full and strong (alcohol is often above 15 vol%). It has a specific and striking flavour. Its supreme potential has been recognised long ago and the wines produced from *plavac mali* are at the top of the list of lovers of Croatian wine. There are many labels with



Plavac on the market nowadays, but the best wine from Central Dalmatia comes from the southern parts of Hvar, Brač and Vis islands. In recent years, there has been an expansion of the *crljenak kaštelski*, an almost forgotten Croatian variety, known in America as *Zinfandel*, and as *Primitivo* in Italy. The DNA testing several years ago proved its Croatian origin, and it was confirmed as one of the parents of *plavac mali*. Historic data suggests that it was a well-known variety in Dalmatia more than five centuries ago, and its supreme characteristics are still visible today. Several producers have made the first wines of this variety, and these are usually typical southern red wines, full, with a high percentage of alcohol and with specific fruity flavours.

Merlot, cabernet, sauvignon and syrah are making excellent wines in this area, too. They are vinified on their own or paired up in dif-

ferent combinations. When it comes to other red varieties, *babić* must not be left out, as it is an accompanying variety to *plavac*, as well as to *plavina*, or it comes in a blend with other autochthonous varieties. Still, a large number of red wines, specifically those made from vines grown in less favourable positions, are a result of pairing, because many old vineyards grow several varieties. This has been shown as favourable for the quality of the *domestic* wine, but has led to the preservation of the old, native varieties, too. Several of them have shown splendid characteristics as independent ones, and we today see the *dobričić* wine (excellent colour, large potential, one of the *plavac mali* parents), *ninčuse, okatca (glavinuša), trnjak and babica*. Other variety wines made of *vranac* can also be found. *Vranac* is grown here, and the interest for it has also been increasing in recent years. The white assortment is led by *pošip*, a variety which has also been proven as indigenous. In recent years it has spread all over Dalmatia. This is the result of excellent variety characteristics, because wine made of *pošip* is strong and full, but also fresh and flavoured, unlike many other autochthonous white wines. *Vugava and bogdanuša* are typical island-grown varieties, grown exclusively on the islands of Vis and Hvar, their original home. Their potential is very high and several wines produced by modern methods have already come to the attention of consumers. *Kujundžuša* is one of the most important varieties of the Dalmatian Zagora. It mostly comes in mass-produced, cheap wine, but in recent years, with the introduction of modern technology, the image of its potential has been changing. *Maraština* is a type we can find in many vineyards here. It is rarely produced as a variety wine, and mostly comes in mixtures. As for the others, we need to mention *trbljan* (a sort intended for mass-production and lesser quality wines), *zlatarica vrgorska* (good potential, but rather rare), *grey pinot* (as the first of the pinot group of varieties planted in the Dalmatian Zagora), and the inevitable *chardonnay* planted usually in the hinterland, intended for the production of wine from regular harvesting and for sparkling wine. There are several other varieties with high potential, but they unfortunately rarely come to the market and when they do, they are in small quantities; i.e. *Prč* from the Island of Hvar, or *Crljenak viški*.

Central Dalmatia has many producers who play a significant role in the Croatian market, both in terms of quality and quantity. Among them, Zlatan Plenković is surely the best (Zlatan otok Inc.), from Hvar, one of the pioneers of private entrepreneurship in wine-growing.

He is best known for the wines made from *plavac mali* and he produces it in several categories of quality and price. He is one of the first to introduce wine from *crljenak kaštelski* onto the market, and he produces

several other noted wines (Zlatan otok, Pošip, Prošek, Zavala). High quality wines from the Island of Hvar are also produced by Andro Romić (Bastiana Inc, with excellent *Plavac mali* and the dessert vine *Prošek*, by Hektorovich), Carić (wine by Hvar d.o.o, producing *Plavac mali* called Plovac ploški, and Bogdanjuša), Duboković (a rare, expensive, but excellent wine from *plavac mali*, named Medvjedica and Medvid), Plančić (one of the first private producers in Croatia, who produces high quality *Plavac* from the area Ivan Dolac, and Bogdanuša and Parč). Among the oldest producers of the cult Hvar *Plavac*, there are also Badel 1962 (Ivan Dolac wine from the agricultural cooperative Svirče), and Faros wine by Dalmacijavino d.d. Producers Lipanović, Roki's and Cobo (A. Ivčević) can be singled out for Vis, with very good *Vugava and Plavac wines*. There are several new producers on the Island of Brač, who are distinguished firstly by *Plavac mali* (Baković, Plavac Murvica) and Jako Andabak (Jako Wine Inc.), which offers *Pošip*, together with *Plavac*. There are several producers in the Dalmatian Zagora – Imota Ltd. (Kujundžuša, Vranac), and Vinoplod (Cabernet sauvignon, Merlot and their brand called Carlot). Still, there is an increasing number of smaller family wineries which stand out for their quality and new products – Grabovac (very good *kujundžuša*, and Modro Jezero, *rosé Crveno Jezero*, several sparkling wines), Jerković (*kujundžuša*) and Opačak (*Zlatarica, Trnjak*). The coastal part has a number of small family wine cellars, but without any significance on the market. Dillatum (Agricultural Cooperative Kaštelacoop) can be mentioned as a *cuvée* of old and rare varieties from Kaštela, a wine made as the result of local communities attempting to revitalise.



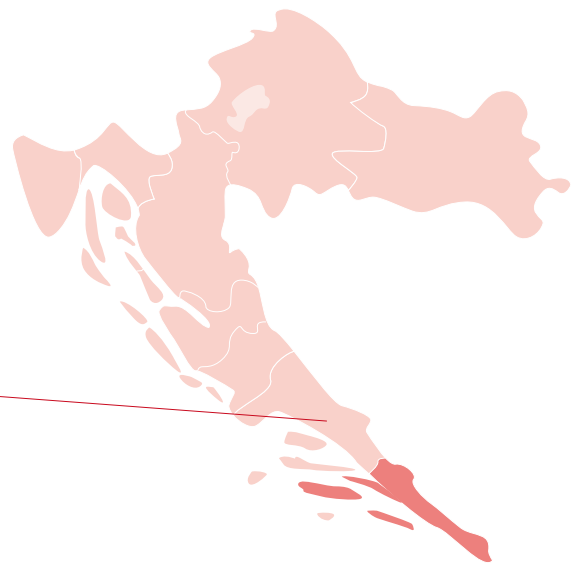
*Gastronomy of the
south coast is based
on the natural
resources of Pelješac,
the Neretva valley
and Konavle*

7 dubrovnik
dalmatia



Did you know?

Ostrea edulis, is a rare and high quality Ston oyster whose quality cannot be compared to that of any of its ocean relatives. This type of oyster is extinct in other areas and has survived only in Morocco and Mali Ston Bay, in sea of the highest purity with the ideal proportion of salt and fresh water. Experts consider them one of greatest seafood delicacies in the world.



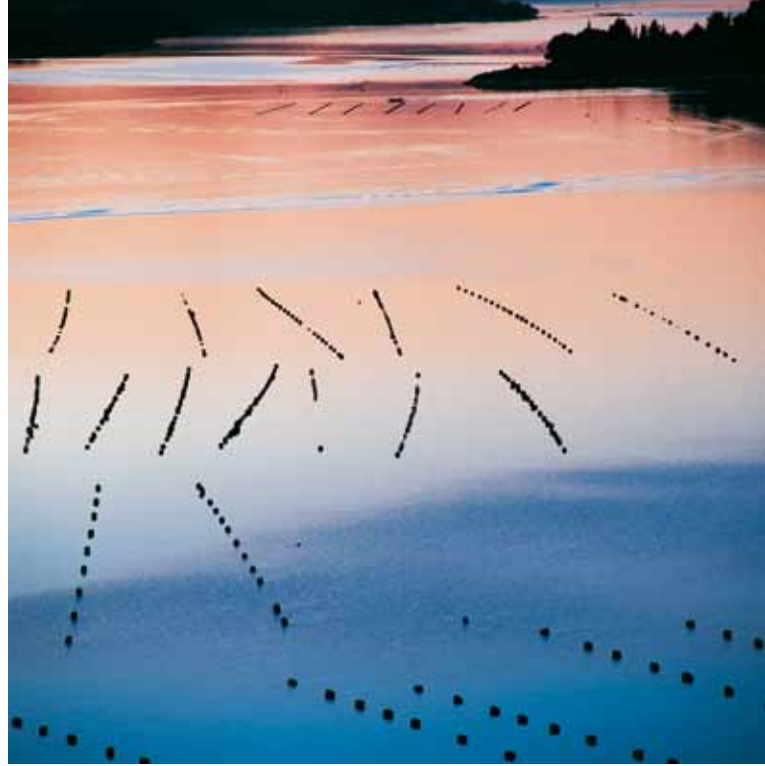
7 In the **DUBROVNIK** area which is exposed to Mediterranean, oriental and continental influences, one of the best Mediterranean cuisines has been developed, with a high contribution from seafood from the southern Dalmatian archipelago, organic vegetables from Konavle, traditional dishes from Korčula, Mljet, Elaphiti and the Neretva area as well as meat specialties from the hinterland.



The natural resources of the Dubrovnik Riviera, Pelješac and Konavle and centuries-long tradition of Dubrovnik's civic culture, within which sophisticated cooking was developed, exposed it to various influences, from Mediterranean to Oriental, culminating in the southern Adriatic gastronomic culture ranking among the best in the Mediterranean; and the area in which it has been developed, among the most potent agromonic areas on the Adriatic.

The *Ostrea edulis* itself, the rare Ston oyster, would be sufficient for culinary branding of the entire region. It is extinct in other areas and survives only in Morocco and Ston Bay. Because of the biological conditions Ston Bay was declared a Sea Zone of the Highest Purity, and Ston oysters, their quality unparalleled compared with their oceanic relatives, are considered by professionals and gourmets as unique in the world.

Mali Ston Bay is exposed to the influence of the Neretva River, the mixing of fresh and sea water, strong currents and tides – all of which have a great impact on the production of shells of exceptional quality. Fans and admirers of Ston oysters served in the most natural way – raw and sprinkled with a few drops of organic lemon juice – are aware that they enjoy one of the world's rare gastronomic delicacies of unique flavour that contains and reflects all the richness of southern Dalmatia. Butarga or dried fish roe, usually from gray mullet or sea bass, formed into a thin sausage or cake, is another specialty that marks the gastro culture of southern Dalmatia. It is offered as a rare delicacy in limited quantities in some rural households on the peninsula, and only in the most prestigious restaurants.



Since the inner part of the peninsula has witnessed a rapid development of agro tourism based on the Istrian model with wine tasting offered on the Pelješac wine trails and also with an increasing supply of olive oil, an original folk cuisine, based on traditional recipes and dishes which used to be prepared by Pelješac old women, is being revived. On the farm *Panorama* above Orebić, dishes with truffles, first found on the peninsula, are offered. Traditional dishes based on local ingredients, especially vegetables grown in the fertile environmental conditions of Konavle, are being increasingly represented on the menus as part of the southern coast's cuisine. All those who have at least once tasted zucchini, aubergine, tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, cucumbers, potatoes and other vegetables grown in Konavle's fields, have been convinced of their exceptional quality, compared to those they are used to from standard commercial

sources. In the preparation of dishes based on vegetables, Oriental influences are also identified, especially when it comes to beans, for which the local name *sočiva* (lentils) is used. The most popular traditional dish of all is green *menestra*, prepared from dried/smoked mutton (*kaštradina*), dried/smoked pork and homemade sausages, combined with cabbage and potatoes, *šporiki makaruli* made of stewed beef and pasta mixed in a large bowl. Southern Dalmatia cuisine, as well as from other parts of Dalmatia, is well known for its rich variety of fish, shellfish, crabs and molluscs which came from the fishing areas around the southern Dalmatian islands. Mljet and Lastovo waters are famous for their lobsters while from Korčula arrive *žrnovski makaroni*, one of the greatest meaty delights of the southern coast, prepared from beef and homemade pasta hand-moulded in a special way around a thin stick. Recipes



Butarga or dried fish roe from mullet or sea bass is a long known speciality from Pelješac

are a closely guarded family secret. Korčula is proud of its wine production. The most popular varieties of white wines are Pošip and Grk while Plavac Mali and Cabernet Sauvignon are the red wines. Fertile areas of Smokvica and Blato are ideal for growing fruit and vegetables and for the development of viticulture and olive growing.

The most famous dessert of the southern coast is definitely flan, egg custard with caramel sauce that is served cold, another favourite dessert being *kotonjata*, quince candy. Sugared almonds (*broštulani mjenduli*) and *arancini* (orange peel cut into thin strips cooked in sugared water) are native delicacies

of the southern coast which in combination with sherry or semi-dry wine are ideal for serving in relaxing moments in informal gatherings.

