

Wines of
CROATIA

unique and exciting

CROATIA AS A MODERN COUNTRY



Croatia, having been eager to experience immediate changes, success and recognition, has, at the beginning of a new decade, totally altered its approach to life and business. A strong desire to earn quick money as well as rapid trade expansion have been replaced by more moderate, longer-term investment projects in the areas of viticulture, rural tourism, family hotels, fisheries, olive growing, ecological agriculture and superior restaurants.

The strong first impression of international brands has been replaced by turning to traditional products, having their origins in a deep historic heritage. The expansion of fast-food chains was brought to a halt in the mid-1990's as multinational companies understood that investment would not be returned as quickly as had been planned. More ambitious restaurants transformed into centres of hedonism, whereas small, thematic ones offering several fresh and well-prepared dishes are visited every day.

*Tradition and a return to nature
are now popular*

Viticulture has been fully developed. Having superior technology at their disposal, a new generation of well-educated winemakers show firm personal convictions and aims with clear goals. The rapid growth of international wine varieties has been hindered while local varieties that were almost on the verge of extinction, have gradually gained in importance. Not only have the most prominent European regions shared their experience, but the world's renowned wine experts have offered their consulting services. Biodynamic movement has been very brisk with every wine region bursting with life.





CROATIA FACT FILE

SURFACE AREA Total land surface area covers over **56,538 square kilometres** and total sea area amounts to **31,067 square kilometres**.

POPULATION Population count stands at **4,437,460**. The majority of the population (some 90%) is of Croatian nationality with the remaining 10% being divided between Serbian, Slovenian, Hungarian, Italian, Czech, Romany, German plus additional minority representatives.

CAPITAL The capital is **Zagreb** with a population of around **800,000**. It is the centre of business, transport, culture and education.

OTHER MAJOR TOWNS **Split, Rijeka and Osijek**

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE **Croatian**

GOVERNMENT **Parliamentary Republic**

CURRENCY **1 Kuna = 100 lipa.**

LENGTH OF COASTLINE The coastline extends to a distance of 5,835.3 kilometres, of which 4,058 kilometres relate to the coastline of islands, rocks and reefs.

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN PEAK **Dinara, 1,831 meters**

THE LONGEST RIVER **Sava, 940 kilometres (partial length)**

OTHER MAJOR RIVERS **the Drava, the Danube, the Kupa, the Zrmanja, the Cetina and the Mirna**

GEOGRAPHY Croatia is located in the southern part of Central Europe. It borders Slovenia in the north-west, Hungary in the north-east, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the south-east and Montenegro in the south, whilst the border with Italy lies across the Adriatic Sea. Croatia owes its specific horseshoe shape to its borders, stretching from the most eastern on the Danube, across the Slavonian plains to the north west where it meets the Alps, and heading down to the Adriatic coast, with a coastline starting in Istria and Kvarner, stretching through Dalmatia and ending at the southern border with Montenegro.

CLIMATE A typical continental climate in the northern, but Mediterranean in the coastal region.

DEVELOPMENT AND TRADITIONS OF WINE CULTURE IN CROATIA

Croatia enjoys a highly developed viticultural tradition, enabling its people to recognise and enjoy quality wines. For several generations, wine was far more than the means of meeting personal existential needs. The wine trade was a secondary result of family weekend reunions in small vineyards, implying that only wines, which were not intended for personal use, would have been sold. "A true Northerner never sells his wine – he drinks it with his colleagues". These lines in a traditional song from the Croatian north western region relates wine consumption to friendly reunions. Statistical data may not be as humorous as the above line, but are even more convincing. Almost half of Croatian vineyards do not hold a licence to sell wine. Hence, most of their production is for personal use only.

Croats are very passionate about wine. Almost half the total wine production never reaches the market, but is for personal use only

Local wine brands, intended for the general market, are still relatively unknown internationally, as Croatian wine exports have not been significantly encouraged for decades. The end of the Yugoslavian federation created new borderlines. Hence, wines from former republics, long considered to be local, had to be imported and were therefore made less available. The Croatian wine industry took advantage of this situation, showing steady annual growth. However, local production, which was seriously hampered by the War of Independence, could not meet the needs of the local market due to increased consumption. Only after long-term investment into vineyards on a larger scale, was the first wine surplus obtained, therefore creating opportunities for export.



THE HISTORY OF WINE IN CROATIA

Croatian viticulture can be dated back 2,500 years. The oldest artefact related to wine-growing and the wine trade is a coin from Vis, a town on the island of the same name in the Adriatic Sea, which dates back to 5th century B.C. One side of the coin contains an imprint of grapes with the opposite side showing an amphora containing wine. Similar archaeological artefacts are to be found everywhere in the coastal region, from Istria to South Dalmatia. Wine-growing spread to the continental region a few centuries later, thanks not only to the Croatian local inhabitants, Illyrians, but also to Thracians and primarily Romans. Perhaps the most famous promoter of vine growing culture was the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius Probus, who ordered large areas of land, from the Rhine valley in Germany to the Danube Region in Croatia, to be used for viticulture. This Roman emperor was a very passionate and persistent wine-grower. Unfortunately, he paid dearly for his passion as he forced his legionnaires to grow and maintain large areas of vineyards which they resented so much that they executed him.

Viticulture dates back to 6th century B.C. in the coastal regions and back to 2nd century A.D. in the continental region

The on-going tradition of viticulture was later to be interrupted in those parts of Croatia occupied by the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century, only to be restored when they left Croatian territory. Croatian and most European vine varieties as we know them today, were, in 19th century, decimated by vine diseases which brought most of Croatian continental vines to the verge of extinction. They were predominantly replaced by Austrian and German varieties, reflecting the Habsburg dynasty that ruled Croatia at the time. French vines were introduced only later, at the beginning of 20th century, and later in the second half of 20th century. Istrian and Dalmatian vines were also stricken by disease but due to the specific soil and climate, most of the local vines have been preserved until the present day.





GENERAL FACT FILE ON CROATIAN VITICULTURE

REGISTERED WINE PRODUCERS	17,000
VINEYARD SURFACE AREA IN TOTAL	33,000 hectares
WINERIES PRODUCING WINES OF CONTROLLED ORIGIN	800
WINES OF CONTROLLED ORIGIN	2,500
TOTAL PRODUCTION OF WINE OF CONTROLLED ORIGIN	61 million litres
REGIONAL SHARE OF VINEYARD HECTARES	Continental Region 49% Coastal Region 51%
REGIONAL SHARE OF THE NUMBER OF WINE PRODUCERS	Continental Region 32% Coastal Region 68%
TOTAL NUMBER OF CULTIVATED VINE VARIETALS	200
THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS VINE VARIETALS	60
MAJOR WINE GROUPINGS	Riesling (croat. Aussprache: gra-sche-wi-na) Malvasia (mal-wa-si-a) Plavac mali (croat. Aussprache: pla-watz ma-li (dunkelroter Wein))

Three major vine varieties cover 47% of total vineyard surface area

*Only a few countries boast such a variety
of vine growing regions,
from Mediterranean glowing heat...*



...to cold slopes of the Alps

CROATIAN COASTAL REGION

(Primorska Hrvatska)

*List of Indigenous Wine Varietals
is as long as Croatian Coast*





The Croatian coastal region consists of three major regions, five sub-regions and 31 vine growing hills:

- **Istria** (pronounced: i-stria) or Istrian peninsula
- **Hrvatsko primorje** (pronounced: hr-vat-sko pri-mor-ie) or Croatian Littoral
- **Dalmacija** (pronounced: dal-ma-tzia), consisting of:
 - Northern Dalmatia
 - Central and Southern Dalmatia
 - Dalmatinska Zagora (Dalmatian Hinterland)

When compared with the Istrian peninsula, Croatian Littoral and Dalmatian Hinterland, Dalmatia is significantly warmer, due to the proximity of the Adriatic Sea, the high hills of the Istrian hinterland and mainly to the highest Croatian mountain range, the Dinara, situated in the hinterland of Dalmatian Zagora. Therefore, vine varieties from these regions vary widely. As opposed to continental Croatia, local vine varieties have been predominantly grown along the coast, whilst international vine varieties were first introduced some 15 years ago. Dalmatia, as the warmest area of the coastal region, produces stronger wines, with a higher degree of alcohol and also a lower level of acidity. The colder coastal regions, such as the Istrian peninsula, Kvarner and Dalmatian Zagora, produce wines with a more distinctive aroma and refreshing character.

*Dalmatia:
Mediterranean Climate*

*Istrian Peninsula and Croatian Littoral -
Where Mediterranean and
Continental climates blend*





DALMATIA

(pronounced: dal-ma-tzia)



Northern Dalmatia, Central and Southern Dalmatia as well as Dalmatian Zagora are three major Dalmatian sub-regions. Vineyards in Northern Dalmatia, with the exception of the Primošten wine-growing hills, are situated away from the coastline. Wines of the region are therefore crisper when compared with those produced in Southern Croatia, but do not show the characteristics of a continental climate, which is so typical of the wines from Dalmatian Zagora. Central and Southern Dalmatia, two typical Mediterranean regions, grows almost exclusively vines of local origin. A centuries long adaptation to climate and soil enables these to thrive on the sunny slopes overlooking the sea. Historically speaking, Dalmatian Zagora was more locally oriented and conducted most of its trading activities with Bosnia and Herzegovina, whilst coastal Dalmatia, having at that time a thriving shipbuilding industry, exported its wines to various European countries. Therefore, those three sub-regions offer a wide variety. Red wines of the Rhone Syrah and Grenache were very successfully domesticated in Northern Dalmatia. This region provided an excellent environment not only for Plavina the local varietal, but also for white Debit and Maraština. Dalmatian Zagora, (or Imotsko polje to be more specific), is dominated by the local Kujundžusa, whose mild and gentle wines provide some 90% of total wine production in the area. The coastal region provides an excellent environment for red wines such as Plavac mali, Babić, and more recently, Zinfandel (Croatian crljenak). Some of the best white wine in Croatia, for example Pošip, are grown on the island of Korčula.

SOUTHERN DALMATIA

TYPICAL RED VARIETAL

- **Plavac mali** (*pronounced: pla-vatz ma-li*)

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETALS

- **Pošip** (*pronounced: po-ship*)
- **Grk** (*pronounced: gr-k*)
- **Malvasija dubrovačka** (*pronounced: mal-va-sia du-bro-vatz-ka*)
- **Maraština or Rukatac** (*pronounced: ma-ra-shti-na or ru-ka-tatz*)

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Pelješac** (*pronounced: pe-le-shatz*)
- **the hill of Korčula** (*pronounced: kor-tschu-la*)
- **the hill of Konavle** (*pronounced: ko-na-vle*)

As in other Dalmatian regions, viticulture and wine production were introduced into the area by Greek colonists. The most prominent centres at that time were the Greek settlements of Cavtat (Epidaurus) and Korčula (Korkyra). The long-standing tradition of the region has been preserved in the areas of Korčula and Pelješac to the present day almost without interruption. However, due to tumultuous historical events and the influence of the Ottoman Empire, the coastal region suffered considerable damage. During those troubled times, the Republic of Dubrovnik played the most prominent rôle in the preservation of viticulture. Wine-growing was highly regarded by its citizens, which may be seen in numerous documents and city regulations regarding wine production and trade. Those historical events contributed to the development and preservation of many local varieties, most of which are currently grown in the area.



The climate of the region is typically Mediterranean, although noticeably more humid and slightly cooler when compared with the islands of Central Dalmatia. Therefore, when compared with Central Dalmatia, wines of the region show noticeable differences in style, even when considering the same varieties, such as Plavac mali or Maraština.