In close connection with the gastronomic culture is the very special viticulture, based on the Plavac Mali variety. Along the length of the Pelješac peninsula three high ridges stretch, their micro-location and micro-climate are so special that each has a specific slope, sunlight, air circulation, the composition of grey and brown sandy soil rich in minerals and other features that affect the quality of the grapes. One of the best positions is the Dingač area, on very steep slopes of the peninsula, after which the premium wine is named, the most prestigious brand of Croatian red wines.

For a more complete insight into the wine-growing areas of Pelješac, the best way is to take a tour of the wine route, a tourist route that reveals all the treasures of the interior of the peninsula and some of the finest and most prominent manicured vineyards in Dalmatia. In Konavle the autochthonous variety Malvasia is grown, which should be clearly distinguished from the Istrian Malvasia.

Along the coast of southern Dalmatia, several excellent restaurants are listed as at the peak of national cuisine. From Mali Ston (Captain's House), Korčula (LD Terrace, Adio Mare), Šipan (In the Harbour at Mark's), Dubrovnik (Nautica and Sesame), the Konavoski Court (dvori) in Konavle to Cavtat (Gaul), restaurants with an excellent supply of fresh fish and crabs. Restaurants in the Konavle mountains also have a good reputation, and are especially appealing in the summer heat, when in the height of the mountain there comes a pleasant freshness, which also provides an impressive view of Cavtat, Dubrovnik and the surrounding archipelago. They are known for offering excellent lamb, veal and roast goat, grilled on *gradele* or baked under a bell and home-made goat cheese in olive oil.

In the western part the most famous specialty from the Neretva delta is a stew of eels and frogs; shrimps and prawns from the Neretva area are among the best, it is believed, on the Adriatic.

The fertile valley of the Neretva river, rich in water supply is a paradise for agriculture and from that area melon, watermelon, cherries, apricots, peaches, nectarines, oranges, tangerines, and all kinds of vegetables arrive on the Dubrovnik Riviera.

The area along the Neretva river is also known for waterfowl, birds such as coots living in the swampy backwaters of the river, which are prepared according to hunters recipes.

The gastronomy of the Dubrovnik coast evolves in parallel with the development of tourism and each seriously prepared dish reminds us that its origin reflects the uniqueness of the southern region. That is Dubrovnik's gastronomy's greatest charm and greatest advantage over many other regions.

health

■ Dubrovnik and its surroundings have always been the area of trade and commerce and therefore it certainly has the most diverse cuisine in the region. Proximity of Otrant Gate and the deep quiet Dubrovnik port, throughout history, meant a break and rest for sailors, but also provisions for long journeys. Marco Polo, who was born in 1255 on Korčula, started his famous journey from there. It is thanks to the port of Dubrovnik that many plants from around the world arrived in this region with the help of sailors who have collected and brought them from their voyages. A special feature of that area is also the delta of the Neretva river. The Neretva river and the sea fed the population for centuries and brought good luck to sailors who during their long voyages could not go without food or fall sick.

Many visitors today, from all over the world, come here to acquire and take away with them their piece of good luck, just like a thousand years ago.

All known natural elements are dissolved in this water so that eating oysters ensures we are supplied with those elements we need only in small traces. Fish salted with sea salt (*slani črnci*) provides replacement of electrolytes lost due to the high temperatures. Oysters are characterized by a high mineral content and are abundant in low molecular weight protein chains. This enable very fast energy transfer. *Kotonjata* is a dessert rich in pectin and beta-carotene, which usually the modern diet lacks. Eel is rich in omega 3 fatty acids.

groceries

Oysters

Eel

Salt has plenty of micronutrients

Dubrovnik's cheese

Konavle *kaštradin*

dishes

Kotonjata

Mantala

Salted *Crnci*

Beef with sage

Raw oysters with lemon



Wines

■ The Dubrovnik area belongs to the winegrowing sub-region of Central and Southern Dalmatia and it includes the coastal area from Ploče to the far south, the valley of the Neretva, the Pelješac peninsula and the islands of Lastovo, Korčula, Mljet and Elaphiti. This warmest and sunniest Croatian territory is almost entirely suitable for growing grapes, so the tradition of cultivating them ties with the beginnings of this culture's arrival on the Adriatic coast.

The rich history of the Dubrovnik Republic and its excellent links with the world have largely influenced the development of viticulture. The new varieties of grapes and new technology were brought in so through history this region was one of the most developed regions in Croatia. Even now, we find a lot of vineyards around here, and many residents are directly or indirectly related to wine production. The region is known for its famous vineyards, many of the best Croatian red wines come precisely from here. For example, the first Croatian wine with protected geographical origin is the famous Dingač harvested in 1961, named after the area Dingač on Pelješac, and the first white, also in the category of fine wine, was Pošip from 1967 from the island of Korčula. In recent years, there has been a major qualitative shift in wine production, new producers emerging with a modern approach and modern equipment. For example, Pelješac wines not only attract the attention of consumers, but nowadays, there are more and more producers whose roots are not connected with the peninsula. Abandoned vineyards are being recovered; new areas are being turned into vineyards, the famous indigenous varieties are being revitalized, so, this area is certainly expected to produce even better wines. Since the main industry of the region is tourism, many manufacturers see this as an additional opportunity, so

that wine tourism is developing intensively. To taste great Plavac Mali, Pošip or Malvasia from Dubrovnik in their native space and beautiful surroundings, is certainly much more enjoyable.

The natural conditions of production

This tourist region comprises six vineyards, but each of them has a Mediterranean climate with hot and dry summers and mild, rainy winters. The average annual temperature is around 16 °C and rainfall is 800-1000 mm. The geology is typically karst and varied soil – many types are found, but brown soil and red soil dominate the region. There are many places on the karst with an abundance of stone, and this land over recent years is successfully being converted into vineyards by using modern mechanization.

Most of the vineyards are located on the Pelješac peninsula, where there are many well-known locations facing the sea – eg. Dingač, Postup, Viganj, etc., which receive additional reflection from the sea's surface and thus have very favourable conditions for the accumulation of sugar in the grapes. On the islands and in the Konvale vineyards the situation is similar – the vineyards are returning to such locations. White grape varieties are planted in most fields, due to lower temperatures and higher humidity favourable to the characteristics of their wines. In the coastal areas larger surfaces suitable for vineyards are located in the valley of the Neretva river and Konavle area.

Varieties and their wines and the most important manufacturers

The abundance and dominance of indigenous varieties is a characteristic of the Dubrovnik region too; Mali Plavac and Pošip





are represented here in most vineyards. In recent years, other, mainly world-famous varieties, are being planted here, but they still cannot threaten the dominance of this duo. Production of Plavac Mali here, compared to central Dalmatia, is grown in the Dubrovnik region to an even greater extent, so that famous vineyards on Pelješac are almost of one variety. On these, elevated and south-facing terrains facing the sea, Plavac Mali gives the best potential quality and therefore, the best variety and quality wines come from the region. Extremely full-bodied and dense, strong and aromatic, intensely coloured red wine has become the hallmark of many local wineries, so that this sort has no real competition. Kaštela's Crljenak is a variety that was grown here even in the 16th century, then it virtually disappeared from Croatian vineyards, and after discovering that this variety is identical to American Zinfandel, which has solved the mystery of its origin, the interest in its planting has increased again. Nowadays large vineyards of this variety can be found on Pelješac and in Konavle, and the first wines have already arrived on the market.

According to the first assessment of this wine, we can say that the variety has met expectations and that in addition to *Plavac Mali* its offspring *Crljenak* will be of great



quality too. Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon have been present along the coast for a long time and over the last few years they are being planted and on the islands too. Their quality is unquestionable, here too their wines are of high quality, but nevertheless it is difficult to compete with production of *Plavac* in the often extreme and difficult terrain. Over the last years *Syrah* (*Shiraz*) was introduced, being mostly mixed with other varieties, but it also justified high expectations. Of the other red wines, we should mention *Plavina*, which is often Plavac's companion, and it ferments together. *Vranac* is a leading variety in neighboring Montenegro, but has also been cultivated here for a long time. In a few cases varietal wines are produced, they usually get mixed with other red varieties of the region, primarily Plavac Mali.

For the last twenty years, *Pošip* has been the area's leading white variety, which is primarily due to its exceptional quality and adaptability. Its provenance was proved through DNA analysis; it originated from the island of Korčula, where it is being produced to this day. It is of an excellent quality and according to many, *Pošip* is of the highest quality of all Southern whites, because in addition to the fullness and high alcohol percentage, it is well-balanced with a nice aroma. *Marasitina*, or more often locally called Rukatac is a variety which is represented in the area to a greater extent, compared with other parts of Dalmatia. There are several wine varieties whose quality varies, as it is quite challenging to cultivate them in those locations. It makes excellent sherries and is sometimes cultivated for the production of dessert wines. *Grk* variety is one of the natives of the area, whose origin intrigues (namely, one of the assumptions is that is of Greek origin, hence the name, or that it came to the island since the time of the Greek colonization of the Adriatic, 2-4 century B.C). *Grk* has a great quality – it undoubtedly has huge potential, but it is grown in a very limited space. It gives exceptional, real southern wines, strong and full, yet balanced, of specific aroma and flavour. Of the other white varieties, we should mention *Cetinika*, which is a widespread variety, but may provide unusually fresh and light wines for the region, and is much sought after, and *Trbljan*, a high quantity variety that often occurs in domestic and cheap wine.

In the Dubrovnik area, there is one more unique variety, *Malvasia Dubrovnik* – known and appreciated for centuries. It provides the highest category of white wines, full and strong, very aromatic, and has exceptional potential for the production of fortified sweet wine – these are wines that regularly receive the highest ratings. The importance of Malvasia in Dubrovnik lies in the fact that this variety of wine had a special treatment – in the Republic of Dubrovnik

the price of other wines was limited while the prices for Malvasia were freely formed. DNA-analysis showed later on that the same variety was found in Sicily (*Malvasia delle Lipari*) and some other places in the Mediterranean. This type is rare, but highly valued everywhere, and today it is fully revitalized in Konavle and there are a few notable wines on the market.

In recent years a large number of small producers prospered here more than anywhere else in Croatia. The credit for this goes primarily to Plavac Mali, so that those who produce this wine are the most numerous.

There are almost no producers on Pelješac today who do not offer *Plavac*, and this wine in recent years has led to the unprecedented expansion of vineyards in certain locations. Vineyards are being planted, new ground conquered, modern technology introduced in the wine cellars, so we can say that today's best Croatian wines come from the Pelješac peninsula. Among the first to produce superior *Plavac*, even during the socialist period, were agricultural cooperatives Dingač and Postup Donja Banda which produce them even today, but they have very strong competition. On the market today Niko Bura and Mara Mrgudić offer excellent Plavac Mali wine (some already legendary vintage wines and highly valued too), Grgić Wines Ltd. (the famous Croatian winemaker from California Miljenko Mike Grgich produces highly valued *Plavac Mali* and *Pošip* at his winery in Trstenik), Miloš Skaramuca and Matuško are among the first private producers, they had a few notable harvests, and to that group also belong Miličić, Radović, Kiridžija and Poljanić. There are a few more of them who have produced excellent *Plavac*, we should mention the new – primarily Saints Hills winery with excellent *Dingač*, Korta Katarina with very well-received *Plavac* and *Pošip*, and Terra Rota with *Plavac* from new locations, with karst reclamation. But the Peninsula is getting conquered by other varieties too, and so we should mention the winery Mokalo, owned by US-Croatian owners (Mrgudić-Benmosche), which produces *Zinfandel*, from the beautiful vineyards in Viganj.

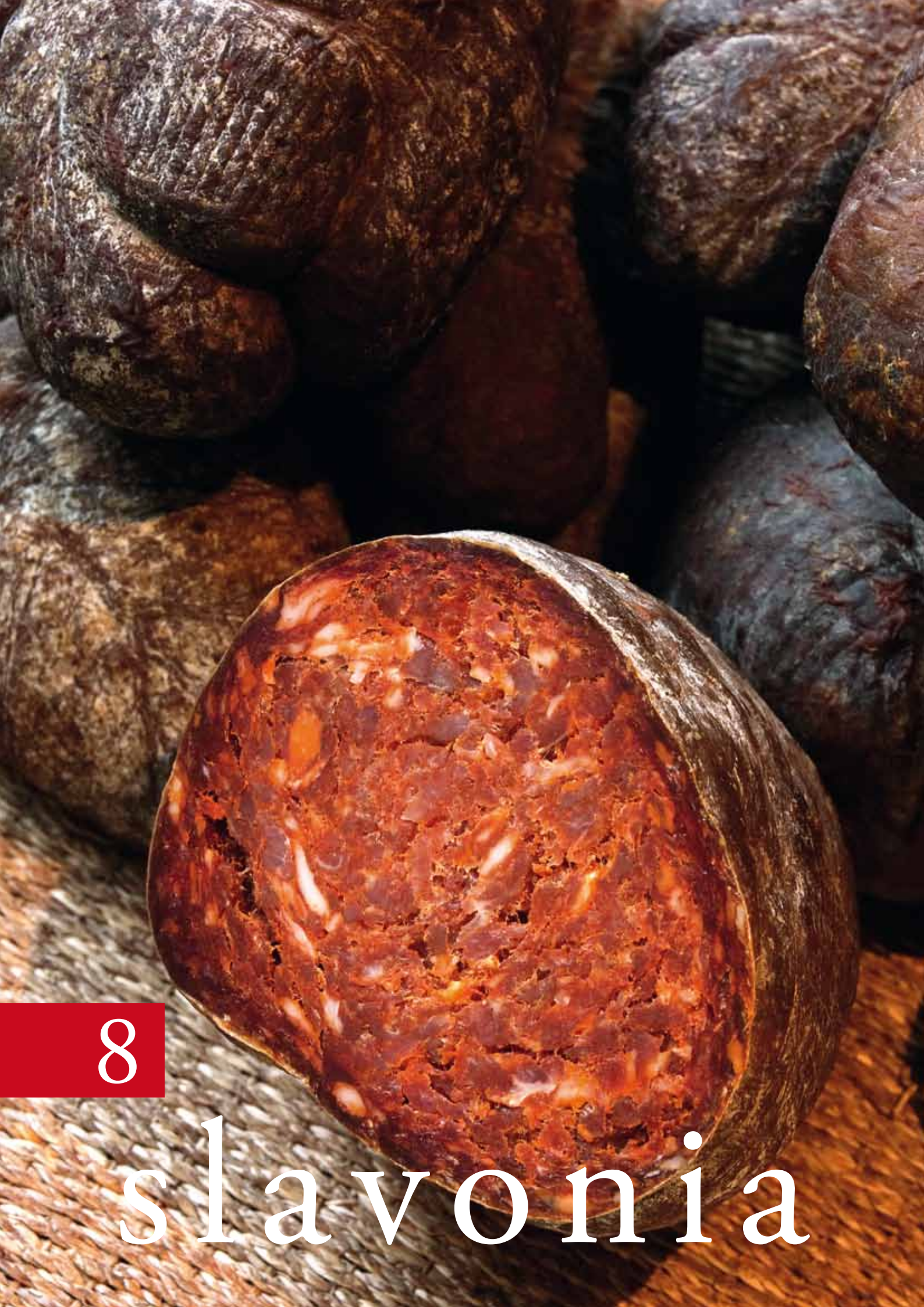
The most famous and the largest manufacturers of *Pošip* are on Korčula, and those are agricultural cooperatives Čara and Smokvica, which began with the production of these varieties in the fifties of the last century. They offer some very popular and sought after wines (*Pošip Čara*, *Marco Polo*, *Centurion*) at reasonable prices. One of the wineries that should also be mentioned is a small winery Toreta in Smokvica, which besides offering *Pošip* also offers *Rukatac* and other wines, and Krajančić and Kunjasa, local winemakers, who recently appeared on the market. On



Korčula, Pošip is being also produced by the winery Blato 1902, which offers *Pošip*, *Plavac Mali* and table wines (made of one or more sorts of grapes). Among the other varieties the most important is *Grk*, which has a very high reputation, is very specific and difficult to grow, and its wines are quite sought after. It is produced in a very limited number of locations, mostly in Lumbarda on the island of Korčula, the only place where varietal wines can be found. There are several small local produc-

ers, including Branko Cebalo, the Fidulić family, Frano Milina Bire, Bartul Batistić Zure, etc. Most of them offer *Plavac Mali* (which is needed for pollination purposes in the *Grk*'s vineyards), while the quantity of other wine varieties is small – notably *Korkyra*, a mixture of native white varieties with the largest share of *Cetinka*, light and fresh, a very reasonably priced wine. Dubrovnik's Cellars Winery Inc. is the largest producer of wine in the Konavle district, which offers a notable wine *Merlot*

and *Cabernet Sauvignon* (under the names *Merlotina* and *Trajectum*) as well as *Plavac Mali*. But, the most interesting in that area is *Dubrovnik's Malvasia*, successfully revitalized a few years ago, and today several excellent wineries offer this wine – these are primarily the Karaman family (which won the sherry champion title at the international competition “The World of Malvasia 2009”) and Andro Crvik, Miho Bratoš, Cellar Marinović, who apart from *Malvasia* offer other wines too.



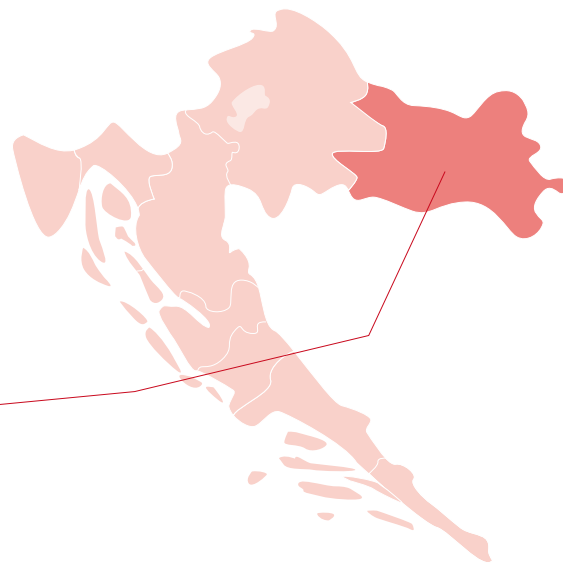
8

slavonia

Slavonian gastronomy is characterised by excellent smoked meat products, specialties of freshwater fish and sumptuous desserts

Did you know?

Slavonian Kulin was the first Croatian food brand with protected origin, and it has since also become part of the world's gastronomic heritage.



8 Gastro culture is an important part of the general culture of the **SLAVONIAN REGION** while its outstanding hospitality is one of the important features of Slavonian tradition and ancient customs. Communication channels and human relationships are associated with food preparation and the way it is served, while an abundance of food is considered to be the trademark of every Slavonian house.



The Slavonian plain is the largest fertile area in Croatia and that fertility is the source of an enduring wealth of varied and imaginative Slavonian cuisine. The plain is intersected by the rivers Sava, Drava and Danube, which enrich Slavonian tables with freshwater fish and many specialties including carp, perch, catfish and other fish. But Slavonia is not merely the plain, as is often thought, but also has a mountainous landscape in the western part, where some of the most important wine-growing areas in Croatia are found.

Gastro culture is an important part of the general culture of this region and outstanding hospitality is one of the important features of the Slavonian tradition and ancient customs. Communication channels and human relationships are associated with food preparation and the way it is served while an abundance of food is considered to be the trademark of every Slavonian house. This is equally true in Baranja, the easternmost part of Croatia.

Cookery is an important topic of discussion for every Slavonian and Baranja resident, but also a way of life and a source of satisfaction. You have hardly sat down before your host is offering you some local specialties, because no house has a lack of local sausages, Kulin (kulen), bacon, crackling, plum brandy ... Local *Kulin Galović* became the first Croatian food brand with protected origin (followed by the protection of Istrian prosciutto, Pag's cheese and Slavonian plum brandy and, recently, the trademark *Greaves Galović*).

The basic prerequisite for the continued quality of every product, including kulen, is strict quality control of the raw materials



from which the food is prepared. Pigs must be kept in the open and fed with healthy food (acorns from the Slavonian forests, corn, barley, oats and clover). The recipe for the preparation of kulin is not some special secret: it is based on the good quality of the raw materials and proper stuffing into bags made of pork intestine, for which you need a superb craftsman. Only 10% of the highest quality of meat (ham, pork, shoulder, neck with no fat) of the total weight of pigs aged between 12 and 20 months ends up in kulin: the rest is processed into other products.

After the kulin is stuffed, it goes to a smokehouse, where it stays, for short periods, exposed to light smoking for seven to ten days in smoke from burning hornbeam and beech. Next is the process of ripening, in a room where natural ventilation is

ensured and optimum humidity reached, which allows the kulin to get coated in noble rot. In the process of ripening, kulin loses about 50% of its original weight. The entire process, from pig slaughter to bringing kulin to market takes six months. Many households in Slavonia produce this most famous Slavonian sausage specialty, which is included in the global culinary heritage and a modern industrialised version of the sausage is produced in Belje.

Kulenova seka (literally *kulen's sister*) is almost equally as valued as kulin (or kulen). It is of a similar composition as kulin and stuffed into beef intestine, which undergoes the same process of smoking and drying, but because of its thickness, it is slightly shorter. Lovers of meat products will be delighted with crackling (greaves) – bacon cut into small pieces, melted in a

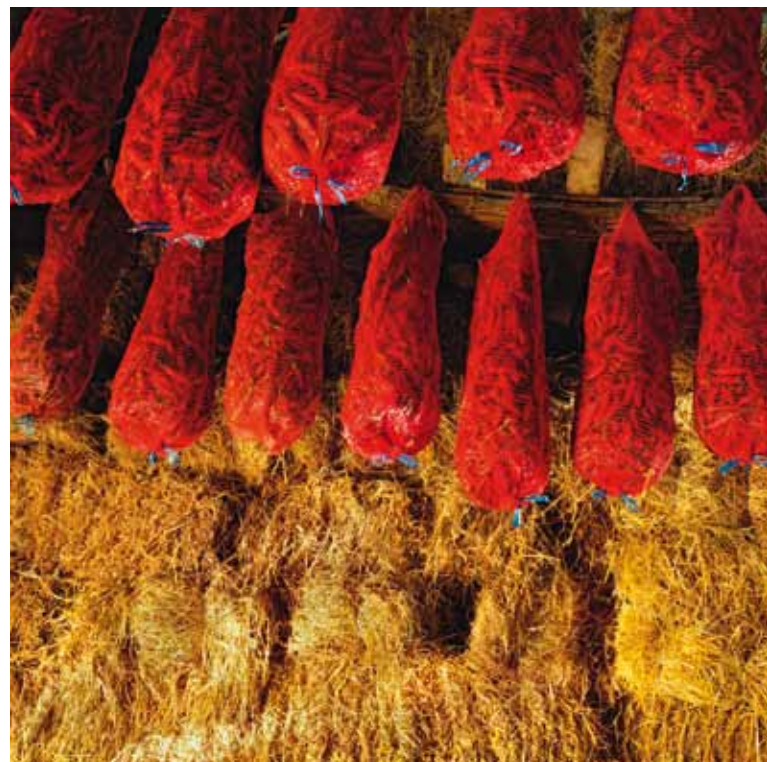


mined by customer preferences, and fish stew can be served with a mild variant or an extremely spicy one.

Freshwater fish are prepared on the grill, but also in a very special Slavonian way – baked on a long fork over an open fire on coals. In more recent times, in the prestige restaurants they serve fish greaves, as an appetiser – a pâté made of ground crackling, with added cucumbers, sweet red pepper, mustard, onions and pressed garlic.

Catfish, a freshwater fish, are usually prepared as *perkelt* or in a stew: add the cleaned pieces of catfish to braised onions, add

Jolly, songful and hospitable Slavonian bećari and snaše (local man and woman) will turn each guest's visit to Slavonia into an unforgettable hedonistic trip.



large kettle on the hearthstone and then pressed in order to separate it from excess fat.

Various types of sausages, from mild to very spicy, like *švargla*, smoked ham and other products complement a wide repertoire of cured meats for which Slavonia is at the forefront of the national gastronomy.

For centuries Slavonian cuisine has been exposed to various influences, from Hungarian and Austrian to eastern cuisines, but it never lost its own originality but only enriched it with new recipes and culinary experiences.

Fiš-paprikaš (hot paprika based fish soup) or fish stew/soup is one of the favourite dishes of Slavonia, and chefs say that – in addition to using fresh fish – the secret of its preparation is in the high quality of paprika powder, whose piquancy is deter-

peppers, tomatoes, garlic and spices, and after twenty minutes of cooking, serve the *perkelt* with pasta.

A very popular dish as well is *čobanac* – a legendary shepherd's stew – the finest when prepared in a pot on the fire. The pot's bottom is lined with chopped onions mixed with fresh peppers and then the meat – sheep, lamb, beef or veal – is added to it cut into cubes. Add water and wine, plus tomatoes, cook until the meat is tender, then add a little bit of cream and some more wine depending on the specific taste and finally add dumplings.

Slavonian cuisine is unthinkable without sweets. The typical cakes such as *salenjaci* – a dough with added minced bacon, folded several times and stuffed with nuts or jam, baked in the oven or *gužvara* – a dough filled with walnuts or poppy seeds,

baked in the oven, are just a few of the ancient recipes for making sweet delicacies.

Walnut cake, poppy cake, various kinds of festive and cream cakes, gingerbread, bear paws (biscuits shaped like bear paws), vanilla cookies and peach cookies are just part of the Slavonian dessert menu, especially sumptuous when prepared for and served at special occasions / celebrations such as births, christenings, engagements, weddings, harvest work, pig slaughter ...

Slavonian oak forests are the ideal environment for forest fruits. Most picked are various kinds of mushrooms, which are most common on the menu in their harvest season.