Plavac mali and Maraština, which are in the area often referred to as Rukatac, are the most prominent varieties of the region. Plavac mali shows two very distinct varieties. One, cultivated on superior locations, such as Dingač and Postup, differs from those cultivated in the area of Pelješac and the South Dalmatian hinterland. The former, with its full-bodied, strong taste and stable characteristics, can compete with some of the most prominent international wines. The latter, being light and fruity, seem to belong to a completely different variety. The microclimate, characteristic of Pelješac inland, is one of the reasons for such a difference. Due to its significant height above sea level, Pelješac shows characteristics of the continental climate, such as typically cold nights, early spring frost and lower rate of exposure to solar rays, especially during spring and autumn. If Plavac mali is to achieve the most prominent results, it is not to be cultivated on a very rich soil. Therefore, the very central part of Pelješac, with its fertile and fecund land, is not the most appropriate location for the cultivation of Plavac. When comparing Pelješac with other Croatian regions, it is interesting that, with few exceptions, the specific varieties are used for wine branding only in the cases of lower quality wines, whereas top quality ones mention just the specific location where the variety is cultivated, such as Dingač, Postup and Žuljana. Hence, it is common that one and the same winemaker produces wines of different quality, depending not on the variety but on the location of its cultivation. However, despite the lower quality varieties from Pelješac inland, this region is still a leading producer of top quality red wines. Therefore, Plavac mali is most certainly the leading variety of Southern Dalmatia.

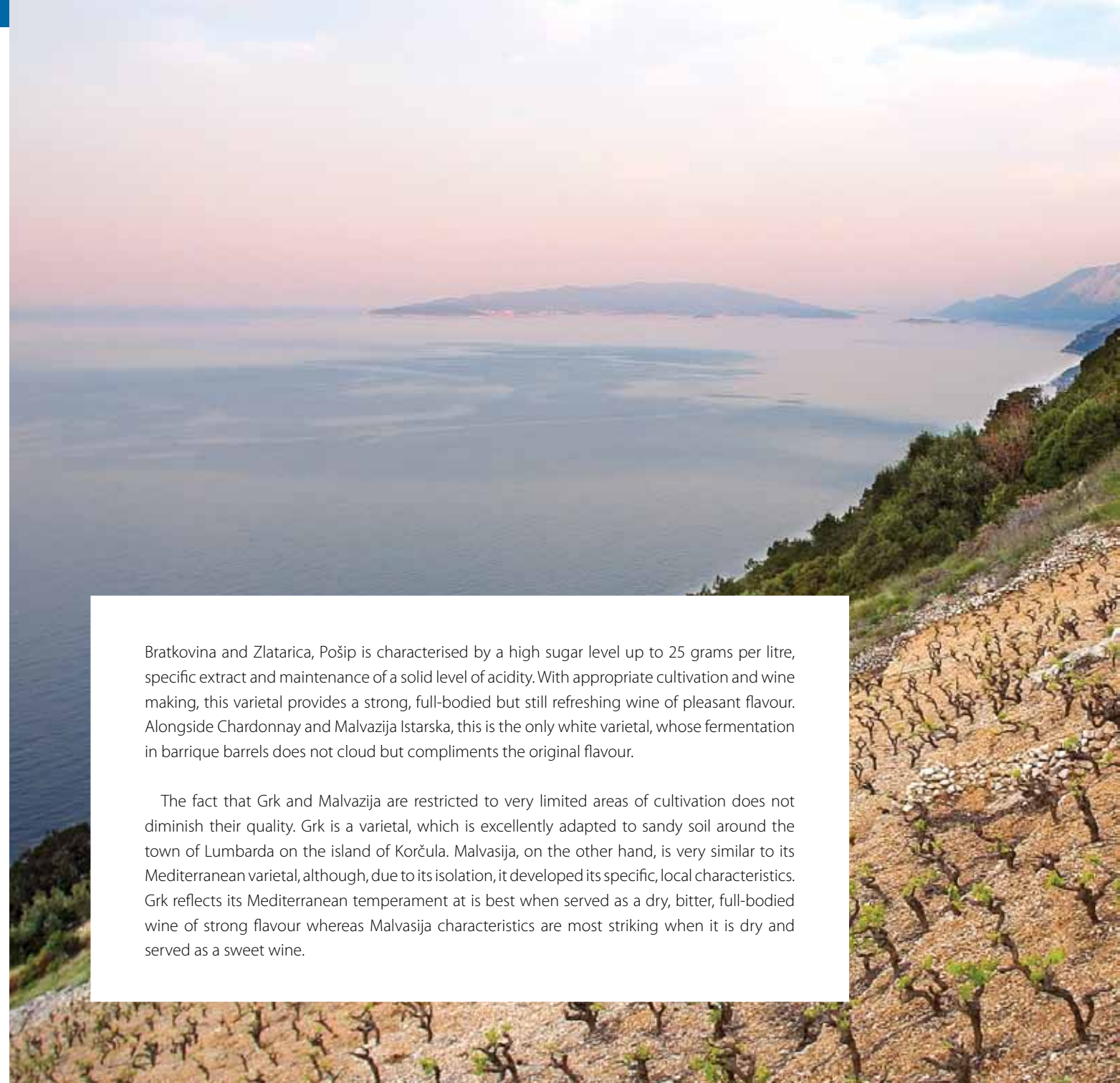
Maraština is considered to be of a far more well-balanced origin. This variety does not require any specific location and is well adapted to various conditions. It is to be found along the whole Dalmatian coastline, even in the northern region around the island of Cres and is extremely popular in Southern Dalmatia, especially on the islands of Lastovo and Korčula as well as in the Konavle region. It is distinguished by having a very good absorption of sugar and is used in the production of medium strong, crisp wines.

Pošip, Grk and Malvazija dubrovačka are considered to be top quality white varieties, which are to be exported in the near future. Pošip is a variety of exceptional potential, whose market quality has been well established. Therefore, it shows a constant increase in production. It originates from the island of Korčula, where it is most commonly cultivated. As a hybrid of



Bratkovina and Zlatarica, Pošip is characterised by a high sugar level up to 25 grams per litre, specific extract and maintenance of a solid level of acidity. With appropriate cultivation and wine making, this variety provides a strong, full-bodied but still refreshing wine of pleasant flavour. Alongside Chardonnay and Malvazija Istarska, this is the only white variety, whose fermentation in barrique barrels does not cloud but complements the original flavour.

The fact that Grk and Malvazija are restricted to very limited areas of cultivation does not diminish their quality. Grk is a variety, which is excellently adapted to sandy soil around the town of Lumbarda on the island of Korčula. Malvasija, on the other hand, is very similar to its Mediterranean variety, although, due to its isolation, it developed its specific, local characteristics. Grk reflects its Mediterranean temperament at its best when served as a dry, bitter, full-bodied wine of strong flavour whereas Malvasija characteristics are most striking when it is dry and served as a sweet wine.



CENTRAL DALMATIA

TYPICAL RED VARIETAL

- **Plavac mali** (*pronounced: pla-vatz ma-li*)

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETAL

- **Vugava** (*pronounced: vu-ga-va*)

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Hvar** (*pronounced: h-var*)
- **the hill of Vis** (*pronounced: vis*)
- **the hill of Brač** (*pronounced: b-ratch*)

The exact origins of Croatian viticulture and wine production have their roots in this precise region. Whether the first vine was planted exactly in Central Dalmatia or not remains a mystery. However, ancient Greek settlements on the islands of Vis and Brač earned their reputation at a very early stage, which rightfully entitles them to be the cradle of Croatian wine growing. Coins with images of grapes and goblets as well as countless archaeological findings related to wine consumption prove that viticulture was of utmost importance to local inhabitants. Viticulture spread rapidly throughout the region and remained one of the most important aspects of agriculture. At the time of Ancient Rome, its importance rapidly increased. Even the first Croatian settlers converted from mead to wine rather easily.

The whole region is dominated by rather similar soil types and climatic conditions. With low precipitation and very hot dry summers, the climate is typically Mediterranean, whilst soil varieties are represented by various types of red and brown soil, covering mostly limestone.



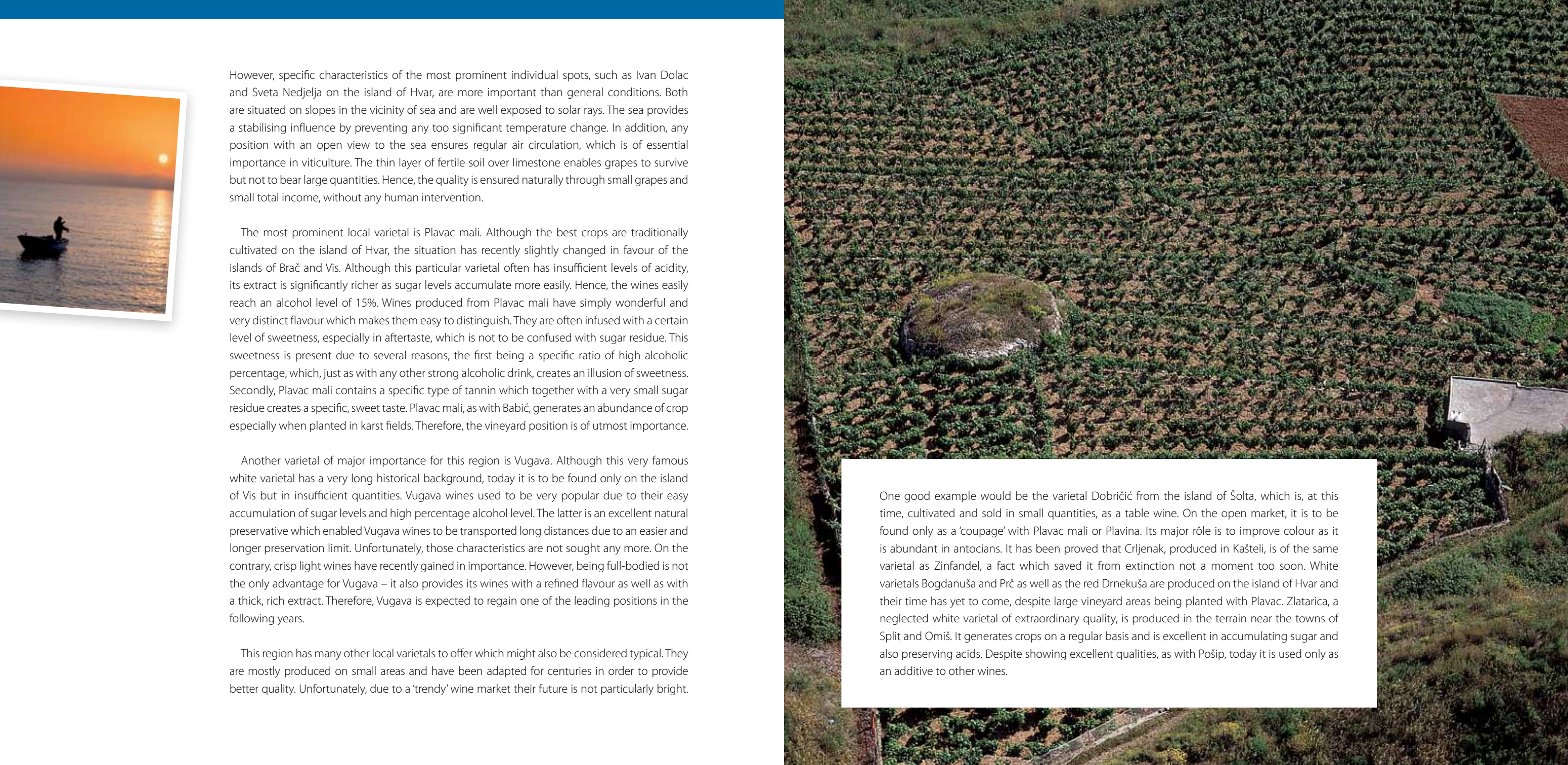


However, specific characteristics of the most prominent individual spots, such as Ivan Dolac and Sveta Nedjelja on the island of Hvar, are more important than general conditions. Both are situated on slopes in the vicinity of sea and are well exposed to solar rays. The sea provides a stabilising influence by preventing any too significant temperature change. In addition, any position with an open view to the sea ensures regular air circulation, which is of essential importance in viticulture. The thin layer of fertile soil over limestone enables grapes to survive but not to bear large quantities. Hence, the quality is ensured naturally through small grapes and small total income, without any human intervention.

The most prominent local varietal is Plavac mali. Although the best crops are traditionally cultivated on the island of Hvar, the situation has recently slightly changed in favour of the islands of Brač and Vis. Although this particular varietal often has insufficient levels of acidity, its extract is significantly richer as sugar levels accumulate more easily. Hence, the wines easily reach an alcohol level of 15%. Wines produced from Plavac mali have simply wonderful and very distinct flavour which makes them easy to distinguish. They are often infused with a certain level of sweetness, especially in aftertaste, which is not to be confused with sugar residue. This sweetness is present due to several reasons, the first being a specific ratio of high alcoholic percentage, which, just as with any other strong alcoholic drink, creates an illusion of sweetness. Secondly, Plavac mali contains a specific type of tannin which together with a very small sugar residue creates a specific, sweet taste. Plavac mali, as with Babić, generates an abundance of crop especially when planted in karst fields. Therefore, the vineyard position is of utmost importance.