Just as the home of Malvasia is Istria, so Slavonia became homeland to *Graševina* (Riesling, although this is one of the domesticated varieties). From the wine-growing areas around Kutjevo and Ilok, but also from the vineyards of Belje, come some of the best Croatian continental wines, *Riesling and Chardonnay* and in recent times also red wines of a very high quality: *merlot, pinot noir*, etc. Kutjevo's and Ilok's cellars with a long tradition of wine production are the oldest ones in Croatia. The best Slavonian wine producers have opened their cellars to visitors, so the wine tasting rooms are an important part of tourism in the Slavonian wine routes.

Agritourism in Slavonia, as in many other Croatian regions, is rapidly developing and the advantage of this type of tourism is an abundance of gourmets attracting visitors who appreciate the autonomous kitchen.

By temperament, Slavonians are jolly fellows and their joyful mood is accompanied often with the inevitable *tamburaška* music (Croatian *tamburitza* /tam•bu•rit•za/ is a folk song played with a tambura – cousin of the Russian balalaika and the Italian mandolin) that accompanies each party. The mood is further enhanced with fine and imaginative cuisine and wines. The well-known Slavonian *bećari* and *snaše* (local men and women) hospitality will turn each visit to this region into a hedonistic unforgettable trip.

From the many popular restaurants that offer authentic Slavonian cuisine, one should definitely visit the *Baranjska Kuća* in Karanac, *Kovač Čarda* in Suza, Restaurant *Zdjelarević* in Brodski Stupnik and the restaurant at the Hotel Osijek in Osijek.

And after enjoying Slavonian cuisine, not only for the purpose of spending excess calories, it is recommended to visit the famous *Kopački rit*, a unique natural phenomenon in the world, where it will also be possible to try some of fine Slavonian dishes.



■ The area of exceptional gastronomic luxury comes from optimum climate conditions that suit the plant world. The number of crops which cannot grow here is almost negligible.

Rivers, swamps and forests teem with wildlife and Slavonia prides itself on its excellent venison.

Game and venison dishes are deeply rooted in the diet of the region. The meat of wild fowl, deer, boar, rabbit was always used here for food. The meat of wild animals is rich in minerals, especially iron (Fe), which is one of the reasons for a lower occurrence of anemia in the population that consumes these high-quality foods. In Slavonia full meals normally consist of a sequence of several dishes, and the portions are much larger than in other regions. Spices are favourite ingredients of any meal and are intense – so the red paprika that gives colour and flavour to stews and fish paprikas as well as to the unique *kulen* – mark the regional cuisine.

groceries

Pheasant
Carp
Oyster mushrooms
Venison
Freshwater fish rolls

dishes

Pheasant soup
Venison steak
Fish
Carp
Pheasant pâté

Wines

■ This is the largest tourist region, as well as wine-growing area – the largest area of vineyards with the largest production and export of wine. Slavonia is a leader in many fields, but, it should be stressed that the best white wines of the Croatian mainland come from here. The region stretches from Virovitica and Daruvar in the west to the Danube, encompassing the eastern Croatian borders, including the finest and most diverse locations, where grapes are traditionally grown and many residents depend on it. According to vineyard legislation this region comprises of two sub-regions (Slavonia and Danube); thirteen vineyards in total and here the largest wine producers are located. In addition to the few large, most of the smaller manufacturers originate from family farms, but compared to other Croatian regions, Slavonia records the largest vineyards by manufacturer. Modern technology is applied, superior varieties are planted, so the wines are of high quality – Slavonian wines regularly receive awards and recognitions at national and international competitions.

The tradition of wine growing in Slavonia goes back to the third century when the Romans planted grapes on the slopes of Fruška Gora, and then it spread throughout the region. From then until today, there are many records about the quality of wine and the importance of its production for the wider economy – the vine has become one of the most important agricultural crops in Slavonia.

Vineyards and production conditions

Slavonia occupies a very large and diverse mountainous area bounded by the rivers Drava, Sava and Danube. The majority of vineyards are situated on the gentle and spacious slopes of the mountains Dilj, Psunj, Požeška Gora Papuk, Krndija and Fruška Gora and on the hills above the rivers, where large water surfaces create a very favourable microclimate for the production of quality grapes. Between individual vineyards there are large differences in environmental conditions and going towards the east on the mountain the climatic features become typically Pannonian. But these differences are manifested in a variety of wines, and Slavonia is the Croatian leader at that too.

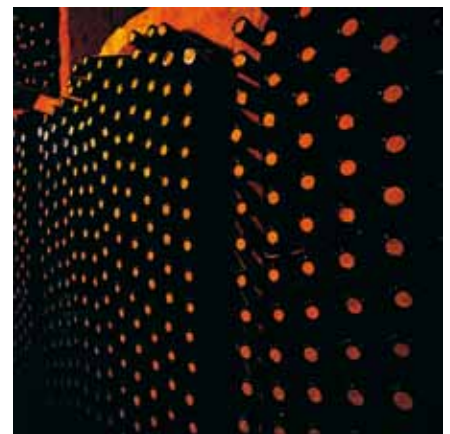
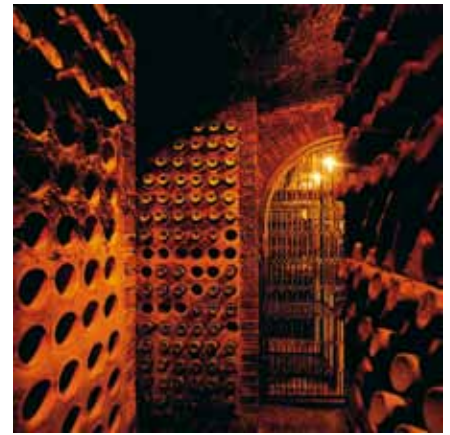
The main production is located around the cities Kutjevo, Đakovo, Ilok, Erdut, Daruvar and Slavonski Brod. The vineyards are located on higher ground, usually 150-350 m above sea level and at the far east, near the Danube, the grapes are even planted un-

der 100 meters. The climate is continental, moving from west to east temperatures rise and rainfall decreases. Thus, in the west region the average annual temperature is 10.5 °C and rainfall is about 900 mm, while in the Danube region temperatures are around 11 °C and rainfall is 650-700 mm. But because of a favourable annual distribution drought is rare. The soil is very diverse, from the Danube's and Podravina's type of sandy to brown calcareous soil and red soil, but they are all suitable for growing grapes.

Generally speaking, Slavonia is also in terms of natural conditions well suited for producing quality wines. As in other continental vineyards here too white wine predominates while more heat and sunshine and less rainfall in the region of Slavonia is reflected in their characteristics – they are usually full, medium to high calorie wines, with a very nice fruity aroma. In recent years, especially from the Danube locations we get the great red wines. This is a result of technological changes, planting of better varieties and according to some, global climate changes as well. But, without going into the reasons behind this, the fact is that this area offers a lot of excellent wines in all categories and justifiably deserves the title of best Croatian region.

Varieties and their wines, and the most important manufacturers

Riesling, the variety known in neighbouring countries under the names *Riesling Italico*, *Welschriesling* or *Laški Riesling* is not a Croatian variety, but it certainly achieves the best quality here. It is the most important and most widespread variety in Croatia





in general, but the best wines of this variety come from Slavonia. It certainly grows in some Slavonian and Danube locations under ideal conditions, so we can responsibly say that some Croatian Graševina is among the best varieties of wines in the world. Fullness, freshness and a well-developed aroma are characteristics of the Slavonian Riesling; these wines are regular companions of the wine and gastronomic offer throughout the country. There are almost no producers in the region that do not have Graševina in their vineyards; it is usually the foundation wine in most of cellars. Apart from the regular wine harvest, Graševina also makes Prädikat wines (superior quality wines, from the German system of designation) and so Graševina has won many medals for Kutjevo original and icy harvests varieties. For the last 20 years, *Chardonnay* has been the most widespread variety in young vineyards. Slavonian wines of this variety are an excellent compromise between heavy and high in alcohol Chardonnay from the south and light, fresh and undefined varietal wines from the north.

Pinot (white, grey and red) is traditionally grown here; they give high quality wines from all wine regions of Slavonia. However, the most aromatic characteristics are reflected in the western region, which is understandable given the somewhat different climatic characteristics. However, *Sauvignon Blanc*, as a typical aromatic variety, gives excellent wines throughout the whole region, although there are obvious differences related to locations – towards the east part of the region floral aromas gradually turn into fruity ones, the body is fuller with a more intense flavour. *Traminac* is also found throughout Slavonia, but the best known come from the warmer parts of the region, Kutjevo, Đakovo, Erdut and Ilok. A very intense smell, fullness and a high alcohol percentage are common in the description of eastern Slavonian Traminac, which is perhaps not typical of most of its wines from other regions, but it is exactly those features that gave it the high reputation that it enjoys in Slavonia today. In addition, the *Graševina* is the most common variety used for production of Prädikat wines. *Riesling rajnski* has found excellent harvesting conditions in many Slavonian locations, it is grown throughout the area, but also more typical varietal wines can be found in the western and central parts of the region.

Rizvanac (*Müller Thurgau*) is weaker today than before, but in central Slavonia it can give very good results. In recent years, *Zelenac slatki* (*Rotgipfler*) is being produced in Slavonia again, this was an almost forgotten variety in Croatia. The first harvests justified the expectations, versatile and very good wines can be produced from this type; *Silvanac zeleni* is one more white wine that could be mentioned here and the red assort-

ment is led by *Frankovka*, the most common red grape variety in continental Croatia. The best wines are produced in prominent, warmer locations in Kutjevo, Feričanci and Danube. To a lesser extent we encounter *Zweigelt*, *Gamay*, and today all major areas are used to produce leading global wines such as *Merlot*, *Cabernet Sauvignon* and *Syrah* lately. Although these varieties have been known for a long time, and some traditionally gave good results (*Merlot*), the application of better technology in Slavonian vineyards and cellars has led to the production of the finest red wines and to winning prestigious continental awards. Among the red varieties *portugizac* should also be mentioned, which is grown here to a lesser extent than in the west, but certain years can give notable wines, which are also typically consumed while young.

The biggest Croatian producers of wine are located in Slavonia, they occupy large areas and produce substantial amounts of wine and they consist of a few medium and many small family wineries. The largest producer is *Agrokor Inc*, who at their wineries (Belje Cellars and Ilok Cellars) produce a large number of wines in all qualitative categories, but we can also say that these wines are excellent value for money. Some of them received awards in recent years and the gold medal was given for the *Merlot* from the wine cellar Belje, 2008 vintage. The gold medal was won at the prestigious competition at the recent Decanter World Wine Awards in London. *Graševina* wines from the same cellar are also among the best in Croatia and the famous dessert wines *Traminer* from Ilok are well known too. Kutjevo Inc. has a premium Croatian range on offer in recent years and besides its traditionally high quality Graševina, it offers to the market a large number of brands, wines from regular harvests and Prädikat wines. *Pinot Gris*, *Chardonnay*, *Pinot Noir*, *Sauvignon* and *Traminer* are just some of the varieties on offer.

Amongst the big manufacturers of wine that should also be mentioned is *Đakovo's Wines Inc.*, which produces a similar range of wines as the ones already listed, including Badel 1862 and their cellar in Daruvar, which produces highly sought Graševina and excellent Sauvignon Blanc. There are also *Feravino Inc.* from Feričanci (its *Graševina* was a champion in 2009 and they also produce a good traditional *Frankovka*), *Erdut Vineyards Inc.* (*Traminac*, *Riesling*), and agricultural enterprise *Orahovica Inc.* (the famous *Silvanac zeleni*). Besides these bigger manufacturers which occupy the largest areas and have the biggest production of wine in Slavonia and were created from formerly socially owned enterprises, nowadays there are also many medium-size wineries, comprising small family cellars. These are *Kutjevo winemakers*, *Krauthaker* (multiple award-winning wines,



traditionally good *Riesling* and *Chardonnay* and *Sauvignon Blanc* and a very interesting sweet *Zelenac* and *Enjingi* (one of the pioneers of private production, a standard good *Chardonnay* and *Riesling*, *Pinot Noir* and some excellent *Zweigelt* and *Venje* vintages, a great white *cuvée* of several varieties). Of the other manufacturers we should also mention the vineyards of the Kutjevo family *Adžić* (a very popular *Riesling*), *Galić* (a new producer, excellent *Chardonnay* and *Sauvi-*

gnon Blanc), *Mihalj* (also excellent *Riesling*), *Lukačević* (causing attention with its *Pinot Gris*), *Jakobović* (*Riesling*, *Rhine Riesling*). Among the medium winemakers we have *Zdjelarević* (Slavonski Brod Vineyards, one of the first privately owned winemakers), which along with a good range of wines (*Chardonnay* and *Riesling*) offers hotel services too. In recent years excellent wines are produced by prominent *Josić*, *Kalazić* and *Gerštmajer* from Baranja. The Slavonian

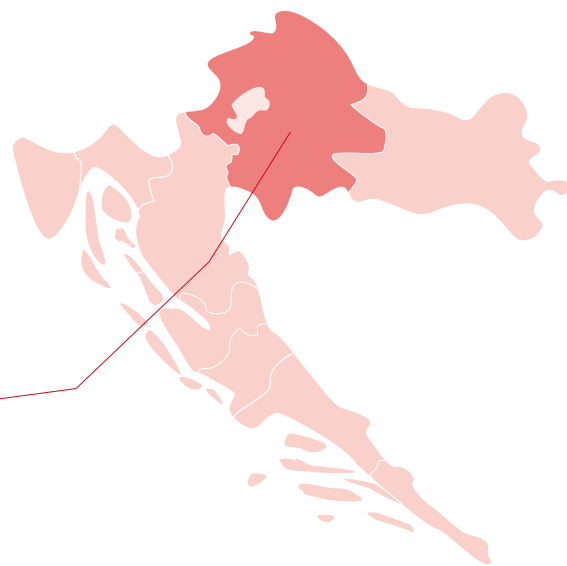
wine scene contains many more promising winemakers but it is impossible to mention them all here, but they are already attracting world attention and will certainly play a major role in the production and range of wines of this region in the future.

In addition to great wines, Slavonian winemakers including the smaller ones are in most cases focused on wine tourism as well and combine their wine with the beautiful landscape and gastronomy of the region.

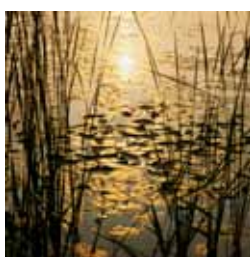


9 central
Croatia

Central Croatia
is the home
of cheese and
cream, and
famous dairy
products



9 **CENTRAL CROATIA** inherited the best from their close neighbours while preserving its native foods from oblivion and has given them contemporary features that have not jeopardized their original quality. That is why the gastronomy of Central Croatia is clearly positioned on the national culinary atlas.



Central Croatia's Cuisine is strongly influenced by Central European cuisine, mostly Hungarian, Austrian, Slovenian and Czech, but along with it – cultivating ancient folk recipes that accurately reflect the strengths and uniqueness of the area where they were born – manages to maintain its originality. From Zagreb, bypassing or passing Medvednica, we enter the Croatian Zagorje, a tame undulated region which is reminiscent of Italian Tuscany and which, by its configuration, already reflects its natural diversity that will show up strongly in the culinary details. And among these extraordinary gastronomic minutiae, a place of honour belongs to one extraordinary dish – turkey with dumplings (*mlinci*) – which most strongly defines the culinary identity of the Croatian Zagorje. Zagorje's turkey, the only Croatian indigenous breed, is hardly bigger than a chicken, lives naturally and feeds on natural food, grows slowly and weighs no more than three kilos and its meat quality differs greatly from those that are artificially reared and can reach twice the weight. Turkey roasted in the oven, if desired, with potatoes, is usually served with *mlinci* – dough rolled out until very thin, then baked on an electric hotplate or on an old-fashioned wood stove, then just immersed in boiling water, drained and poured over with grease from the turkey roast. Turkey with dumplings is usually served as a Christmas dinner, as well as during other holidays and festive occasions, and, as we know, in American gastronomy, turkey (without *mlinci*!) is a traditional meal served at Thanksgiving (Thanksgiving Day).

Did you know?

Varaždin's klipić, the Croatian version of a French croissant, is a short breadstick of a golden colour and wonderful taste, is usually served at breakfast, but also on many other occasions. It dates back to the 18th century and represents the first Croatian protected bread product.



This specialty of Zagorje has spread to other areas in Croatia, all the way to Dalmatia, where roast turkey reared in the hinterland, is also considered an excellent dish. Turkey is a part of a long tradition of poultry farming, not only in the Croatian Zagorje region, but throughout Central Croatia, especially in the Varaždin area and Međimurje. Domestically bred chicken, roosters or baby chickens which, in their quality, are essentially different from those artificially bred, are regularly on the menu in this Croatian region, both in households and in restaurants. Poultry is prepared in various ways, baked, fried, boiled, grilled and in *perkelt*. Organic eggs, in quality and colour, also vary considerably from eggs bought in supermarkets, and is very often baked in lard, commonly used in other cooking too. When it comes to poultry, ducks and geese are among the praised specialties, which gourmets claim are the best in Turo-

polje, which has plenty of water and has a long tradition of superior breeding and preparation.

In central parts of Croatia, especially in winter, a typical continental food is served, such as ham or pork leg with sauerkraut, beans with turnips, sauerkraut with smoked meat, black pudding with potatoes and sauerkraut, *sarma* (cabbage rolls stuffed with meat), pasta with cabbage or spinach, beans with cabbage etc. Cabbage, fresh and pickled, is strongly represented in the gastronomy of the area and the most appreciated comes from the Varaždin region. Beans and potatoes, prepared in many ways, are also very often on the menus of local residents and an extremely healthy pumpkin seed oil is used in salads. Pumpkin, often scorned, in recent times has experienced a real renaissance and is served in the most prestigious restaurants as a creamy soup or baked as a side dish.



**Turkey with dumplings
(*mlinci*) most strongly
defines the culinary identity
of the Croatian Zagorje**



What lamb is for Dalmatian gastronomy – pork is for the continental area. Pork grilled or roasted in the oven with potatoes is considered the biggest speciality. Crispy skin off succulent meat is for many an unsurpassed meat dish and the most appropriate dish for the climatic conditions in which it is served. Because of its juiciness, pork meat is suitable for barbecues and most often used are chops, neck and so called *lungić* or pork fillet. Pork *kare* is separated from bones and prepared in a special way: it is firstly marinated in oil and spices for two days, then roasted in one piece, the fat poured over it and finally stored in an earthen vessel and

thus is suitable for consumption for a longer period of time. Along with the traditional cuisine, restaurants such *Vuglec Breg* near Krapina, *Kezele* near Čazma, *Zlatne gorice* and *Zlatna guska* (Varaždin), *Mala biža* near Čakovec and many others, today offer menus which include more sophisticated versions of traditional cuisine based on local ingredients. Although, it is difficult to locate the original area whence the famous cheese and cream arrived in the local gastronomy, it is pretty certain that these milk products are, in many ways, unique in Europe. Croatian Zagorje is, certainly, at least one of homes of these

delicacies, whose consumption is widely spread across the entire central Croatia and also in Slavonia, Lika and other regions. Home-cooked ham with onions, cheese and sour cream, sprinkled with paprika according to taste, together with homemade corn bread, locally called *kuruznjak*, is one of the biggest specialities of the continental cuisine and which is, with great pleasure and admiration, accepted by foreign visitors too.

■ The change of seasons in Central Croatia is reflected on the gastronomic map of that area. The harmonisation of the traditional menu with the rhythm of nature shows all the splendour of crops and animal products that were used with great wisdom throughout all four seasons. Food was successfully stored also in times when the resources of modern gastronomy were not available.

Before we had refrigerators, pork meat was kept by first dipping it into fat and then stored in cold storage. For centuries due to low winter temperatures fruit and vegetables were processed and preserved in acid. Pickled peppers, pickled beets and sauerkraut are sources of valuable vitamins of high bio availability and natural probiotics, much needed during the long winter months.

Goose meat and dairy products ensure gastronomic variety to the region, but also exceptional nutritional versatility, one of the basic components of nutritional balance.

Central Croatia is a culinary crossroads of the region and it could be said that all the cuisines of Europe have crossed here. The movement of people and goods has left its mark and because of exceptional weather conditions in the region, there are hundreds of plant and animal species that form a part of this sumptuous cuisine.

During your travels in the summer, seasonal fruit and vegetables await you. You can taste some old varieties of apples.

groceries

Oats

Cheese, cream and butter

Pickled peppers stuffed with cabbage

beet

Trout, perch

Meat from *Iodrice* (meat stored in fat)

Goose meat and its products

Black pudding

dishes

Sauerkraut with baked black pudding

Pork chop in its own sauce

Trout in corn meal

Hearty goose soup with vegetables

Cherry strudel

■ The tourist region of Central Croatia includes four wine-growing areas, the subregions *Zagorje – Međimurje*, *Pokuplje*, *Moslavina* and most of the subregion *Prigorje – Bilogora*. This is a typical continental wine growing area and thus here we find wines with these properties – mostly white, with accentuated freshness and fruitiness. Grapevines have been traditionally grown here since the Roman Empire and throughout history represent important agricultural crops. In recent years, viticulture has developed intensively in this area, a large number of small family wineries were formed, particularly in areas where tourism developed – there are more and more winemakers who offer wine in a tourism related context. New varieties and technologies are being introduced, the number of wines on offer increases, so this area is rightly becoming one of the most important areas in Croatia.

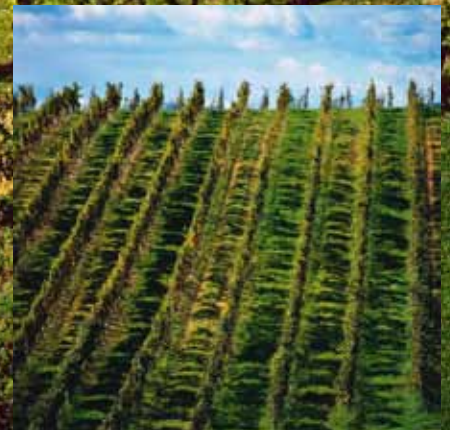
Vineyards and production conditions

Vineyards of Central Croatia are situated on higher grounds and these are the slopes of the mountains (*Kalnik*, *Ivančica*, *Bilogora*, *Moslavačka gora*) or low mountains, which, especially on their southern slopes, have excellent conditions for producing high quality grapes. Vineyards can be found even above 400 m altitude, in some cases on very steep, but predominantly gentle and slightly inclined hills. The whole area is dominated by a continental climate, with warm, not too dry, summers and slightly keener winters. The lowest average annual temperature is recorded in the northernmost part, in Međimurje (10 °C, Čakovec), and gradually increases towards the south and east (11 °C, Sisak). Drought does not commonly occur in this area, due to good rainfall distribution throughout the year, although the annual amount of rainfall is not too high (800-900 mm). The soil is varied and usually of a lighter composition in vineyards. Most vineyards are located in Zagorje and Međimurje; this is a terrain of undulating relief, scattered across the gentle hills of Zagorje and Međimurje. This is the area of white wines, where most of the continental varieties give fresh and light wines, with very beautiful floral and fruit aromas. Similar landscape can be found in *Pokuplje*, where vines are now just returning to former positions, and to the east, on the slopes of *Bilogora* and *Moslavačka Gora*, there are more crops with new, modern vineyards developing.

Varieties and their wines, and the most important manufacturers

Conditions of production, especially climatic, have influenced the development of typical continental varieties. These are the varieties similar to those in the neighbouring countries (Slovenia, Austria, Hungary and northern Italy) which have existed in this region for the past hundred years. There are several valuable indigenous varieties, but, in general, we can say that the Central Croatia region is very rich in varieties, so the range on the market is very versatile. The most important variety is *Riesling*, usually the basic wine of almost all manufacturers. Although its grapes ripen later and it grows only in the best locations, due to many positive characteristics many manufacturers produce it. Its wines are usually fresh, medium strong, of a discrete aroma, and from these varieties, all categories of wine are produced. The varieties of *Pinot* group (white/blanc, grey/gris and red/ noir) have been grown in the local vineyards for a long time and because they mature early, they are very suitable to grow in almost all locations. *Pinot Gris (Ruländer)* have been among the most sought after wines for a long time, a white which has always been one of the most prized varieties and *Pinot Noir* is, without a doubt, the best choice for red wines of many manufacturers in this region.

In addition to high quality red wines, the production of sparkling wines is common. For sparkling wines, of which there are some of a very good quality in this area, – *Chardonnay* is a very widespread variety often used in recent years, as indeed everywhere in the world. But *Chardonnay* wines that grow under these climatic conditions are somewhat different from the heavy varieties in other parts of Croatia. Their main characteristic is freshness, fruitiness and elegant fullness, with a discreet developed varietal flavour – such wines are often produced in Međimurje and Croatian Zagorje. *Riesling* is also found in many vineyards, as well as *Sauvignon Blanc* and *Traminac (Gewürztraminer)*, the variety of high aromatic potential is best expressed in such production conditions. These world famous varieties with great characteristics suppressed the indigenous varieties, of which only a handful are of economic importance. These are the *Moslavac*, also known as *Furmint* and *Šipon* – a variety which for years was used for the production of table, common and inexpensive wines, but lately in Međimurje great attention is paid to it. In addition to special regulations regarding wine production, the local manufacturers have founded an association and under the name



of the local market – *Pušipel* – they place some excellent wines on the market.