Another varietal of major importance for this region is Vugava. Although this very famous white varietal has a very long historical background, today it is to be found only on the island of Vis but in insufficient quantities. Vugava wines used to be very popular due to their easy accumulation of sugar levels and high percentage alcohol level. The latter is an excellent natural preservative which enabled Vugava wines to be transported long distances due to an easier and longer preservation limit. Unfortunately, those characteristics are not sought any more. On the contrary, crisp light wines have recently gained in importance. However, being full-bodied is not the only advantage for Vugava – it also provides its wines with a refined flavour as well as with a thick, rich extract. Therefore, Vugava is expected to regain one of the leading positions in the following years.

This region has many other local varietals to offer which might also be considered typical. They are mostly produced on small areas and have been adapted for centuries in order to provide better quality. Unfortunately, due to a 'trendy' wine market their future is not particularly bright.



One good example would be the varietal Dobričić from the island of Šolta, which is, at this time, cultivated and sold in small quantities, as a table wine. On the open market, it is to be found only as a 'coupage' with Plavac mali or Plavina. Its major rôle is to improve colour as it is abundant in antocians. It has been proved that Crljenak, produced in Kašteli, is of the same varietal as Zinfandel, a fact which saved it from extinction not a moment too soon. White varietals Bogdanuša and Prč as well as the red Drnekuša are produced on the island of Hvar and their time has yet to come, despite large vineyard areas being planted with Plavac. Zlatica, a neglected white varietal of extraordinary quality, is produced in the terrain near the towns of Split and Omiš. It generates crops on a regular basis and is excellent in accumulating sugar and also preserving acids. Despite showing excellent qualities, as with Pošip, today it is used only as an additive to other wines.

NORTHERN DALMATIA

TYPICAL RED VARIETALS

- **Babić** (*pronounced: ba-bich*)
- **Syrah**
- **Grenache**

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETALS

- **Debit** (*pronounced: de-bit*)
- **Maraština** (*pronounced: ma-ra-shti-na*)

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Primošten** (*pronounced: pri-mosh-ten*)
- **the hill of Pirovac Skradin** (*pronounced: pi-ro-vatz s-krad-in*)
- **the hill of Promina** (*pronounced: pro-mi-na*)
- **the hill of Benkovac Stankovci** (*pronounced: ben-ko-vatz stan-kov-tzi*)

Northern Dalmatia covers a large geographical region with various climatic conditions. However, the same varieties are cultivated across the whole region. Among the white varieties Maraština and Debit are the most prominent whereas the most typical red variety would be Plavina, followed by Babić, Lasina, Merlot, Syrah and Grenache. Contrary to all expectations, both white and red wines of the region are rich in acids. This interesting fact would lead us to the familiar landscape with blistering heat and strong winds. Rather than producing full-bodied wines with high levels of tannin, Northern Dalmatia offers wines which are predominantly of brisk, light, gentle and smooth flavour, such as Plavina. White varieties, for example Maraština, are very similar. They are usually of brisk and smooth flavour, typical of the region. However, Northern Dalmatia offers some different varieties, which are low in quantity but still of significant importance. This specifically relates to selected locations, such as Primošten vineyards, renowned for Babić, as well as Promina and Oklaj regions, famous for their Debit.

Babić is a local variety of Northern Dalmatian origin. Its name can directly be related to the island of Pag or the Šibenik region. As with some varieties of Plavac mali, Babić, when cultivated on the rich soil of the coastal region or hinterland, produces wines of average quality. However, Babić achieves best results if cultivated in coarse rocky regions and exposed to solar rays, despite producing low crops. This variety excellently preserves acid levels, which reduce the strong influence of alcohol. Its high levels of tannin and rich extract give the wine its distinctive and

delicious flavour. Therefore, this particular variety has shown very good results when aged in oak barrels which contribute to its flavour and tame the tannin. Top quality Babić wines have lately showed an increase in their market share. Hence Babić is, for certain, the leading variety of Northern Dalmatia.

Debit is another Northern Dalmatian variety which might become extremely popular at a national level in the future. Although its potential has not yet been fully discovered, several very good wines of various styles show its versatile characteristics and top quality. The thick skinned grapes, relatively high levels of acids and good ability to accumulate sugar make this variety a very suitable candidate for the production of dry, sweet wines, like prosecco. Due to its rich extract, Debit produces high quantities of wine. This makes Debit wines suitable both for maturing in barrels and on yeast sediment, attributing to this variety more complex characteristics. Finally, its simpler side is visible in regular vintage, with its harmonious and refreshing primary flavour of minerals and citrus fruits.

International varieties have been domesticated in the northern parts of the region. Merlot has been cultivated in the regions of Zadar, Benkovac and Stankovci for a number of years. Cabernet Sauvignon is a relatively new variety, whereas Syrah, Grenache and Cinsault have been present in the region for more than three decades. Southern Rhône, the home of the previously mentioned varieties, shows similar characteristics to Northern Dalmatia. Hence, it is not surprising they produce top quality wines.



DALMATIAN ZAGORA

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETAL

- **Kujundžuša** (*pronounced: ku-iun-dzu-sha*)

TYPICAL RED VARIETALS

- **Trnjak** (*pronounced: tr-n-jak*)
- **Merlot**

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Imotski** (*pronounced: i-mot-ski*)
- **the hill of Vrgorac** (*pronounced: vr-go-ratz*)

Dalmatian Zagora, with its complex historical background and isolated position, managed to preserve local varieties in specific small areas of land. Therefore, Kujundžuša and Trnjak from Imotski preserved their original identity and number. Renowned international varieties, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Sivi have recently increased in number. Soil characteristics of the region provide the same cultivation conditions as the rest of Dalmatia and the Croatian Littoral. It solely consists of limestone rocks with a thin overlay of various types of red soil and some other soil types. Climatic conditions are significantly different from the coastal region. The Dalmatian Zagora has dry, Mediterranean summers with daytime temperatures even higher than in the coastal region. Spring, autumn and winter seasons, with glazed autumn ice and early spring frosts, show characteristics of the continental climate. Hence, wines of Dalmatian Zagora are of a completely different style when compared with Dalmatian region, influenced by the stabilising impact of the Adriatic Sea. With Kujundžuša, Trnjak and Merlot, being most prominent regional varieties, white varieties of Medna, Zlatarica and Žilavka as well as red varieties of Vranac, Okatac, Rudežuša and Blatina are also accounted for as regionally important.

In terms of quality, Kujundžuša and Trnjak should be highlighted. The full potential of Kujundžuša is yet to be discovered. Yet it produced several wines of a very good quality and different styles, which indicates its versatile characteristics and top quality. Kujundžuša wines show low level of acids but are gentle in terms of alcohol volume. Hence, with their complementing delicate and pleasant flavours, such wines are very light and easy to drink. The light citrus flavour is supported by a moderate level of minerals.

On the other hand, Trnjak offers pleasant and delicate flavours of berry-like fruit, such as blackberries and raspberries. Its wines are of harmonious, fresh, fruity flavours, and easy to drink. They show low levels of acrid tannins and usually have a low alcohol level by volume. If left to mature in barrique barrels, its flavours become more complex.

Other varieties are not significantly represented. White varieties of Pinot Sivi and Chardonnay have shown promising results, as with the varieties from the Bordeaux region.



CROATIAN LITTORAL

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETALS

- **Žlahtina** (*pronounced: zla-h-ti-na*)
- **Gegić** (*pronounced: ge-gich*)

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Krk** (*pronounced: kr-k*)
- **the hill of Pag** (*pronounced: pa-g*)

The Croatian Littoral is a region having an exceptionally long and deep historical background. Its influence on the region can currently be only superficially grasped. When considering its influence and the total amount of vineyard surface area, the current situation, when compared with the glorious history of the region, does not look promising. Empty vineyards of Novi Vinodolski and deserted terraces around Bakar area bear witness to this unfavourable situation.

Viticulture and wine growing were first introduced to the region at the times of Ancient Romans. According to several experts, the invention of wooden barrels for wine maturation is to be attributed to the local Illyrian tribes. The islands of Krk, Cres, Rab and Susak as well as the coastal regions on the slopes of Velebit and Učka were abundant in vineyards, thanks to the Church and Princes of Frankopan, a noble family from the island of Krk. This long and prosperous tradition of viticulture was abruptly brought to an end by phylloxera, at the beginning of the New Era. Most vineyards never recovered. Several local varieties completely disappeared whereas others, such as Žlahtina, Trojšćina or Gegić, survived only on a limited number of restricted localities.

Local varieties of Croatian Littoral re-entered the Croatian wine market some 15 years ago. Luckily, this vigorous start has been flourishing to the present day. Žlahtina was first to graciously return. Over the last decade, it has become an indispensable attraction on wine lists of several restaurants and stores. Many wine aficionados throughout the country were delighted with its refreshing character, wonderful, airy scent, which reminds one of gentle flowers and ripe fruity flavour, as well as with its light, smooth, silky taste. It is therefore considered to be the leading varietal of the region.



Gegić, another prominent varietal, has recently been launched on the national market. This intriguing varietal from the island of Pag has been cultivated in the region for several years. Despite having a distinctive scent, its flavour and structure reminds of Malvazija. It covers the whole spectrum of flavours – starting with fine mineral shades, to an intensive, fruity aroma and ending with complex, spicy flavours. As there are no regional varieties of a similar type, the market reaction to its distinctive features will be interesting to observe. Its best quality and a more homogenous style are yet to be improved by increased growth and the selection of the best clones.



ISTRIA

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETALS

- **Malvazija** (*pronounced: mal-va-zia*)
- **Muškat** (*pronounced: mush-kat*)

TYPICAL RED VARIETALS

- **Teran** (*pronounced: te-ran*)
- **Merlot**
- **Cabernet sauvignon**

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hills of Western Istria (Buje, Umag and Poreč)**
- **the hills of Central Istria (Pazin and Motovun)**

The history of viticulture in Istria is deeply rooted in the history of its civilization. Importance of wine growing and its long tradition are, perhaps, best noticeable in the name of Kalavojna bay, near the city of Pula. Its name originates from Ancient Greek, meaning The Bay of Good Wine.

The thousand-year long viticulture tradition is based on favourable climatic conditions with the stabilising influence of the Adriatic sea, which played a major role in the coastal region of Western Istria, near the towns of Umag and Buje, whereas the vineyards of Central Istria, positioned on the slopes of Čićarija, were mostly influenced by their significant height above sea level. Istria, with a total vineyard surface area amounting to 6,000 hectares, owes its current position, as one of Croatian leading wine-growing regions, precisely to this uninterrupted history in viticulture.

The whole region of Istria is dominated by Malvazija and Teran, two very distinctive varieties, each demanding specific climatic conditions and soil types. The coastal region of Western Istria is characterised by a mild, Mediterranean climate and gentle slopes facing the sea with constant sea wind and breeze, an absolute imperative for a healthy vineyard. Central Istria, without any direct influence from the sea, is dominated by a continental climate. Its valleys are often foggy whereas nights measure a considerable decrease in temperature.



The influence of fog is to be avoided with classical, well-positioned vineyards where temperature changes significantly influence the final appearance and style of a particular wine. Wines from coastal regions are more mature, with predominantly fruity flavours whereas wines from Central Istria are brisker, richer in minerals and abundant in flowery flavours.

A great deal of attention has been paid to the particular soil type. Red soil is typical of the Istrian coastal region whereas the continental area is predominantly influenced by marl, which is popularly called white soil. Hence, single manufacturers from different parts of the region praise the advantages of one soil over the other, depending on the particular position of their vineyards. However, both types of soil are very fertile, although neither is particularly suitable for top quality wines. On the other hand, the fact, that the whole region is situated on a layer of limestone, which is to be found below the fertile soil, completely changes the whole situation. A good vineyard does not need a thick a layer of soil above the layer of limestone. More importantly, the soil itself has to be porous enough. Hence varietals, cultivated on either red or white soil, will provide good quality wines, with a small difference in flavours.

The most prominent Istrian varietal is Malvazija. Although Malvazija was, ten years ago, only locally recognised, it is today not only one of the leading brands on the Croatian market but also one of the most important export assets. For decades, Malvazija was known as an abundant fruit-bearer, and was served as a simple table wine. However, during the 1990's, a new generation of modern wine makers significantly reduced its cropping which enabled us to discover a new type of Malvazija. Malvazija today is characterised by a whole range of primary flavours, ranging from mineral and citrus flavours and flowery scent to the flavours of ripe continental and tropical fruits. In terms of its taste, Malvazija shows very good potential. It is rich in extracts, which are sometimes of a milder and more refreshing character, and sometimes stronger, fuller and more mature, both being equally appreciated.

Another prominent Istrian varietal is Teran. As with Malvasia, Teran is also an abundant cropper, with a slightly higher acid level. Hence, it requires not only a great deal of attention and patience during harvesting, but also a significant reduction in crops. If treated accordingly, Teran wines can be very alluring. Teran grapes are of a magnificent deep red colour with a glint of purple and are rich in fruity flavour, reminding of black stone-fruits, such as cherries and sour cherries, mixed with fern leaves or currants. Its excellent ratio of acid levels and extracts gives the flavour its strength and the wine its solid constitution whereas its abundant and pleasant tannin levels contribute to a sweet aftertaste.



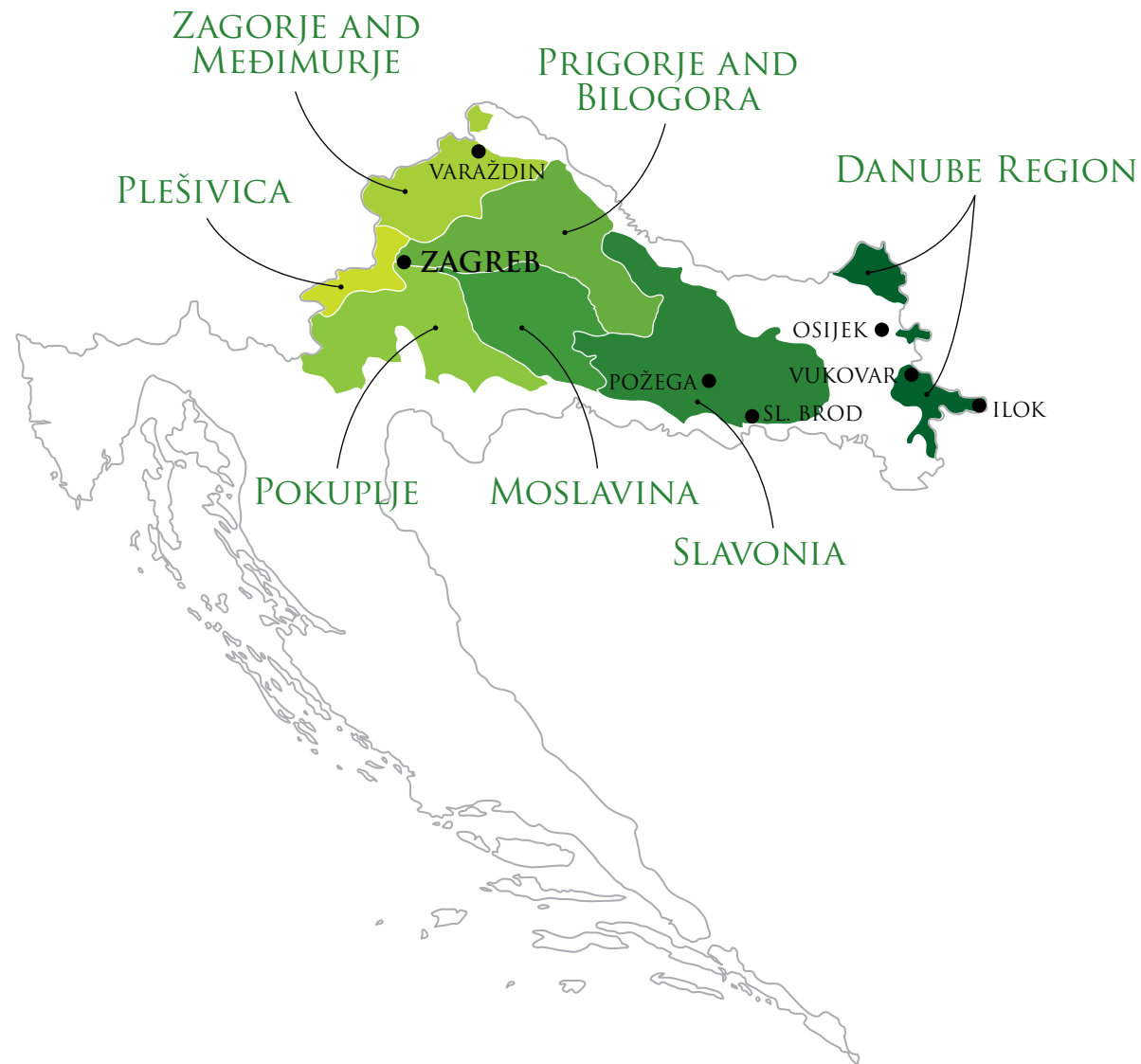
Both Malvazija and Teran are considered to be local Istrian varietals. Although Malvazija is often considered as being related to a larger Mediterranean varietal of a similar name Malvasia, scientific analysis has found no similarities. Teran is considered as a separate clone of a larger family Mondeuse Noir, as the Italian Refosco, known in Istria as Refošk.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, originally cultivated in Burgundy, also show extraordinary results in Istria. At the moment, Merlot, when compared with Teran, shows an increase in total surface area of Istrian vineyards. Another very popular white varietal in Istria is Muškati, locally known as Muškati momjanski or Muškati bijeli, a member of a larger family of Muscat e Petit Grain. It is often produced as a sweet wine, although recently its dry version was available on the open market.

CONTINENTAL
CROATIA

*Hot summers,
cold winters*





Continental Croatia is divided into 4 major regions, 7 sub-regions and 35 wine-growing hills:

- **Podunavlje / Danube Region** (pronounced: po-du-nav-ie)
- **Slavonija / Slavonia** (pronounced: sla-vo-nia)
- **Središnja Hrvatska / Central Croatia** (pronounced: sre-dish-nia hr-vat-ska)
 - Moslavina / Moslavina Hills (pronounced: mo-sla.vi-na)
 - Pokuplje / River Kupa Region (pronounced: po-kup-lie)
 - Plešivica / Plešivica Hills (pronounced: ple-shi-vi-tza)
- **Sjeverozapadna Hrvatska / Northwetstern Croatia** (pronounced: sie-ve-ro za-pad-na hr-vat-ska)
 - Zagorje and Međimurje (pronounced: za-gor-ie; me-dji-mur-ie)
 - Prigorje and Bilogora (pronounced: pri-gor-ie; bilo-gora)

Continental Croatia is characterised by cold winters and warm summers. However, Central and North-western Croatia are significantly colder regions in comparison with both Slavonia and the Danube region. Western parts of Croatia are therefore appropriate for the cultivation of more aromatic varieties, such as Sauvignon, Muškati and Rhine Riesling, the latter being extremely resistant to low temperatures.

Northern and Central Parts of Croatia are ideal for the cultivation of aromatic varieties and bring forth wines of the highest quality.

Eastern Croatian regions are aposite not only for the cultivation of Burgundy wines, especially the Pinot varieties, such as Pinot crni and Chardonnay but also for the cultivation of the most prominent variety of continental Croatia – Graševina. Although Graševina is to be found in almost every continental sub-region, its cultivation has shown marked results in the Danube region and Slavonia. Traminac, Frankovka as well as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot from Burgundy area show the best results on the eastern areas of the Danube region. Eastern Croatia is specific in cultivating larger vineyard areas, unlike other Croatian regions, in which individual vineyard plots are rather small with an average surface of one hectare.

Slavonia and Danube regions are the most appropriate terroirs for the cultivation of Graševina.



DANUBE REGION

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETALS

- **Graševina** (pronounced: gra-she-vi-na) COMMON SYNONYM Welschriesling
- **Traminac** (pronounced: tra-mi-natz) COMMON SYNONYM Gewürztraminer

TYPICAL RED VARIETALS

- **Frankovka** (pronounced: fran-kov-ka) COMMON SYNONYM Blaufrankische
- **Cabernet sauvignon**
- **Merlot**

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Srijem** (pronounced: sri-em)
- **the hill of Erdut** (pronounced: er-dut)
- **the hill of Baranja** (pronounced: ba-ra-nia)

The slopes of Fruška gora and Baranjska planina, situated on the plains of Srijem and Baranja region, were already recognised as ideal locations for the cultivation of various varieties at the time of the Ancient Romans, who were the first to introduce viticulture to the region. Their renowned tradition was continuously cultivated through the Middle Ages, which was interrupted under the Turkish siege of the area. When the Turks left the region, during the late Middle Ages, new lords, the noble families of Odelschalchi, Eltz, Chech as well as the Dukes of Savoy, restored old viticulture traditions which have been flourishing in the area ever since.

Climatic characteristics, determined by cold winters, cool springs, hot summers and moderate autumnal seasons, make this lovely region an ideal place for the cultivation of various varieties. Geographically strictly speaking, it is of utmost importance to place vineyards on hill slopes, since lowland depressions, numerous in this region, are subject to frosts during wintertime, which would require complete removal of a vineyard. Another reason for such a placement would be the cases of decay during autumn seasons, due to reduced air circulation. Constant gentle breezes and a position at the appropriate height above sea level, such as in the case of the vineyards Principovac from Ilok or Kneževi vinogradi, make this region healthy and ideal for major viticulture achievements.



Characteristic varieties of the region are Traminac and Graševina, although the latter is far more popular today. However, one hundred years ago the situation was very much different, with Traminac having been a leading regional variety. In this region, Traminac is produced as a dry or semi-dry wine, unlike in Europe, where this particular variety is very sweet. This quality makes Croatian Traminac quite special. If its quality is to be continually developed, it could make a significant mark on the international market. Graševina, on the other hand, is a very popular variety on the Croatian market, showing tremendous potential in the area. With a significant reduction in cropping and timely harvesting, Graševina is characterised by flowery and fruity scent with a defined, tangy, juicy and refreshing flavour.

SLAVONIA

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETALS

- **Graševina** (pronounced: gra-she-vi-na) COMMON SYNONYM Welschriesling
- **Chardonnay**
- **Pinot Gris**
- **Sauvignon blanc**
- **Rajnski Rizling** (pronounced: rain-ski riz-ling) COMMON SYNONYM Riesling
- **Silvanac zeleni** (pronounced: sil-va-natz ze-le-ni) COMMON SYNONYM Sylvaner

TYPICAL RED VARIETALS

- **Pinot crni** (pronounced: pi-no tzi-ni) COMMON SYNONYM Pinot Noir
- **Frankovka** (pronounced: fran-kov-ka) COMMON SYNONYM Blaufrankische
- **Merlot**
- **Cabernet Sauvignon**

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Daruvar** (pronounced: da-ru-var)
- **the hill of Đakovo** (pronounced: dja-ko-vo)
- **the hill of Feričanci** (pronounced: fe-ri-tchan-tzi)
- **the hill of Kutjevo** (pronounced: kut-ie-vo)
- **the hill of Orahovica** (pronounced: o-rah-o-vi-tza)
- **the hill of Slavonski Brod** (pronounced: sla-von-ski b-rod)

Slavonia is one of the largest wine-growing regions in Croatia, with a long viticulture tradition preserved in every corner, from Bilogora to Papuk. The Slavonian climatic characteristics remain unchanged in almost every part of this spacious region. Its most distinguished feature is that autumn is generally warmer than spring, providing beneficial effects on natural processes of sugar accumulation, which is one of the primary determinants of wine quality.