In Moslavina and Pokuplje, we find another, less widespread, but excellent variety of great qualitative potential – *Škrlet*. It is a very sought after wine because of its attractive characteristics – discreet scent, light but balanced flavors. In recent years, this sort has become the subject of numerous professional activities and research which have local support, because the wine *Škrlet* has become the trademark of many local manufacturers. There are several other less abundant white local and foreign varieties whose wines can be found on the market, but lately also more and more blends that attract attention. Besides the aforementioned *Pinot noir*, red wines are made mostly of *Frankovka*, which gives only looked-for characteristics for just a few manufacturers and more recently *Merlot*,

Cabernet Sauvignon, *Syrah*, etc., but in this area, they are of a high quality only and in a few locations.

There are many manufacturers in this region, most of them small family farms which started production for a wider market ten or so years ago. Most of them are in the northwest region, to mention only few – in Međimurje: *Agromedimurje Inc.* (produces good and cheap wine), *Bobnjar* (excellent Sauvignon), *Lovrec* (large selection of quality wines), *Cmrečnjak* (Rhine Riesling, Pušipel) *Dvanajščak -Kozol* (Pušipel) *Štampar* (yellow Muscat), *Jakopić* (Sauvignon Blanc), etc., then in the Croatian Zagorje and Prigorje – Bilogora: *Bodren Ltd.* (expensive but excellent Prädicate wines, four gold medals from last year's Decanter World Wine Award), *Šafran* (Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling), *Winery Vinski Vrh* (Riesling, Pinot Noir), *Petrovečki*

(many labels), *Badel 1862* (Križevo vineyards Ltd. – known for Riesling in the category of less expensive wines produced en masse), *Matočec* (excellent Pinot Gris from Podravina sands), etc. Pokuplje is represented with only a few manufacturers, many of them located in Moslavina. Most of them produce wines from the standard, aforementioned varieties, however more and more of them are increasingly turning to production of the indigenous *Škrlet* (*Miklaužić*, *Florijanović*, *Mikša*, *Jaram*, *Trdenić* ...).

It is worth noting that many family producers from this region are modern pioneers of wine tourism in Croatia – but besides wines they offer other products and services such as accommodation and food, combining in the best way all the virtues of the production of quality wines, a beautiful environment and good traditional cuisine.



*Zagreb cuisine
inherited the best
from Croatian
regional cuisines*

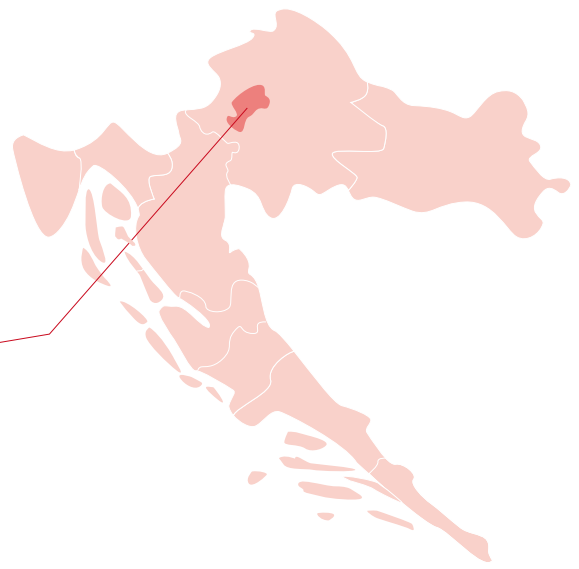
10

zagreb



Did you know?

In Zagreb, there are some of the best Croatian restaurants catering for different genres, for different budgets, with an offer that could satisfy the most demanding customers of any European capital.



10 ZAGREB AND ITS SURROUNDINGS nurture an enviable gastro culture with one important feature: it is a bourgeois cuisine, in many ways different than the rural, which shows the art of food preparation in all its glory. Thus it is not the most important whether a dish originates from Zagreb, but the way it is prepared and enriched with culinary finesse.



When you look down upon Zagreb Dolac market, one of the most panoramic views of Zagreb, built in the 1930's to free the central city square of stalls that had been previously located there to sell food products, it is immediately clear that *Zagreb's paunch* is a sumptuous and magnificent exhibition of the best Croatia has to offer. All Croatian regions pour their best exhibits into Dolac, thus capturing the national gastronomic richness and high levels of gastro culture in their region. Dolac market is a 'must visit' for all tourists, many of whom no longer have the opportunity to enjoy such a luxurious presentation of food in the open in their own country, accompanied by the folk elements that indicate the regional origin of foods and their uniqueness.

All Croatian regions are represented at Dolac, from those who gravitate to the city as a vast market for the demanding consumer, to those further away, for whom distance is no obstacle as they are proud to offer their products in this cult place.

A dairy department, a modernly equipped fish selling area, the part above-ground which looks like a vast tapestry of fruit and vegetables and the part inside the building on the ground floor with butchers and other food stores, offer consumers a choice of their favorite food and many housewives specifically decide their daily menu on the spot at Dolac inspired by the daily selection of foods.

Besides Dolac, there are other markets in the city centre which offer the richest variety of food, but each quarter of Zagreb also has its own neighbourhood market. Although large shopping centres completely



changed the system of supply and consumption of food, the food market, as a key concept of tradition and gastro culture in this area, survived this modern battle and retained its essential characteristics.

Just a brief glance at the Dolac and other markets convince us that the Zagreb area cultivates great gastro culture, interspersed with many regional influences, but with one important feature: it is a bourgeois cuisine, in many ways different than the rural, which comes to show the art of food preparation in all its glory. Thus it is not the most important whether a dish originates from Zagreb, but the way it is prepared and enriched with culinary finesses.

Zagreb's cuisine inherited the best of regional cuisines, so on Zagreb's table, one will find excellent Mediterranean specialties

as well as delicacies from Slavonia, select Zagorje meals and menus of neighbouring countries.

Sunday lunch could serve as a good overview of Zagreb's cuisine. Beef or veal soup with homemade noodles, followed by veal or pork roast with potatoes, green salad, lamb's lettuce or arugula, and for dessert apple strudel or strudel made from some other fruit, could be considered typical, almost a conventional family Sunday lunch, but equally other combinations are as common as well.

After *ajngemahtes* – aromatic soup with chicken liver dumplings – usually is followed by fried chicken with mashed potatoes, lettuce, or beetroot. Dessert might be pancakes or *šnenokle*, *kremšnite* – a cream cake bought in Samobor, home of these native sweets; or poppy cake, walnut cake or some



Dolac was built in 1930 to move the food stands from the city's central square, it is Zagreb's paunch and the most beautiful market in Croatia.



other sweet delights. Those who prefer lighter meals will go for a Mediterranean menu, for example, fresh fish purchased early in the morning from one of Zagreb's well-stocked fish markets, which can be prepared in the oven, *na gradele* (on a special grill) if the host owns one, or boiled. The fish is usually served with chard and potatoes seasoned with olive oil. For an appetizer fish soup and octopus salad can be served, and for the dessert *fritters*, which were already very well-known in continental cuisine or *rožata* for those families brave enough to try to prepare this Dubrovnik specialty. If, for any reason, the prospect of fish was not satisfactory, the Mediterranean alternative is always available – cooked meat with vegetables, tomato salsa or horseradish mixed with grated apple.

The fascination with young lamb is not just a Southern tradition, it is equally eaten with enthusiasm inland too, and it is considered an highly esteemed and favourite food in Zagreb's gastronomy too.

Zagreb's cuisine comes with the usual range of demanding, expensive and pretentious menus to traditional local dishes such as stuffed peppers with mashed potatoes, stews from cabbage, leeks and other vegetables, *sarma*, pork-tripe, pasta with cabbage, chopped steak known as *polpete* or *faširanci*, beans with sausages and smoked meat, *ričet* (vegetarian stew based on beans and barley), beans with turnips, *ajnpren*-soup (egg soup), wine stew, etc.

Some of the best Croatian restaurants are situated in Zagreb; they are of various culinary genres and different price categories, such as the luxurious *Zinfandel* in the Hotel Esplanade, restaurant *Dubravkin Put*, appreciated *Mano* in the authentic surroundings of Gliptoteka, *Apetit* (in two locations) with an imaginative menu and expertly selected range of wines, legendary *Okrugljak* with a great menu closest to the concept of Zagreb's cuisine, which, with its outdoor terrace, the murmur of the brook and the sound of an old spinning mill, evokes the spirit of old Zagreb and offers visitors an extraordinary experience, not just a culinary one.

Among the esteemed and popular Zagreb restaurants there are also: *Balthazar* with its meat and fish delicacies, *Vinodol* located in the city centre, *Balon* in an area where this restaurant is very much needed, lovely *Prasac* in Gornji grad (the Upper Town), *Gallo* in a renovated Art Nouveau palace in Donji grad (Lower Town), *Gračanka Kamanjo* a popular restaurant of the same name as its chef, a nice *Triologija kod Kamenitih vrata*, *Carpaccio* in Tesla St, *Lari i penati* in Petrinjska St, *Laščinska klet*, *Kod Pere* on Šalata and *Purger* in Petrinjska St offering classic Zagreb and home-style dishes and local cuisine, and many other restaurants that meet high hospitality criteria. Eastern cuisine is strongly represented in Zagreb's cuisine:



health

■ Zagreb is a world metropolis where you can taste specialties of domestic and international gastronomy. Due to transport links and a favorable climate, nutritional raw materials come to Zagreb's marketplace from across the region, but the typical range from the immediate surroundings of the town is strongly present as well.

Zagreb is the ideal location, so that within a few hours, fish from Adriatic fishing nets arrive at the fish market, fish from nearby rivers and fungi which are abundant around the hillsides of Zagreb. Slavonia and Baranja areas provide a variety of grains and products based on wheat, corn, buckwheat ...

The markets are full of top quality fresh foods because Zagreb is the place where all meals are prepared with the freshest ingredients. Quality assurance guarantees the pleasure of food, but also a good balanced diet.

A large number of restaurants with international cuisine meet the most complex culinary desires and it is very unlikely that a specific course in Zagreb cannot be found. Zagreb is a city in which dishes are prepared with olive, pumpkin seed oil, apple cider vinegar and wine and meet high nutritional requirements, but also you will find dishes prepared in good old lard, goose fat and spiced with red paprika.

The specifics of Zagreb's cuisine are also: extravagant menus where they include caviar, Istrian truffles, lobster dishes, simplicity and accessibility, which feature buckwheat, corn ground at the mill, pumpkin, sauerkraut, nuts, apples and strawberries ...; country-folk regularly offer on the markets products that are part of the diet of them and their families - cottage cheese with homemade cream, eggs from hens that live outdoors, cured meat products prepared in the traditional way.

groceries

- Mushrooms
- Pumpkin
- Strawberries
- Hazelnuts
- Buckwheat

dishes

- Pumpkin
- Smoked trout
- Kotlovina* (meat, veggies and sausages cooked in a cauldron in the open)
- Corn bread
- Soup with mushrooms

grilled dishes such as kebabs, burgers and other meats are very popular and are part of a regular offering in many restaurants.

In Zagreb's surrounding areas, there are several attractive restaurants with a typical range of continental dishes, some of which are *Zeleni papar*, *Gabrek*, *Špilja and Slavagora* in Samobor and restaurant *Špiček* in Zaprešić with exceptionally creative cuisine based on traditional foods.

Zagreb is the Croatian gastronomic capital which has recognised all the qualities of regional cuisines and put them in its offer, in a wide range from the highly sophisticated bourgeois cuisine to the charming folk ones which have kept rural authenticity. Open to a wide range of culinary achievements, from central European to Eastern, Zagreb can be regarded as an important stop on a gastronomic journey through Europe.



Wines

■ The area around the capital city of Zagreb abounds in excellent locations suitable for the production of quality wines. The slopes of the mountain Medvednica offer good conditions for the vineyards and the town itself, where the grapes traditionally grow (until the advent of phylloxera, vineyards were located in the very centre of town, on Kaptol and above the main square!). Even today there are vineyards on the edge of the city, but the eastern slopes of Medvednica (the city of Saint Ivan Zelina) and the slopes of Plešivica on the south enable the residents of the Croatian capital and their guests to enjoy superb wine.

At only thirty kilometers from the bustling city modern vineyards are planted with varieties known to the world, modern technology is applied, so the area is still highly prized for the quality, especially of white wines. In order to popularise these industries the wine roads opened and Plešivička and Zelinska roads opened in 2001, and since 2009 the Wine Road of Zagreb City. So, to all visitors, in addition to beautiful scenery, Zagreb offers excellent gastronomic delights – lots of traditional dishes and high quality wines. In recent times, the city authorities have organised special wine events, the celebration of *Martinje* (St. Martin's, the holiday when

traditionally grapes turn into wine) to taste and occasionally sell county brands – wines made from traditional varieties, *portugisac* and *kraljevina*.

The conditions for growing grapes and producing wine

The City of Zagreb is situated on the eastern and southern slopes of Medvednica, its gentle slopes offer a favourable configuration for growing vines. The slopes of Plešivica, with its famous Roman amphitheatre has been immersed in this wine culture for centuries, as well as Zelina area which traditionally focused on the production of grapes and wine. That is the result of excellent natural conditions, with sunny, warm and airy elevated vineyard locations, a sloping and south-facing terrain. According to Croatian legislation the wine vineyard area belongs to two subregions Plešivica and Prigorje – Bilogora, temperatures are around 11 °C on annual average. The soil is of a diverse composition: in vineyards it is lighter and permeable, and rainfall is regular – amounts ranging from 850-1000 mm per year with very a favourable schedule throughout the year. These conditions are very suitable for obtaining high quality and excellent white wine, and traditionally the most cultivated is the white variety. In recent decades, almost all the known varieties of the world were introduced and some indigenous types are being revitalised, so the region now offers many labels of mostly varietal wines.





This region has a relatively large number of manufacturers in small areas, but in recent years, several family wineries have enlarged into medium size, with the associated amounts of wine for the Croatian market.

Varieties and their wines and the most important manufacturers

In the last hundred years in the majority of the Croatian mainland, including the Zagreb area, the dominant variety is Riesling, the variety originating from Western Europe, but, in this region, it has been domesticated and very well accepted. It is a multipurpose variety; it generally gives good quality table wines from the regular harvest, but often yields Prädikat wines of the highest quality too. Its wines are fresh, aromatically discreet, of a moderate fullness and strength, a basic wine of the large number of manufacturers.

Lately Chardonnay has assumed dominance in the younger vineyards; in these production conditions it is rich and full, often wine with a high percentage of alcohol, of medium intensity and with a floral-fruity nose. It manifests many varietal qualities here, and although they are usually strong character wines, climatic conditions make it special and quite different from most wines of this variety, especially in warmer areas. Riesling has had its own place in Zagreb for a long time, so it is often found in the local vineyards. Undoubtedly, many manufacturers have nurtured the high quality features, and these have a very nice nose, noticeable freshness and full flavour, often accompanied by residual sugar. Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris are common in the local vineyards, due to earlier ripening these varieties are very suitable. The freshness and a very nice aroma usually adorn these wines, which usually are marketed as dry, medium strength, but of noticeable fullness.

Silvanac and Sauvignon Blanc varieties are also widespread in recent years and are highly sought after wines, primarily due to a very nice floral and fruity aroma, and from Traminer, traditionally, excellent dessert wines are produced. Late and selected harvests, often ice wines, are mostly obtained by vinification of overripe grapes of this variety, and these are wines of exceptional characteristics – highly aromatic (intense aromas of honey, overripe and dry fruits), and usually with more residual sugar. Less common red varieties are led by the world-famous Pinot Noir, but attention should be paid to Portugizac, a red variety, which has long been cultivated in the Zagreb area and whose wines usually come on the mar-

ket very young. Many are inclined to call it Croatian Gamay Beaujolais, modeled on the French wine regularly offered on the market in November, in the same year of harvest. Young Portugizac has excellent characteristics as a young wine, bringing together a growing circle of admirers, and in November, Portugizac days are also organised, when the wines of this variety are presented. In this way, the city authorities are trying to encourage young people to enjoy the culture of wine as in neighbouring countries, supporting its planting and the protection of its wines as a county brand. Zagreb County in recent years prompted the protection of another brand, *Kraljevina wines*, indigenous varieties of this area. Often it is a basic wine of Zelina, very fresh, light and easy to drink, a favourite with local residents as a daily beverage. Major manufacturers are Jarec family, Jarec-Kure, Puhelek, Puhelek-Purek, Kos, Kos-Jurišić etc. In the vineyards of Zagreb and its surroundings some other indigenous varieties can be found, such as Plavec žuti, Šipelj, Ranfol etc., but they are rarely produced separately.

Larger manufacturers are Badel 1862 (Kurija Nespeš, and they produce Riesling Rajnski, Chardonnay, Traminac and Sauvignon Blanc), Mladina Inc. (a number of wines, best known for their Riesling and Muscat Ottonel) and Božjakovina Inc. (wines under the brand name of sv Jakob – Pinot Gris, Traminac, Riesling). Other vine growers produce wine mainly on family farms, of which some are more successful and have now grown into small wineries. Most of them are located in the area of Plešivice and among the important and sought-after, award-winning wines, the Tomac family should be noted (excellent Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, a few sparkling wines and in recent years as a rarity – wine from amphora) and Korak Family (Chardonnay, Portugizac). There are also Ledić wines (Portugizac, Pinot Noir and Traminac) and several family cellars – Agro Režek (Portugizac, Rizvanac), Zdravko Režek (Silvanac zeleni), Kunović (Rhine Riesling, Chardonnay). In St. Ivan's Zelina most manufacturers are also small family farms, and apart from the Kraljevina, the ones to be noted are Riesling (Kos-Jurišić), Sauvignon (Puhelek-Purek) and Pinot Blanc (Stjepan Jarec). Very near to the centre of Zagreb, wines are produced also by the University of Agriculture in Zagreb, offering to the market Chardonnay and Traminac (Zlatarevo zlato /Goldsmith's Gold) Riesling (Dora Krupićeva) and some other wines from grapes grown in the Jazbina college grounds.





about wine



Croatia – a small country for great wines

Edi Maletić ■

Although Croatia is a small country, it offers many interesting things to its guests. Among other things, it is interesting for its wine, which has been produced here since the beginning of vine cultivation in Europe. In addition to a long tradition of wine production in Croatia, one can still find a large number of indigenous grape varieties, many of which are of specific characteristics and superior potential. If we take into account the facts that the area for growing grapes is very diverse, that in this small area four of the five climatic zones can be found, that there are many variations in relief and soil composition, the conclusion is that Croatia has many kinds of wines of different and often original in their characteristics, in short – wine for every taste.

Croatian viticulture and oenology in the past

There is evidence that the noble grape – *Vitis vinifera* was cultivated in this area from a few centuries before Christ, when it was, according to numerous sources, brought to the coastal areas by prehistoric traders and colonizers of the Mediterranean, the Phoenicians and Greeks. A special credit for starting wine growing and for the introduction of initial wine varieties goes to the Greeks, who reached the eastern Adriatic coast and settled permanently at prominent points. They established settlements of the city-state (*polis*) type, the most famous of those are Korkyra – Korčula, Issa – Vis, Pharos – Hvar, Tragurion – Trogir and Epidaurus – Cavtat. Grapes arrived on the continent later with the expansion of the Roman Empire spreading from south to north. The Romans spread and developed wine growing and grapes arrived in all areas where climatic conditions allowed its cultivation. This activity runs throughout the long history of ups and downs, and in the late 19th century wine growing reached its peak. The official statistics of that time recorded the largest area under vine, after which, unfortunately, it never reached that record area. The reason for that was the emergence of new diseases and phylloxera, which led to the deterioration of many vineyards and since wine production was a very important industry, this was reflected in major demographic changes. Croatia is a country with a long tradition of wine growing and wine production, but also the homeland of many grape varieties. A lar-

ge number of varieties exist here since the beginning of cultivation, and the reasons for this were many. Geographical position, turbulent history and links with other nations and cultures have enabled our country to be introduced to many foreign varieties, but it is certain that a large number of the varieties originate from here too. This is further confirmed by the latest results of genetic research which agree that this area is an important centre in the development of genetic varieties, whence a number of Croatian, but also some world varieties originate. Consequently in the pre-phylloxera era, when the wine was at its peak Croatia was growing more than 400 varieties, but in the reconstruction of vineyards many varieties disappeared. However, the latest results from Croatian vineyard inventory and genetic identification of varieties in cultivation show that about 130 varieties can still be found that can be regarded as indigenous. Many of them have very high oenological potential, so in recent years a number of rehabilitation programmes have been implemented and some varieties have already become economically important.

Croatia today

Viticulture and wine production are still very important economic activities in Croatia. According to some indicators a large number of residents directly or indirectly are connected with this production, and the potential is much larger than the current situation. The total area of vineyards in Croatia, according to official statistics, is about 33,000 hectares and wine-growing areas are divided into two regions (continental and coastal Croatia), 12 sub-regions and 66 vineyards. Within these, many locations stand out with especially good ecological conditions where they produce famous wines. The composition of vineyards shows that the majority of vineyards are small (less than a hectare – more than 80% come under this category) with small producers predominating. Many of those produce wine only for their own use, but there is also a remarkable number of market producers – more than 700 wineries produce around 2000 wines with a protected geographical origin. But there are only twenty of those whose production exceeds 3000 hl/year and who belong to the category of big wine producers. The production of white wines is predominant (70%), fol-

lowed by production of reds (29%) and rosé (only 1%).

Today, Croatia grows many varieties of grape vines – the official variety list shows that there are two hundred of them. Besides the large number of indigenous sorts almost all major international varieties were introduced, many of which show excellent results. For example, *Riesling* (*Riesling Italico*, *Welschriesling*) exhibits high quality in all categories, according to many wine critics in Croatia (Slavonia and Danube regions) it reflects the maximum qualitative potential. Today that is Croatia's most important variety (about 25% of cultivars), and it can be found in all wine regions the continental regions. Beside it, *Istrian Malvasia* and *Plavac Mali* are indigenous Croatian aces – leading varieties in their areas (Istria and Dalmatia), and an unavoidable subject when talking about Croatian wines. Their potential is very high, and as a result of technological progress in recent years wines of these varieties that attract attention and consumer demand are produced. Along with Riesling they occupy almost half of Croatian vineyards and form the largest part of the wine offer. It is also necessary to mention other wines – Chardonnay, Pinot, Sauvignon, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and *Rajna's Riesling* – varieties of the world, as well as *Pošip*, *Teran*, *Žlahtina*, *Zinfandel* and *Dubrovnik's Malvasia* of the indigenous varieties that greatly enrich the Croatian wine scene and without which any discussion about Croatian wines is inconceivable. Despite poor recognition on the world wine map, which is the result of small quantities of wine production and the lack of recognizable wine brands, Croatia is, thanks to many natural benefits, an interesting wine country. Very diverse environmental conditions, a large number of indigenous varieties and in recent years – development of high technology vinification – create conditions for the production of high quality, and by its nature, original wines. In addition, you can enjoy them with traditional Croatian dishes, often in beautiful natural surroundings, which are undeniable and irreplaceable assets. That is why and rightfully so, the wine stands out as a unique product because it combines tradition, natural resources and high technology – enough for complete enjoyment.



Olive oils



Benefits of olive oil

Due to its geographical location and the mild Mediterranean climate, Croatia is rich in olive groves whose fruits have been throughout the centuries a part of traditional food, especially for the population living near the sea.

The olive tree can reach a ripe old age and has the ability of auto renewal even in burnt areas. An olive tree on the Brioni islands is one of the oldest olive trees in the Mediterranean, and it is assumed that it is about 1600 years old. *Lunjske* olive trees on Pag and those from Kaštel-Štafilić and from Korčula, which also can count more than a thousand summers with their fruit, full of *yellow gold*, deserve respect and special care.

The most common and most famous product of the olive is olive oil, which is of a very specific taste and a pleasant, almost fruity smell, and can be found in various shades of green, depending on the variety and the area from which the fruit comes. In Croatia, there are several varieties of olives, of which the most common are: *oblica*, *rošulja*, *bjelica*, *lastovka*, *buža*, *levantinka*, *debela*. The oil quality is evaluated by analysis and by tasters' evaluation, and, in the most prestigious international competitions, a number of Croatian olive oils have won gold medals.

Olive oil is one of the most respected foods and its health benefits are recognized by modern science too. It has a protective

role in preventing cancer and a variety of malignant diseases and significantly contributes to the preservation of the circulatory system. It is good to skin, it helps healthy development of bones and brain tissue and due to a high content of antioxidants it is considered that olive oil slows down the ageing process.

The secret of the healing properties of olive oil is in its composition – it contains a large percentage (60-85%) of mono-unsaturated fatty acids or oleic acid, which is resistant to oxidation. It also contains carotene and chlorophyll which prevent oxidation of oils, and essential vitamins A, D, K, and E.

Olive oil is the perfect blend of many components that have powerful antioxidant effects and thus, when included in the diet, serve the skin as an aid in preventing the bad effects of ultra-violet rays. Oils are easier to digest than regular fats, including olive oils, which of all oils is the most easily digested. It is believed that it is just as digestible as breast milk.

In addition to preserving beauty and health, olive oil is a must in the kitchen, where it is used in the preparation of savoury dishes, especially fish and meat with vegetables, and it is traditional and an essential ingredient in making authentic homemade cakes. So the secret of longevity of people who live by the sea most likely lies in the regular consumption of fruits given to us by this precious tree.





Water is life

Water is the most important ingredient for the survival and quality of life wherever you are. The human body consists of 60-70 percent of water, which is the basic, indispensable and necessary daily dietary component. Water is the most important component of the cuisine; with a safe tap water we can also choose one that has the characteristics suitable to our needs (acids, alkalines, minerals).

Fortunately, Croatia abounds with water. The public water supply system supplies 75 percent of the population, and about 90 percent of the water in Croatia comes from the supplies of high quality groundwater. Water is renewable, and the data show that Croatia uses between 140 and 150 litres per capita per day, corresponding to the EU average. In addition, 20 manufacturers offer high-quality water from water sources, natural water and mineralized water from deep-pumping stations.