*Kutjevo as the Heart of Continental
Wine Production*



Considering wine tradition, Slavonia had a very turbulent past. Archaeological findings show that viticulture was introduced to the area at the time of the Ancient Romans, although their arrival seems to have been fatal, as wine growing was not mentioned again until the 13th century. The Cistercians from Kutjevo monastery were particularly responsible for the reappearance of viticulture in the region. They organised complete agricultural production, which included wine growing as an important part of the Christian tradition. During the Turkish occupation, wine growing seems to have disappeared from the region, only to reappear after their withdrawal. At the time, viticulture was reintroduced to the region, due to the Church, especially to the Đakovo diocese, but also through many noble families from the region, such as the counts Janković from Daruvar. Wine production in Slavonia endured another terrible blow at the end of 19th century, when most of the grapes were attacked by disease and blight. When looking at the short-term consequences, disease stopped almost all wine production in the area, whereas long-term consequences included the introduction of new varieties of mostly German origin, such as Graševina (Welschriesling), Silvanac zeleni and Rajnski rizling. Many local varieties became completely extinct. After the Second World War, new French varieties were introduced, mostly of the Pinot family, which finally completed the current selection.

Graševina is most certainly the most valuable Slavonian variety, although often underestimated due to its unpretentious name and some lower quality wines from the lowland area. Climatic conditions and fecund soil of the region provide ideal surroundings for its cultivation. As Graševina is harvested rather late, its characteristics blend perfectly with cool springs and warm autumn periods. If a vineyard's position is carefully planned, its inclination to decay may be annulled. If Graševina is exposed to sufficient amount of solar rays and cultivated on the appropriate hillside, it accumulates sufficient sugar levels and reduced cropping, providing an excellent end product.

Best Cultivation Conditions for Graševina to Be Found in Slavonia

Graševina wines of the Slavonian region are usually characterised by fruity flavours, reminding one of apples and other ripe fruit. Gentle almond shades as well as herbal flavours, such as chamomile, green tea and hay, are almost regular components of this particular variety. The share of sweet, flowery flavours as well as an aroma of honey is developed consistently with the increasing remnants of un-boiled sugar. Late and selection vintage are abundant in flavours,

which are a mixture of wild flowers, locust honey and quince jam. Graševina is usually very brisk, due to naturally high levels of acids, which together with rich extract, low levels of un-boiled sugar and a substantial degree of alcohol, creates a heavy and delicious flavour. The aftertaste is usually characterised by a mildly bitter note, which gives Graševina its unique appearance.

Rajnski rizling, another very popular Slavonian variety, is primarily cultivated in very limited areas of the region. The best vintage usually comes from the Kutjevo vineyards, whose Rizling is usually rich and flowery in flavour with a hint of citrus fruit and traces of "more serious" and disguised notes of kerosene. It develops its full flavour after one year, so quality wines do not appear on the open market very quickly. Rajnski rizling reminds in style of its German counterparts in the Pfalz region.

This region proved itself as a welcoming place for all Burgundy varieties, probably due to the fact that both regions are situated at the same latitude. Chardonnay and Pinot crni, as well as Pinot Sivi in some cases, have shown exquisite characteristics. Both white and red varieties of Bordeaux origins are also present in the region. Several vintages of Cabernet Sauvignon have shown good results whereas Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc show excellent results on regular basis.

Exquisite Sweet Wines Awarded Gold Medals

The highest slopes of Slavonia are used for the cultivation of special wines. Ice vintages, which are successful on a regular basis, together with dry wines are awarded gold medals at many prestigious competitions worldwide, such as 'Decanter World Wine Awards' or 'Mundus Vini'.



MOSLAVINA

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETAL

- **Škrlet** (pronounced: sh-kr-let)
- **Dišeća Ranina** (pronounced: di-she-tcha ra-ni-na)

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILL

- **the hill of Voloder - Ivanićgrad** (pronounced: volo-der iva-nitch-g-rad)

Moslavina is one of the rare wine-growing regions of continental Croatia to have resisted the influence of more popular French and German varieties. Hence, the most prominent varieties in the region are of local origin. The wine-growing tradition of Moslavina goes back many centuries. The first written evidence can be traced back to the times of emperor Claudius when Ancient Roman authors praised the wine produced by Roman legionnaires on the slopes of Mons Claudius or Moslavačka gora, near Siscia (today known as the city of Sisak). The Catholic Church, or Čazma chapter to be more specific, together with noble families of the region, such as the counts Erdödy, holders of the renowned vineyards near Voloder, carried on the cultivation of wine-growing during Middle Ages.

The southern slopes of Mosavačka gora offer the most appropriate locations for viticulture. They are characterised by rather small plots whereas larger vineyards are the exception rather than the rule. Therefore, wines of the region are not well represented on the national market, being more locally oriented towards the Sisak area. This market-related inferiority also brings certain advantages, such as the preservation of ancient local varieties of Škrleta, Dišeća ranina and Moslavac through traditional and more natural cultivation procedures, which are best applied on small plots.

*Moslavina is a region of light
and refreshing wines*

Škrlet, the most popular and prestigious variety of the region, is of local origin and is cultivated by all prominent winemakers. It is considered to be the continental counterpart of Žlahtina from the island of Krk. Škrlet wines, with their low level content of extracts, reduced to medium alcohol levels and slightly increased acid levels are characterised by a very gentle but brisk character. The mild flavour is of predominantly fruity shade, reminding of barely ripe apples and young pears, with a mild touch of dried herbs. Mineral shades of quartz and schist are distinct characteristics of the more prestigious wine brands. Škrlet wines often vary in quality, depending on the manufacturer and specific variety type. Škrlet zeleni is famous as an abundant fruit-bearer whereas Škrlet žuti, being less fertile, is of higher quality. However, Škrlet is a variety whose time has yet to come. Its variants and clones should be systematically selected. Hence, the new characteristics of this specific variety remain to be discovered in the forthcoming future.

Dišeća ranina, also known as Dišeća Belina or Petrinjska Ranina, is another prominent variety of the region. Although rarely used in the production of single wine brands, it is often added as an aromatic "spice" to other regional varieties, such as Škrlet or Graševina. It is characterised by a distinct and attractive nutmeg note as well as by an airy and brisk flavour, due to its distinctively pronounced acids.



PLEŠIVICA

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETALS

- **Rajnski rizling** (*pronounced: rain-ski riz-ling*) COMMON SYNONYM Riesling
- **Sauvignon blanc, Chardonnay**

TYPICAL RED VARIETALS

- **Portugizac** (*pronounced: por-tu-gi-zatz*) COMMON SYNONYM Portugieser
- **Pinot crni** (*pronounced: pi-no tzi-ni*) COMMON SYNONYM Pinot Noir

MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Plešivica** (*pronounced: ple-shi-vi-tza*)
- **the hill of Sveta Jana** (*pronounced: sve-ta i-ana*)
- **the hill of Vivodina** (*pronounced: vi-vo-di-na*)

The history of this extremely charming region is similar to historical events of Northern and North-Western wine-growing regions of Croatia. The Church, nobility as well as the wealthy towns of Samobor and Jastrebarsko, have contributed to the cultivation of grapes, from the Middle Ages until the present day. Many vineyards, situated on predominantly small plots, have maintained old traditions of supporting grapes with wooden stakes. Plešivica region is famous for the cultivation of a mixed varietal selection, ranging from traditional local varietals to several cultivars of American origin, such as Noah, Isabelle and Delaware. Vineyards, which cultivate monocultures, are dominated by renowned international varietals such as Chardonnay, Rajnski rizling, Silvanac zeleni, Graševina, Rizvanac and Portugizac. Traditional local varietals, such as Šipelj, Plavac žuti, Kraljevina, Belina and Moslavac are only to be found in vineyards with mixed varietals.

The Pleševica region is famous for its large number of quality winemakers, some of whom offer first quality Croatian wines, able to compete with the most renowned brands.

Typically continental climatic conditions, with cold winters and abundant precipitation, are mostly suitable for the more aromatic varietals, such as Sauvignon and Muškat, which regularly achieve outstanding results. However, Rajnski rizling, with its significantly distinct characteristics, shows top quality results in this region, specifically when cultivated in the most appropriate areas.



Plešivica is a perfect region for the cultivation of Riesling

The most appropriate cultivation areas of the region are mostly situated very high above sea level and are characterised by a “healthy” air circulation. Vineyards are usually situated on very steep slopes, providing an ideal blend of grapes and solar rays. This is a perfect natural environment for Rajnski rizling, a varietal which requires both a cold climate and direct contact with solar rays. In this region, Rajnski rizling is represented in three very distinctive, but equally attractive variations. The first, a part of the regular vintage, is simpler in character, with a fruity flavour, reminding of peaches and apples. Its aroma also shows mild hints of wild flowers. It produces light to medium brisk wines of a refreshing flavour. The second variation is more complex. Grapes are harvested only after reaching high sugar levels, with flavours gaining in complexity. The fruity aroma is more mature, reminding of deliciously stewed peaches and apricots. Floral shades, with the prevailing aroma of locust, have become sweeter. Due to high levels of alcohol and substantial extracts, flavours are full-bodied, thus producing a strong, rich and delicious wine. As the product of a late or elective harvest, the third variety of Rajnski rizling is very sweet, providing wines with an intense scent of locust honey and apricot jam and a full-bodied, long-lasting aftertaste. A single varietal, producing three completely different, but equally top-quality variations in such a small region, deserves the title of champion of the Plešivica region.

Portugizac from Plešivica is the Croatian Beaujolais Nouveau

Portugizac, another leading varietal of the region, is perhaps not of the same top quality as Rajnski rizling, but the local winemakers did not intend to cultivate another varietal with similar characteristics. Portugizac is a young, frisky wine with very short life-span and is therefore best used before the end of winter. This gentle, raspberry flavoured red wine with a mildly sour aroma is bottled each November under the same brand. Each and every winemaker sells his supplies, one month after they have been placed on the market. All regional winemakers decided to brand this varietal together and they have produced a very successful, frisky and sociable wine which makes Portugizac one of the leading varietals of the Plešivica region.

MEĐIMURJE AND VARAŽDIN

TYPICAL VARIETALS

- **Sauvignon blanc**
- **Muškat žuti** (pronounced: *mush-kat zu-ti*) COMMON SYNONYM *Muscat a Petit Grain*

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hill of Međimurje** (pronounced: *me-dji-mur-ie*)
- **the hill of Varaždin** (pronounced: *va-raz-din*)

Unlike other continental parts of Croatia, this most north-westerly region was spared from Turkish occupation. Hence, the continuous wine-growing tradition can be traced back to the times of the Ancient Romans. Due to a large number of small, disunited vineyard plots, wine of this region never reaches the national market, but is produced solely for personal use. During the Middle Ages, only the Church and numerous noble families owned larger acreages of vineyards, whereas today they are mostly company-owned. When compared with other Croatian regions, this north-westerly part is characterised by cold and humid climatic conditions, with the highest rate of precipitation in the whole country.

Such climatic conditions are not suitable for many varieties, such as Graševina, with the exception of its predicative vintage, but are excellent for many aromatic varieties, such as Sauvignon or Muškat.

Picturesque Hills and Cool Climate

Stanetinski vrh and Železna gora, situated in Međimurje region, as well as Sv. Barbara, located on the wine-growing hills of Varaždin, are the most appropriate viticulture locations of the region. These steep, picturesque slopes, situated rather high above sea level, are the perfect spot, where weak autumn sun rays increase the necessary sugar levels in grapes to their maximum.

When such prerequisites are applied during cultivation, Sauvignon bijeli shows one of its most seductive characteristics. Its magnificent and attractive flavours of a refreshing character, with the hints of gooseberry, freshly cut grass, elder and green peppers, own their presence to humid summer mornings as well as dry autumn seasons, characterised by significantly reduced temperatures. Naturally high acid levels in grapes require special attention during harvesting, but are responsible for a fresh and fruity flavour, creating in this wine an attractive scent and refreshing and easy to drink.

Alluring Flavours and Pronounced: Freshness are Typical Characteristics of the Region

Muškat varieties, especially Muškat žuti, have also found their home in the region. They are characterised by a wonderful mixture of flavours, such as wild flowers, roses, glacée citrus fruits, with a sweet hint of honey. As opposed to Muškat bijeli and Muškat Ottonel, its pronounced: aroma and full-bodied flavour provide Muškat žuti with an extra hint of quality, nominating it as the leading varietal of the region. The best vintages are to be found in the area of Štrigova and Dubrava breg, near Varaždin.





HRVATSKO ZAGORJE AND PRIGORJE

TYPICAL WHITE VARIETALS

- **Kraljevina** (pronounced: kra-lie-vi-na)
- **Silvanac zeleni** (pronounced: sil-va-natz ze-le-ni) COMMON SYNONYM *Sylvaner*
- **Pinot bijeli** (pronounced: pi-no bi-ie-li) COMMON SYNONYM *Pinot Blanc*

THE MOST PROMINENT WINE-GROWING HILLS

- **the hills of Zelina** (pronounced: ze-li-na)
- **the hills of Pregrada** (pronounced: pre-gra-da)

The rich viticulture history of the region has been extremely tumultuous. In other words, wine production has for centuries been a major source of income for the inhabitants of the region, including the Church and Zagreb diocese, the free royal cities of Gradec and Križevci as well as the serfs, who treated grapes as a major agricultural crop. One of the most important historic events was the Croatian-Slovenian peasant revolt under the leadership of Matija Gubec, which was partially caused by increased claims made by the feudal lord Tahy over wine surplus as well by imposing limits on the wine trade. However, the viticulture tradition has been successfully continued up to the present day. Despite this region having the largest winegrowing surface area in the country, single vineyards are situated on rather small plots as a result of historical and traditional influences.

Winemaking Is a Very Popular Pastime in the Region

Vineyards, cultivated traditionally on very small plots of land, as well as winegrowing being a very popular pastime, contributed to a further local specific characteristic. Vineyards are mostly based on mixed varietals, sometimes even including cultivars, such as Noah, Delaware and Isabelle (locally known as Direktor or Izabela).



Traditional methods of cultivation have shown many advantages, particularly noticeable in the preservation of traditional local varietals. Kraljevina, Moslavac, Belina, Zelec, Plavec žuti and Šipelj to name but a few, owe their survival to the fact that they are slow to adapt to new trends. However, new viticultural developments forced many local winemakers to cultivate monocultures of primarily international origin, such as Chardonnay, Silvanac, Sauvignon, Pinot bijeli, Pinot sivi, Graševina and Traminac, which, when added to local and American varietals, enriched the total varietal cross-section of the region. Despite individual winemakers producing good quality wines from international varietals, none of the above varietals has managed to impose itself as a regional leader.

Although Kraljevina is traditionally well-represented, its significance is decreasing steadily, and is mostly replaced by international varietals.

*This region is famed for its sweet
botrytic wines.*

This region is one of the colder wine-producing regions of Croatia and thus it is always possible to find a higher level of acids in both grape and wine. In dry wines, acids could dominate and perhaps disturb the equilibrium of the wine. As a result, it is more common practice to grow sweeter varietals where such a level of acid is desirable. Extremely late harvesting (under snow and ice conditions) and predicated harvesting of dried grapes from the region are considered to be the best in the country as a whole, proven by being awarded multiple trophies and medals over the part years and in particular by 'Decanter World Wine Awards'. From this region came four gold medals from the eight in total awarded to Croatia.



MOST IMPORTANT
GRAPE VARIETALS
IN CROATIA

White Varietals

GRAŠEVINA

pronounced: gra-she-vi-na

MOST FREQUENT SYNONYMS

Welschriesling, Laški rizling, Olasz rizling, Vlašsky ryzlink, Riesling Italico

Graševina is most certainly an international wine, the origin of which has not yet been determined with certainty. Some sources claim that it is French, others that it is Romanian, and there is also speculation it might well be Italian or Austrian. The prefixes welsch, laški, olasz and vlašsky in different languages mean “from Wallachia” or, Croatian, “iz Vlaške”, which clearly suggests that the wine comes from southern Romania, as this region has been called for centuries. However, in Romania it is called Riesling Italico. The origin, nevertheless, is not as important as the fact that graševina is predominantly the wine belonging to the countries of the Danube region. More precisely, this varietal is cultivated in all the countries of the Danube region: Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Austria, as well as two more from outside the region – Italy and Slovenia.

It owes its popularity primarily to its rewarding characteristics such as high and regular yield, as well as an excellent adaptability to different soils and types of continental climate.

Its international image has been shattered for years due to two reasons. The first is mediocre quality, the type that the socialist economies of most of the above countries cherished for decades, and secondly is the poor choice of the name which, by using the word Riesling in most of its synonyms, sends the message to an average consumer that it is a copy of the real Riesling. But it is not. Such an evaluation is unjust. Graševina is a wine having characteristics considerably different to Riesling and the two should by no means be confused.

Regardless of where Graševina originated, it is certain that it has found a new home in Croatia since, apart from being convincingly the most represented wine, in no other location is it produced in such quantities. For example, in many continental wine-producing regions it takes up more than 50% of total vineyard area. Croats have grown to like it so much that they have given it a special name, deriving from the appearance of the grape at the stage of maturation when it has the appearance of a green pea.

Contrary to misconceptions, Graševina is capable of achieving excellent quality in good regions. In Croatia there are three regions excelling in this, Baranja and Ilok bordering the Danube and Kutjevo in central Slavonia. Thick layers of poor loess along the Danube and summer heat naturally reduce yields and concentrate the content of small grapes. For this reason the Baranja graševinas always abound in sugars, alcohol and body. A little further down the Danube, in Ilok, sheltered by Fruška Gora, the aromas are fresher and the acids are a little higher, so their wines are aromatic and lighter. The abundance of aromas is something in which the region of Kutjevo excels, as it does not gain the structure of the Baranja wines on its hills but has a very attractive and lively character with an excellent acid ratio, due to which it irresistibly reminds of juicy apples. In regular harvests the aromas vary from fresh fruity, such as apple and citrus, to light herbal notes. In warmer years the aromas change towards exotic fruit, and in later harvests,

A normal varietal that has flourished in Croatia and achieved a new meaning

according to the increase in sugar content, abundant flowery, and then honey notes appear. Graševina is also suitable for very late, optional and ice harvesting, particularly in more northerly regions where acids persist in spite of high sugars. The characteristic common to all graševinas is a specific sharp and semi-bitter aftertaste.



MALVAZIJA ISTARSKA

pronounced: mal-va-zia

COMMON SYNONYM

Malvasia Istriana

Malvazija Istarska (Malvasia Istriana) has for decades been considered part of a big family of Mediterranean malvasias (Malvasia, Malmsey), which, to be frank, has minimal linkages apart from the name. More precisely, most malvasias are grown as sweet wines while Malvazija Istarska is sweet as a norm. Ampelographic differences are also quite strong. With the majority of namesakes (Malvasia delle Lipari, Malvasija Dubrovačka) the cluster is looser, more elongated and broad-shouldered, and the difference can be also seen in leaf configuration. Long-standing doubts regarding its kinship to the wider malvasia family have been confirmed by recent genetic research proving through reliable DNA analyses that it is not akin to any. Thus we know today that Malvazija Istarska is a local Istrian wine grape varietal. It is characterised by luxuriant growth and moderate to high yields, due to which it demands significant vineyard operations, and also substantial resistance to vine diseases such as botrytis and oidiuma. It accumulates sugars well so the average values in dry wine range between 11.5% and 13.5% vol. of alcohol. Average total acids in wine vary from 5 to 6 g per litre, and the dry some 20 grams per litre.

Malvazija Istarska is grown throughout Istria, a small amount in the neighbouring Slovenian coastal region, and can also be found in the Italian region of Friuli. It is quite a large area offering various microclimatic conditions due

to which the wine made from Malvazija Istarska comes in several styles. The Association of Istrian Winegrowers has additionally protected the style and quality of their wines by the "IQ" (Istrian Quality) label on the bottle neck. It is not a top-quality label but a guarantee to the purchaser of a base-line style and quality dependability. Better producers produce also a higher category besides the "IQ" Malvazija.

The primary aromas of a mature Malvazija are a combination of fruity and flowery flavours such as apple, peach and nectarine with locust flower, supported by more or less prominent but always traceable mineral notes. The mineral note also stretches through the flavour in the form of a mild saltiness and slightly bitter finish. The look and style of certain Malvazija varies, depending on the position from which it came. The malvasias of western Istria, whose positions are closer to the coast, have a more prominent mineral quality, which is sometimes utterly stripped of other flavours. However, they are more commonly combined with light fruity aromas such as peach. The same sub-region, western Istria, is characterised at slightly elevated positions by attractive flowery aromas blended with ripe fruit. The malvasias of central Istria and those from even higher altitudes are characterised by the emphasised fruitiness of apples and nectarines as well as livelier and refreshing acids. Southern Istria, though, is characterised



Malvazija Istarska is a dry and refreshing wine when labelled IQ

by a slightly sweeter fruitiness tuned to more exotic fruit and an almost regular banana flavour. Such differences in styles have not been solely caused by the versatility of the positions but also by Malvazija subtypes, the settlement and cataloguing of which is under way. Malvazija endures ageing extraordinarily well; thus two basic types can mainly be found in the market - fresh, supposed to be consumed within 2 years, and mature, ready for market in the third year after harvest at the earliest.

POŠIP

pronounced: po-ship

FREQUENT SYNONYMS

pošip bijeli, pošipak, pošipica

A very successful and increasingly popular local white varietal facing a promising future. Originating from Korčula, it is a hybrid of two domestic wine grape varieties, bratkovina and zlatarica, which are themselves local variants to the island of Korčula. It is mostly grown on Korčula, but can also be found on the neighbouring islands of Mljet, Lastovo, Hvar, Brač, and the peninsula of Pelješac. It has adapted exceptionally well to its original habitat, gives good yields, has an excellent ability of accumulating high sugar content, up to 25 g per litre, extracts and, most important for the hot Mediterranean climate, preserves acids extremely well.

This variety shows splendid adaptability to various methods of vinification. It comes to the market in two categories. The first is aromatic and fresh, fermented in stainless tanks and represents some 80% of total production. The aroma complex is very rich and attractive. Fresh sauvignon tones of cut grass and gooseberry blend with an admixture of citrus and continental fruit, as well as mineral notes. The flavour is also fresh but with a very solid body, higher alcohol and a good coverage of necessary acids.

The other expression of style is considerably different. Some specimens are obtained by fermentation and subsequent sur lie ageing in oak barrels, whilst with others fermentation takes place in stainless tanks, and ageing in barriques. The results are complex and strong wines, with the potential for ten-year



The most significant white variety in Dalmatia is synonymous with first-class quality

storage, strong alcohol, a fat and almost buttery texture, with an attractive relish on the aftertaste. The aromatic profile is considerably influenced by the yeasts giving it the aroma of toast; there may also be vanilla tones and Mediterranean herbs, and it is important to note that it preserves successfully also the primary fruitiness of mostly citrus and sometimes also dried or candied fruit.

CHARDONNAY

The most widespread white wine grape varietal in Croatia. It is present in all regions, including Dalmatia. Istria cultivates an interesting style, mostly rich with smells of fresh fruity aromas, mostly of high acids, with also a solid medium body of ripe and juicy flavour and moderate alcohol. Several producers such as Degrassi and Matošević mature wine in small barrique barrels and achieve interesting results: a more intense and sharper flavour, a richer and more mature character, alcohol regularly exceeding 13%, a slightly less intensity and greater complexity of aromas. In the north of Croatia, in the regions of Međimurje, Zagorje, Prigorje and on Plešivica, a mostly light and fresh style prevails, a thin to medium body, smooth and sweet, of moderate fruity aromas most often abounding in apple and citrus. Apart from this light style, a few wine producers have achieved very renowned results with predicates, the wines characterised by intense sweetness and abounding in wonderful aromas of apricot and honey.

In Slavonia, Chardonnay changes into a strong and serious wine which is, when matured in stainless steel, of a fruity and delicious character, but when aged in barriques



Luxuriant and rich when coming from Slavonia, Danube region and Istria, and fresh and fragrant from the northwest of Croatia

and produced by sur lie technology, achieves top quality. The Danube region produces strong and full specimens, almost buttery in texture, with high alcohol levels and very ripe aromas.