The human body and Croatia, according to information about water, it seems, are in a statistical coincidence and it is clear that the quantity, type and water quality are huge benefits that we gladly share with our guests.

Water has always been prized for its value and it was always managed wisely. Supporting this thought there is data on the existence of some form of water systems far in the past. For example, the remains of water pipes on Kupa River prove the existence of water systems in the area of Sisak probably dating from the Roman period. Pools and tanks for organized water supply of the population from ancient times are found on the Briuni islands too and above Bol on the isle of Brač. It is believed that parts of ancient Pula's water system originate from the 2nd century. At that time water was largely passed via clay pipes, and at the very end were found the remains of lead pipes.

A similar ancient water supply system exists also in the area west of Knin and a water supply system was built in Zadar on

the order of the Emperor Trajan. From the time of Venetian rule the remains of stone pipes were found in Ston and Gradac and wells in which water was collected were found on the island of Hvar and other islands. Novalja on the island of Pag was supplied by a water supply system that passed through a Roman ditch and it operated on wind power.

Diocletian's water system is one of the few which from the beginning until now remained partly functional so that even after almost two thousand years it is used to supply water to inhabitants of Split. The water supply which goes from the source of the Jadro river is extremely rich in high-quality water of maximum purity and is more than nine kilometres long. That the old masters certainly knew their job even without having measuring instruments that we have today is proved by the fact that they managed to build the system of water free-fall. The slope has perfect channels towards Split. Relying on the flawless performance of gravity, the slope is constant (2.43 ‰), which has ensured the delivery of water to any desired point in the city. Plumbing pipes partially go through the tunnels and aqueduct, which is part of today's cultural monument – the so-called Dry Bridge.

The most perfect water scenery awaits visitors in natural parks. Whether you enjoy the waterfalls of Krka, Plitvice lakes or rivers, you will witness the wonders of nature that are impeccably maintained and their waters are pure. For those who seek health benefits from water, Croatia abounds in numerous thermal and curative waters containing components whose benefits have been confirmed by epidemiological studies.

The Adriatic Sea is the largest water resource in Croatia. The length of the Croatian coast is 1.880 km + 4.398 km surrounding the 1.244 islands, islets, reefs and rocks totaling 6.278 km. The waters of the Adriatic are of the optimal temperatures for our enjoyment and for the many animal species living in the sea.





Ideal conditions for production

Did you know?

Organically produced food has a special and important place because it attracts the attention of manufacturers as natural conditions are almost ideal. Proximity of roads to agricultural sites, and the impeccable composition of soils make Croatia one of the most favourable places for organic agriculture in the wider region. Easily accessible terrain and the possibility of application of eligible technology production methods make organic production feasible and the vast unpopulated parts are the ideal area for pasture and breeding of farm animals. Thus organic production and preservation of indigenous products in Croatia are booming and the statistics are changing every few months. It is emphasised that the analysis of food is carried out systematically and thoroughly.

■ Ecological products with the eco stamp have been created in an orderly and controlled manner. These manufacturers are listed in the registry and all products are visibly marked. So, we have organic apples, tomatoes, pumpkins, carrots, wheat and poultry meat from eco breeding as well as fish (freshwater and marine) and other types of meat.



basic information about croatia



WELCOME TO CROATIA!

Unique in so many ways, Croatia has roots extending from ancient times and a great cultural wealth which tells of its turbulent history, from the Roman era to the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and Ottoman conquests, right up to the present day. This cultural wealth is exceptionally appealing to all those who visit the country. If we then include in this the amazing natural beauty which attracts visitors throughout the year, the 8 national parks, 11 nature reserves and the numerous UNESCO world heritage sites, Croatia can truly be called a country of incredible magnetic attraction.

Yes, Croatia is all that and so much more. It is the home of the necktie, the parachute, the torpedo, the mechanical pencil, the filament light bulb, the world's fastest electric car, the Dalmatian dog, Marco Polo, one of the oldest cities and parliaments in Europe, the second longest stretch of defensive walls in Europe, the smallest cathedral, the oldest arboretum, the oldest film festival in the world, and the birthplace of great athletes.

And last but by no means least – the Croats themselves! The Croatian people and their kindness are a magnet that keeps drawing tourists back. Sometimes the hospitality of the locals will make you wonder whether you are in your own home or simply – on holiday in Croatia!

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

ID (EU and EEA citizens and Switzerland) or passport. A visa is necessary for the citizens of certain third countries. The Croatian visa policy can be consulted here: www.mvep.hr/en/consular-information/. Information: Diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Croatia abroad or the Ministry of

Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia
Tel. +385 1 4569 964
Web: www.mvep.hr/en

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

The Republic of Croatia has implemented the customs legislation of the European Union on its territory, and the national legislation has been aligned with the regulations of the European Union.

The import of personal luggage is exempt from import duties, **without any limitations regarding its value**, and this applies to every individual-passenger who enters the EU customs area, regardless of whether they carry their luggage with them or if it arrived separately, providing that the passenger can prove to the person responsible for its transport that all indicated luggage was declared simultaneously at departure. Items that are in the personal luggage of the passenger, which by its type and quantity are not for resale but solely for the personal use of the passenger and members of their family, is exempt from import duties if its total value does not exceed the equivalent value of HRK 2,200.00, or for air and sea transport the value of HRK 3,200.00. This exemption applies to each passenger individually. Those items where the value exceeds the specified amount or are not considered to be personal luggage are subject to customs duties and value added tax (and possibly excise duties as well). The luggage of passengers who are under 15 years of age is exempt from import duties up to a total value of the equivalent of HRK 1,100.00, regardless of the mode of transport used.

Passengers are obliged to report to the Customs Service when they are carrying the equivalent of EUR 10,000.00 or more in cash, whatever the currency, or in any other

means of payment, such as cheques, whenever they enter or leave the EU. Foreign nationals and Croatians who are residents of third countries may temporarily bring in items for their personal use, as well as for the use of their family members, without being liable to import duties. Also, people residing in the EU may temporarily export items they need during their stay in a third country. The personal belongings of passengers include any items, whether new or used, which a traveller may reasonably need for his or her personal use during the journey excluding all goods being imported for commercial purposes. Examples of personal items are: video cameras, portable TV sets and audio devices, cameras, laptops, PCs, camping, sailing, scuba diving, skiing, skating and hiking equipment, caravans, pleasure crafts, portable medical devices with accessories (if necessary to the passenger), pets and the like. The import of such goods is made by oral declaration without any particular customs formalities at the border crossing. The re-export of the above items is done in the same way.

Natural persons, who are neither residents nor have a usual address in the European Union, are entitled to a refund of value added tax (PDV) on the goods they have purchased in Croatia, if the value of the goods exceeds HRK 740 per purchase. The refund is obtained upon presentation of the completed form PDV-P, i.e. Tax free form that must be certified, within 3 months of the date stated on the invoice or delivery note, by Customs when taking the goods out of the European Union. Foreign citizens must submit the VAT refund request within six months of the date of purchase. **It is not possible** to certify the PDV-P form or Tax-free form **once the**

goods have been carried out of the European Union.

For further information, please contact the Customs Administration website (<https://carina.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama/propisi-i-sporazumi/carinsko-zakonodavstvo/fizicke-osobe-2715/2715>).

For information on the regulations relating to the import of products of animal origin in personal luggage see the Ministry of Agriculture – Administration for Veterinary Medicine and Food Safety website: <http://www.veterinarstvo.hr/default.aspx?id=1186>.

CURRENCY

The kuna - HRK (1 kuna = 100 lipa). Foreign currency can be exchanged in banks, exchange offices, post offices, and most travel agencies, hotels and camps.

POST OFFICES

The opening hours of post offices are available on the Croatian Post website, as well as a smartphone app. Some post offices remain open until 0:00 a.m. – the one in Branimirova 4, in the centre of Zagreb, as well as at the one at the border crossing of Bajakovo. Info. Tel.: 072 303 304
Web: www.posta.hr
E-mail: info@posta.hr

WORKING HOURS OF SHOPS AND PUBLIC SERVICES

During the tourist season, most shops are open from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. on weekdays, and most are open during the weekends as well. Public services and business offices work from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.

HEALTH SERVICES

Hospitals and clinics are found in all larger towns and cities, while smaller places have outpatient units and pharmacies. Foreign visitors who have compulsory health insurance in other EU countries and EEA (Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein) and Switzerland during their temporary stay in Croatia have the right to basic healthcare, on the basis of the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Healthcare on the basis of the EHIC may be used in all health-care institutions and with all MDs that have a regular contract with the Croatian Health Insurance Fund. They only bear the cost of participa-

Offices of the Croatian National Tourist Board

tion in cases when Croatian insured persons pay it as well.

Tourists that have compulsory insurance in countries which have signed a social security agreement with Croatia, regulating the use of healthcare services (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, FYRM, Turkey) have the right to emergency health care during their temporary stay in Croatia. The precondition is that they request from their insurer the certificate of the right to health care during temporary stay in Croatia, before they leave for Croatia. The Croatian Health Insurance Fund (in the place of their stay) will change it into a health insurance certificate. They can benefit from health care services on the basis of the abovementioned certificate in contracting healthcare institutions and MDs, and they will only bear the cost of participation in cases when Croatian insured persons pay it as well.

Persons coming from third countries (countries that are not EU/EEA members, Switzerland or contracting countries) bear all healthcare costs in Croatia themselves.

For further information, please contact the Croatian Health Insurance Fund - compulsory health insurance 0800 79 79, premium health insurance 0800 79 89; Ministry of Health toll free number 0800 79 99; web: www.hzzo.hr, and the National contact point for cross-border healthcare, E-mail: ncp-croatia@hzzo.hr, tel.: +385 1 644 90 90

Power supply: 220 V, frequency 50 Hz
Tap water is safe to drink in all parts of Croatia.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

1 January - New Year's Day
6 January - Epiphany
Easter Sunday & Easter Monday
1 May - Labour Day
22 June - Anti-Fascist Resistance Day
25 June - Statehood Day
5 August - Victory Day and National Thanksgiving Day, Veterans' Day
15 August - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
8 October - Independence Day
1 November - All Saints' Day
25 December - Christmas
26 December - St. Stephen's Day

PETROL STATIONS

Petrol stations in larger cities and on motorways are open 24 hours a

day. Petrol stations sell Eurosuper 95, Super 95, Super 98, Super plus 98, Euro Diesel and Diesel, and gas (LPG) is also available in major cities, and at petrol stations on motorways.

For information on fuel prices and a list of places selling LPG gas go to: www.ina.hr; www.hak.hr; www.tifon.hr; www.crodux-derivati.hr

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

International dialling code for Croatia: +385
Ambulance: 194
Fire Brigade: 193
Police: 192
Roadside vehicle assistance: (+385 1) 1987
National Centre for the Co-ordination of Search and Rescue at Sea: 195
National Protection and Rescue (single European number for emergency services): 112
General information: 18981
Information on subscribers' telephone numbers: 11880 and 11888
Information on international subscribers' telephone numbers: 11802
Duty forecaster of the Meteorological and Hydrological Service (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.): 060616666 (T-com), price: 6,99 HRK/min for landlines and 8,41 HRK/min for mobile networks.

Hrvatski autoklub (HAK) (Croatian Autoclub):
Roadside assistance: 1987
from abroad (1) +385 1 1987
from abroad (2) +385 1 4693 700
Road traffic information: 072 777 777 from Croatia
from abroad +385 1 464 0800
User services: 0800 9987
Web: www.hak.hr; <http://map.hak.hr/>

DEAR GUESTS,

For your own comfort and in accordance with the law, please check whether you have been properly registered for the entire duration of your stay, from the date of your arrival to the date of your departure.

This is an important and necessary procedure, particularly if you are staying in private accommodation, in order to guarantee the quality of service and your personal safety, as well as to prevent the illegal provision of accommodation by those who are not registered with the appropriate authorities.

We thank you in advance for your co-operation and wish you a pleasant stay.

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ENTE NAZIONALE CROATO PER IL TURISMO

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Web: it.croatia.hr

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Web: pl.croatia.hr

KROATISKA TURISTBYRÅN

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Web: se.croatia.hr

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Publisher

Croatian National Tourist Board

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The Author of '*Croatia, Gastronomic Princess of the Mediterranean and Europe*'

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Edi Maletić

Graphic design and layout

Studio Rašić; Ante Rašić

Image processing for printing

FAB d. o. o./Ines Pulić, Petar Strmečki

Translation

Croatian Language School London

Printer

Radin print d.o.o., Sveta Nedelja

Zagreb, 2019

The data and descriptions in the articles express views and professional opinions of authors who the Croatian National Tourist Board engaged as top specialists in their fields. The publisher does not guarantee the absolute accuracy of the information published herein and shall not be responsible for possible inaccuracies or changes to this information.

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