RAJNSKI RIZLING

pronounced: rai-in-ski riz-ling

COMMON SYNONYM

Riesling

Riesling is a varietal adapted for centuries to the chilly German climate and achieving the best results in such or a very similar climate. However, the fact is that as with Chardonnay, it possesses a property of excellent adaptability to other, totally different geoclimatic conditions. In those parts of Croatia with a cooler climate, what is particularly appreciated is the resistance of the vine to low temperatures, enduring easily, today's more and more rare appearance of winter temperatures down to minus 20°C. The yield is moderate to high, depending on several factors, mostly geographical. A normal year under Croatian continental conditions can achieve 10,000 litres per hectare without any problem. Riesling has a unique ability of achieving high sugar levels in ripe grapes, maintaining at the same time a very high acid content, amounting often to 15 grams per litre. Due to this characteristic and, naturally, to its refined aroma, it makes an almost ideal varietal for predicates of all types, and a late harvest would be a desirable minimum. In Croatia three styles may be found. One is a very light, refreshing and a mildly sour wine, most often the consequence of the regular harvest time in northern regions.

The other style is a mature and delicious wine, with lively acids, also with a refreshing character and a very rich aromatic complex in which flowery aromas of locust can regularly be found, as well as peach and, for the varietal very typical, sharp, but as a spice, pleasant traces of petrol. In this style, particularly good results are achieved by wine producers undertaking their harvest after the regular time (late harvest) but allowing all or almost all the sugars to



From the western parts of continental Croatia it is light and refreshing, and from the eastern mature and strong

ferment into alcohol. The third style are the mentioned predicates, optional and ice harvests, very sweet wines literally overflowing with flowery and honey flavours and being capable of ageing in bottles for decades. It has been shown at its best in the regions of Plešivica and Kutjevo, but it is also successfully grown in other continental regions, especially the Danube region and Slavonia, where wines are somewhat stronger with more mature aromas and more intense colour.

ŽLAHTINA

pronounced: zla-h-ti-na

A local varietal of the Croatian coastal region, it is grown mainly in a narrow area of the island of Krk. Until the appearance of phylloxera it used to be considerably better represented and cultivated in all the sub-region. It is again very popular in Croatia today and probably the only varietal the full quantity of which is successfully sold in 0.7 l-bottles. It gives high yields and has large grapes, so in the vineyard appears as a varietal for food rather than wine, producing, however, wines of excellent quality. Žlahtina wines are always gentle, with milder alcohol varying from 11% to 12%, and typically not exceeding 12.5%.

Aromas are usually gentle but also very pleasant. Most often one finds a combination of gentle fruity aromas such as apple and ripe citrus with the notes of meadow herbs with a mild admixture of flowers. The flavour is gentler owing to lighter alcohol but also to lower acidity than those typical of the wines with lower levels of alcohol. Due to this, it is easily drunk and possesses attractiveness consumers simply adore. It is not intended for longer ageing but will, in spite of its gentle structure, endure up to three years without any major disturbance to its quality.



Žlahtina gives gentle and light wines of an attractive aroma

SAUVIGNON BIJELI (WHITE)

FREQUENT SYNONYMS

Sauvignon blanc, Muskat Silvaner



Sauvignon is predominantly grown in continental Croatia, where it is represented in all sub-regions but is also successfully cultivated in coastal Croatia, especially in Istria. In continental regions it turns into wine by itself, without mixing with other varieties, in the majority of cases it is intended for quick consumption, whilst a better-quality minority vinifies itself in the manner requiring shorter or longer ageing. It seldom reaches wooden barrels (barriques), mostly in the Slavonian sub-region, but even as such it shows interesting results as it successfully preserves the refreshing character of the aromas of gooseberry, freshly cut grass, elder and mineral notes, as well as the freshness, juiciness, and sweetness of the flavour, its main anchor.

In Istria it is often mixed with other varieties, mostly Malvazija and Chardonnay, but it occasionally reaches the bottle by itself. Blending Sauvignon with other varieties in Istria is due to the impact of tradition from the neighbouring regions of Slovenian Brda and Italian Collio. Such coupages are not produced with young and fresh wines but with mature and well-structured ones so that their intense aroma would be slightly weakened in order to make an harmonious match with the bouquet of the other varieties.

*Croatian Sauvignons often
abound in the aroma
of elder*

In cooler regions with sufficient precipitation, the goal is an aroma as intense and attractive as can be achieved, but also with a steady and refreshing flavour, which is an attractive characteristic for most consumers. The best results of the style are achieved by wine producers in Međimurje, towards the northwest of the most protruding wine-producing region. Međimurje excels amongst others both in the aspects of price and quality. Their Sauvignons are always attractive, due to their aroma and their price. Following Međimurje, the best potential for the fresh and aromatic style is shown by the region of Varaždin, and then Prigorje and Plešivica.

TRAMINAC

pronounced: tra-mi-natz

FREQUENT SYNONYMS

Gewürtztraminer, Mirisni traminac, Traminac crveni



The king of aromatic varieties, once much more popular than today due to a firmly dominant Graševina. After years of stagnation, the image has improved of late. Cultivation and sales of Traminac have risen. In Croatia it is grown in all continental regions with varying rates of success. The cooler regions of northwest Croatia plant it very often, with a variable rate of success compared with the other two popular aromatic varieties –sauvignon and muškat žuti. Predicates are excellent as a rule, with an excellent ratio of sugar, acid and spice, and the dry wines are light and intended for use within two years.

In Slavonia and the Danube region it is vice-versa; aromatic sauvignon and muškats do not achieve such good results but Traminac, to the contrary, shines in full splendour. The predicates from Ilok and Kutjevo are so good that the most fervent opponents of sweet and aromatic wines remain speechless, disarmed by the intense honey and flowery aromas, a rich, strong and often sharp lasting flavour. The shortcoming of numerous predicates is that there is very little beyond sweetness but in this case the sweet flavour

*Sweet wines from
Croatian Traminac last for
one's whole life*

is just the beginning followed by character, steadiness and strength. Dry (with no sugar residues) traminac also has a splendid character, a little higher in sugar than Graševina, a solid extract and acids giving it fruitiness and relish, as well as equally attractive aromas, albeit with fewer honey, but more flowery and fruity notes.

MALVASIJA DUBROVAČKA

pronounced: mal-va-sia du-bro-vatch-ka

FREQUENT SYNONYMS

Malvasia delle Lipari, Malvasia di Sardegna, Malvasia de Sitges



*Malvasija is best as Prošek,
a sweet and strong wine
typical of Dalmatia*

It was long considered a local varietal of the Dubrovnik region but recent scientific research has established it as a member of a large Mediterranean Malvasia family, which can also be found in several more countries such as Italy and Spain. In Croatia it has been proved to be one of the oldest varietals, since its name was mentioned in 14th-century documents from the Dubrovnik Republic. Its cultivation today has been confined to a narrow area of the Dubrovnik and Konavli surroundings. Due to its form, featuring a loose cluster and thick grape skin, it is suitable for the production of traditional Prošek – sweet wine made of semi-dried grapes.

It easily accumulates a high sugar content, so sweet wines from Malvasija are at the same time both very sweet and very strong. Aromas are attractive, from honey tones, over candied citrus, liqueur admixtures to dried figs and walnuts.

DEBIT

pronounced: de-bit



Once a highly appreciated varietal, its habitat was endangered by war activities, which thus made production reach an all-time low in the 1990's. Today its popularity and vineyard representation are on the rise once again. Tradition says that it was named after a toll that had to be paid in wine. Since precisely the wine made from Debit was of good quality, the authorities insisted on using precisely this varietal to settle the debt.

There are similar examples in other parts of Dalmatia; Plavac mali, for example, is called Pagadebit (pagare debt) on Korčula. Of all Dalmatian varietals Debit has the best ratio of acids and sugars so it most often gives the only Dalmatian white wine a refreshing character. This fresh character is partly also due to its situation. Specifically, the Debit vineyards are not by the seaside but in the hinterland of Dalmatia, in the inland area behind Šibenik and Skradin, where night temperatures are considerably lower than those on the coast.

*A very high-quality varietal
that preserves freshness well
and has the potential for
longer ageing*

GRK

pronounced: gr-k



*Faithful picture of
historically traditional
white Dalmatian wine*

Another treasure from the treasury of Croatian local varieties. It is mainly grown on the island of Korčula and production levels are very low. It is difficult to cultivate, since its flower is unisexual, functionally female, so it should be planted with another pollinator variety, and on Korčula this role is most often reserved for the popular variety of Plavac mali. Due to this rare phenomenon, the Grk cluster is often full of stunted grapes, giving it a specific appearance. It produces strong and full wines when dry, and is occasionally also used for Prošek – the Dalmatian type of very sweet wine.

ŠKRLET

pronounced: sh-kr-let



*Ideal summer wine,
discrete, lively and
refreshing*

A local variety of continental origin, it is grown in a narrow area of the central Croatia sub-region, mostly in the wine-producing region of Moslavina. Škrlet is the continental equivalent of Žlahtina, a slightly more discrete aroma and a slightly higher in acids. Lively and light wines with alcohol varying from 12.5% and served as ideal summer wine, which is also when they reach their full shape. A life cycle of an average Škrlet stretches over two years at most, but it is best to use during the first. Due to a very fine, although discrete aroma and a refreshing character, it goes extraordinarily well with food, especially light, summer dishes.

During the past few years, in conjunction with the increasing popularity of local varieties, the popularity of Škrlet and, subsequently, its cultivation have also risen but it does not go beyond its region of origin for the moment.

VUGAVA

pronounced: vu-ga-va

*Giving full, strong and
mature wines*

The origin of Vugava is unknown, but it is considered to be a local and very old variety and its appearance can be traced back to ancient times. Apart from Plavac mali it is the most mentioned Dalmatian variety in international guides and atlases but its glory is disproportionate to today's mass-market interests.

The reason lies in the fact that it most often reaches the market in the traditional form, with very high sugar content and overripe aromas, the characteristics not currently 'in'. It is cultivated exclusively on the island of Vis.

KUJUNDŽUŠA

pronounced: ku-iun-dju-sha

*Discrete, soft and
light wines*

The origin of Kujundžuša is unknown but it is considered to be a local variety. According to tradition, it was named after a Turkish word (golden) that describes the golden color of the grape at its mature stage, and according to another, after the family name Kujundžić, as one of its first producers. It is grown exclusively in the sub-region of Dalmatinska Zagora, surrounding the town of Imotski.

Like Žlahtina, it gives gentle wines with milder acids so, due to its mild character, it is easily drunk and very popular in its region of origin, where its vineyard representation amounts to as much as 90%. Its aroma is discrete, featuring gentle fruit traces blended with mild minerals. A gentle flavor, with alcohol varying from 11% to 12% and not overly prominent acids.



MOST IMPORTANT
GRAPE VARIETALS
IN CROATIA

Red Varietals

PLAVAC MALI

COMMON SYNONYM

pagadebit crni

The king of red wines in Croatia. Generations of lovers of quality wine have developed their expected quality standards towards all red varieties based on the varietal properties of this great local variety. Thus, even how some subtler and gentler varieties like pinot crni or frankovka are unjustly and insufficiently appreciated due to their characteristics opposite to the Karst plavac varieties. It is the only variety cultivated in Croatia that rarely reaches the market under its proper varietal name. It is usually found under 'fantasy names' designating most often the geographic location, such as Dingač, Postup, Plavac mali, Žuljana, Ivan Dolac, Plavac Bol, Plavac Murvica, but also under fantasy names of an indefinite character, such as Stagnum, Zlatan Plavac, Villa Sponza, Faros, Kaštelet, Pelješac or simply just Plavac.

Plavac mali is a local variety of central and southern Dalmatia, and a few years ago, thanks to co-operation between the Californian ampelographer, Carol Meredith, from the famous Davis University and experts from the Faculty of Agriculture Edi Maletić and Ivan Pejić, with the wholehearted support of "our" Californian viticulturist, Miljenko Grgić, the parental pair of varieties was established by the crossbreeding of which Plavac mali had been created. Both parents are also local Croatian varieties, one of which was literally facing extinction,

and the other was only present on the island of Šolta. The first was called Kaštelanski Crljenak or Pribidrag and is identical to the famous Californian variety Zinfandel and Italian Primitivo, and the other is Dobričić, serving for years mostly just to improve the colour of other varieties.

The variety is exceptionally well adapted to the very hot Mediterranean climate and miserly soil; moreover, the plavac varieties from the southern Kras slopes exposed to the sunshine give full, strong and healthy wines of an excellent quality and long life cycle, while the plavac varieties "from the field", produce lower-quality wines. It is the same way with the yields, which are indeed regular and reliable, but may be abundant or very poor, so yields may vary from 4,000 litres to 15,000 litres per hectare, depending on the position. When wine comes from good sites, its famous strong points emerge to the surface. The wines usually abound in tannins, sometimes even very astringent, alcohol levels are very high, from 13% to 16%, most often mildly sweetish, which is rather the result of the compound of high alcohols, tannins and glycerol, than sugar residues, and a very rich and full body. The smell of Plavac mali is easily recognisable, typically a combination of sweetish notes of dry or even baked fruit, with mild aromas of cherries, blueberries and prunes, and easily memorable mocha notes (the

smell of game). Aromas get much richer if wine is left to mature in barrique barrels, and in that case these aromas are supplemented with dark chocolate, coffee, vanilla, pepper and many others, which is all the more beneficial for the flavour than the fragrance, as somewhat harsh tannins are rounded and softened, the wine structure gets firmer and the wine lasts longer.

Except those being locally Dalmatian, its cultivation has, unfortunately, also become confined within these boundaries, so it may now be found mostly on all major islands and the narrow coastal region of central and southern Dalmatia. According to the quantity cultivated, the peninsula of Pelješac is at the forefront, followed immediately by Hvar, and then Brač, Vis, Mljet and Lastovo. Among the islands or the coast, which is a macro-location, what matters much more, is position, so the best wines



*King of red
varietals*

currently come from the Dingač, Postup and Trstenik positions on Pelješac, Ivan Dolac and Sveta Nedjelja from Hvar and Murvica from Brač. It is certain that some good positions have not yet been discovered since a linking thread of these positions can be found in quite a few more sites on the Adriatic, so thanks also to a great interest in this variety, new viticulturists and newly discovered positions may be expected in the forthcoming years.

BABIĆ

pronounced: ba-bitsh

FREQUENT SYNONYMS

babica, babičević, pažanin, roguljanac, šibenčanac


A local varietal which has entered this short review of the most significant varietals in Croatia due to its great representation or significance but due to its extraordinary varietal characteristics and a great quality potential.

It draws its origin from central or northern Dalmatia, as the listed synonyms may suggest. At the mention of the babiĆ varietal, most wine lovers see the apparition of stone-paved terraces of Primošten or the so-called Primošten "stone lace", so often seen in various commercials and tourist advertisements. However, this picture depicts nicely what kind of conditions BabiĆ needs so that it would produce top quality wine. Fertile soil like Ravni Kotari, the Kaštela fields or Dalmatinska Zagora fields have not proved to be a particular success in growing this varietal. Similar to Plavac mali, it needs miserly soil, exposure to the sun and low yields. But, contrary to Plavac mali, it preserves acids without problems so they reach 7 grams per litre, so the wines are of a livelier character.

BabiĆ is not particularly attractive as young wine from stainless steel. In such wine vegetal notes prevail, such as fern and green vegetables, and among fruit blackberry is most commonly found. However, when grapes are well-ripened, the share of fruity aromas increases, and when wine maturation takes place in new oak barrels, aromas become complex and very pleasant. This is normally the characteristic of some other great varietals like syrah.

BabiĆ should not be produced as light wine as the flavour is precisely the part where its' potential shines in its splendour. Its increased acids fantastically match high alcohols and abundant (not astringent) tannins, so the body then becomes full and very strong, but at the same time sweet and delicious. While less alcohol would result in a thinner body, acids would jump out, the wine would be refreshing, true, but imbalanced and bland.

Maturation in oak (barrique) barrels suits it particularly well. Regarding the fact that its primary aromas are not flowery or fruity, it achieves a lot with maturation



*Excellent quality,
rich wine needing
long ageing*

through a positive impact of oak and barrique, which tame, possibly overstressed, tannins, additionally stresses fullness and with low lactic fermentation blunting acids gives support in the sense of harmonising extreme valued that such a wine naturally possesses.

TERAN

pronounced: te-ran

MOST COMMON SYNONYMS

Refosco d'Istria, Terrano

Teran is an indigenous Istrian wine. Until recently it had been regarded only as an adopted variety, more precisely a sub-variety of the Italian Refosco, which is incorrect. Recently published DNA analyses have finally determined diversities between these two similar varieties.

Before phylloxera struck at the beginning of the 20th century, Teran had spread over a considerably wider area than today. Today, we can find it only in Istria, and in smaller quantities in Slovenia and Italy, whilst in the past its spread included the coastal area and all Kvarner islands.

The most important features of Teran as a variety are high acidity level, sometimes over 10 g/l and a large percentage of antocians, which gives it a fine, dark ruby colour with purple shades, and quite a rich extract that depends on yield and position. The bouquet of Teran is very specific and easily recognisable. It is usually reminiscent of ripe blackberries with an abundance of vegetable overtones, such as fern and sometimes paprika, and also a scent of fresh meat, when it is still young. For the past couple of decades, it has slowly lagged behind the more expansive French varieties, such as Cabernet Franco, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. In comparison, its quality used to be somewhat inferior.

When first brought to market, it had a history of being a quite acid wine with a refreshing character but without pretentious ambitions. Fortunately, over the past several years the situation has changed somewhat, due to the



*A bright and lively wine
with great potential
for maturing*

fact that the leading Istrian wine producers succeeded in producing remarkable wines which overcame the majority of leading international counterparts. The key factors were a reduction in annual yields, harvesting at the most opportune moment and the ageing process carried out in barrique barrels. Acidity levels are such that they cause no bitterness in the mouth although there is a welcoming residue, with the colour changing from ruby-red to a deeper shade, thanks due to higher levels of extracts and alcohol ensuring a more rounded and fuller-bodied wine. Sophisticated tannins add stress to its character. Eventually, the wine has a fine perspective for ageing; currently it is a known fact that 10 years sees continual improvement.

MERLOT

This French varietal is very popular in Croatia. It has been planted for decades in all regions of both continental and coastal Croatia. In Istria, for instance, it has surpassed the local teran by representation and can be found in larger quantities even in the utmost south of Croatia, in the surroundings of Dubrovnik.

It is a very rewarding varietal for cultivation, not very 'picky' regarding soil, and although classic vineyard positions, permeable to water, on the slopes, sun exposed and without long humid periods, will suit it best, its quality will not deteriorate much even in poorer quality positions if proper maturation and moderate yields are made possible. It is precisely due to these "adaptive" qualities that it has spread successfully throughout Croatia.

In Slavonia and the Danube region it gives full, rich and fruity wines, of pleasant fruity aromas, mostly plums, but it does not lack other black fruit either, there are some milder tannins, but it partially lacks acids, which as tannins get supplemented by a coupage of 10% of Cabernet Franc or some other varietal rich in acids and tannins. In Istria the face of Merlot is more similar to the original one from the right bank of the Gironde. Acids and tannins are more stressed when the wine is young, which is why it requires longer maturation. The key to success with



Merlot lies mostly in the yields, so those wine producers that gather the courage to cut them achieve great results and a higher degree of complexity and excellence, which is additionally improved by coupage with other varietals. Interesting results are also achieved in central Dalmatia near the town of Drniš and in Konavli in the very south of Dalmatia and Croatia.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Croatia cultivates Cabernet Sauvignon, following the model of the rest of the world, in all its wine producing regions. The most popular, wide-spread and appreciated red varietal in the world meets only the second criterion. Its popularity is great indeed, but unlike Merlot, and its quality is not so appreciated as that of Plavac mali. Cabernet is also grown in almost all regions with different rates of success.

It is certainly necessary to single out the Danube sub-region, its wine-producing region of Baranja, that astonishes with its richness of aroma and luxuriant flavours, then Istria that has launched several excellent specimens in the past few years and the island of Pag, which succeeds following coupage with Merlot, classify its specimens year in year out as the top Croatian but also European quality wines.

The ability of adapting to various climatic and pedological conditions is one of the most significant qualities of this varietal. In the cool hills of Međimurje a few viticulturists have, in coupage with syrah, produced excellent specimens of a dominantly fruity style. On the other hand, as Cabernet blossoms late and matures long and slowly, so very hot climate with long sunshine periods does not suit, as it speeds up the creation of sugars and the harvest time while the other essential elements remain underdeveloped, it does not give some results in hot Dalmatia yet.



One of the most important characteristics of Cabernet Sauvignon, which makes it excel above all other red varietals is its natural leaning to maturation in oak (barrique) barrels. Cabernet, as well as oak barrels, abounds in tannins, which through long maturation in barrel period of 18 to 24 months harmonise from astringent into pleasant, giving the wine a uniquely long life cycle, managing at the same time to preserve its primary features and fruitiness. Naturally, in such a case wines achieve their peak of quality usually as late as in their second decade.

FRANKOVKA

pronounced: fran-kov-ka

MOST COMMON SYNONYM

Blaufränkische

This important Central European type is present in all sub-regions of continental Croatia. Most types come from the eastern sub-regions of Slavonija and Podunavlje, whilst the most famous vineyards for cultivating Frankovka grapes are found in Feričanci and Srijem (Ilok). In this eastern region, naturally high acidity is somewhat lower. As a result, the level of sugar in the grapes is higher, and thus the wine tends to be lush and fruity with an appealing freshness. There are two types according to the style. The first one comes as a result of maturing in stainless steel containers, where its fruity aromas and lively character are more accentuated. Its colour is intensely dark-ruby. The second type matures in wooden barrels and undergoes low-lactic fermentation. It thus gives lower acidity and a mature fruitiness. Its body is fuller, whilst its flavour is complex and lush.

Frankovka originating from central and north-western Croatia turns to a lighter wine of extremely fruity and refreshing character, whose style reminds of the Austrian Zweigelt, regardless of the fact the wine had matured in wooden or stainless steel barrels.



Top Frankovka wines come from eastern regions of Croatia, Podunavlje and Slavonija

In addition to common red and dry wines found throughout the region of continental Croatia in Ilok, near Danube, Frankovka also gives semi-dry sparkling wines, which is slowly gaining more popularity on the local market.

PINOT CRNI

pronounced: pe-no ser-ni

COMMON SYNONYM

Pinot Noir



Pinot Noir grapes are cultivated in all continental regions and in Istria. Its terroir varies from region to region. Central and north-western Croatia, especially the sub-region of Plešivica, produce Pinot Noir with the most aromatic appeal. In this region, pinot noir pleasantly suggests primary fruit aromas of strawberry and raspberry. The flavour is dominated by a refreshing and accentuated acidity. It reaches the peak of its quality after having rested for a few years in barrels and partly bottled, since it successfully manages to preserve its freshness and fruitiness regardless of secondary and tertiary aromas.

In eastern continental Croatia, in Slavonia, especially in Kutjevo, it has a softer and fuller body, and its colour is darker. Conditions here are similar to its native Burgundy to which its terroir managed to adjust. It is still pleasantly refreshing, though with a fuller body and a higher level of alcohol by volume. Its aromas maintain these features, and are reminiscent of a fruity character with an abundance of spicy tones. In the far east of continental Croatia, in Podunavlje, pinot noir completely transforms its character.

*Pinot Noir excellently
blends with continental
Croatia where it yields
better results than other
international red wines*

The colour turns completely dark, and the aroma is closer to the wines of California than that from Burgundy. Aromas here turn from fruity to marmalade ones with a lush and complex flavour, leaving a long sweet and subtle aftertaste. It is cultivated less in other regions. As a consequence, its style is impossible to ascertain.

PLAVINA

pronounced: pla-vi-na



Plavina from Primorje is the obverse of the continental Frankovka. It spreads across almost all coastal regions, from the islands of Kvarner to the south of Dalmatia, with the exception of Istria. Whilst two of the most important red wines of Dalmatia reflect mild acidity, Plavina does not share this feature.

Plavina wines are usually fresh, whilst the level of alcohol ranges between middle and strong. Its soft tannins are quite unusual for coastal Croatia, making them exceptionally soft and light. For these reasons, Plavina is often blended with the more robust Plavac mali and Babić, contributing thus, with its softness and higher acidity, to the harmony of the primary wine. During the past couple of years, a producer has emerged from northern and central Dalmatia with highly ambitious and quality bottled Plavina monotypes, suggesting possible further development and positioning of Plavina as the third most important indigenous wine type of Dalmatia.

*As opposed to other red
Dalmatian wines, plavina
yields soft, fresh and gentle
fruity wines*



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