

11th – 14th May 2023



Official host of CMB 2023

 **VINISTRA**
www.vinistra.hr



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culinary diversity is on us!



INSPIRE YOURSELF
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PHOTOS: MEDITERRANEAN SCALLOPS (MAJA DANICA PEČANIĆ); KULEN (MAJA DANICA PEČANIĆ)



We are delighted, and proud, to be holding our 30th Concours Mondial de Bruxelles in Istria. The competition aims to be an indicator of trends in the marketplace and Croatia is very much an upcoming wine destination with a rich history dating back to Antiquity. Today, the country boasts an extensive range of native grape varieties such as Malvasia and this authenticity is something present-day consumers are increasingly looking for. From the wine expert through to the inquisitive enthusiast, Croatia's wine scene certainly deserves everyone's full attention!

Since we began working with Croatia, we have been struck by the significance of families and the authenticity of vineyards that are at one with their natural surroundings. Here, more than ever, wine is an integral part of tourism and the Concours will be introducing its 350 judges from around the world to the highlights of a wine region which combines magnificent scenery, gourmet delicacies and quality wines. Those judges will most certainly become the new ambassadors of a region which is definitely worth a visit!

By partnering with Croatia, Istria and the town of Poreč, we have the good fortune of working with committed, passionate partners. The people we have met here are devoted, competent professionals who share our commitment to excellence and quality.

President of Concours Mondial de Bruxelles,
Mr. Baudouin Havaux

We wish you a warm welcome to our beloved Istria, region of Croatia!

The most important wine event in Istria in 2023 has begun, and we are honoured to be hosting you. Just one week after Vinistra, our annual international wine and wine equipment fair, the world-famous wine competition, Concours Mondial de Bruxelles, is taking place in Žatika hall in Poreč. It is a great honor and joy for us, Istrian winemakers, Vinistra members, but also for the entire Croatian wine and tourism scene.

With the aim of promoting Istrian wines and the Istrian peninsula as an attractive wine destination, Istria applied to host this famous wine competition in the red and white wine session. The application was prepared by Vinistra, and the news that the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles is coming to our region made us very happy.

By bringing the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles, Istria has positioned itself on the world wine map and further strengthened its position on the European and international level.

According to previous experiences, this prestigious global competition directly affects the tourism, economic and wine sectors due to its global importance, and the region in which it is organized gains marketing visibility on a global level.

Lastly, we would like to thank all members of the Conours Mondial de Bruxelles organisation on making a great choice for this year's host. We are confident you will enjoy your stay in Istria and Croatia and are committed to perform our duties with excellence.

President of Vinistra - association of winegrowers and winemakers of Istria,
Mr. Luka Rossi



Concours Mondial
BRUXELLES

30th EDITION



www.vinistra.hr



GHIASTAFF



AMORIM CORK





OFFICIAL PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2023

Welcome point at Hotel Molindrio Plava Laguna, Zelena Resort, Poreč city

6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Welcome cocktail and dinner

Hotel Parentium Plava Laguna, Zelena Resort, Poreč city

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2023

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Plenary presentation by Caroline Gilby MW (EN)

Hotel Parentium Plava Laguna, Zelena Resort, Poreč city

10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

Masterclasses (split in 5 different language groups)
Luma Monteiro (EN), Luigi Salvo (IT), Thomas Brandl (DE), Pierre Thomas (FR), Alejandro Lopez Facorro Paadin (ES)

12:00 PM

Departure by bus to visits of the day

Meeting point hotel Parentium Plava Laguna,
Zelena Resort, Poreč city

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Extra virgin olive oil tasting with a traditional lunch
in the city of Vodnjan-Dignano

2:30 PM

Transfer by boat from Fažana to Brijuni islands
national park. Please dress accordingly (walking
shoes, windbreaker, jackets).

8:30 PM – 10:00 PM

Return to the hotel by boat to Fažana and then
shuttles buses to the hotels



FRIDAY, MAY 12, 2023

7:45 AM

Departure by bus to the tasting hall
Meeting point hotel Plavi Plava Laguna,
Zelena Resort, Poreč city

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM

Official opening ceremony of Concours Mondial de
Bruxelles – Istria 2023

9:30 AM – 1:15 PM

1st tasting session - Žatika Sport Centre, Poreč city

1:15 PM – 3:15 PM

Lunch at Hotel Parentium Plava Laguna, Zelena
Resort, Poreč city

3:30 PM

Departure for afternoon degustation's and
excursions – Visit to the Istria wine region
Meeting point hotel Plavi Plava Laguna,
Zelena Resort, Poreč city

7:30 PM

Arrival at Poreč city centre – Free evening

9:30 PM – 11:00 PM

Shuttle transfers to the hotels

SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2023

7:45 AM

Departure by bus to the tasting hall
Meeting point hotel Plavi Plava Laguna,
Zelena Resort, Poreč city

8:30 AM – 1:00 PM

2nd tasting session - Žatika Sport Centre, Poreč city

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Lunch at Hotel Parentium Plava Laguna, Zelena
Resort, Poreč city

3:00 PM

Departure for afternoon degustation's and
excursions – Visit to the Istria wine region
Meeting point hotel Plavi Plava Laguna,
Zelena Resort, Poreč city

7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Medieval dinner - Morosini-Grimani Castle,
Svetvinčenat

9:30 PM – 11:00 PM

Shuttle transfers to the hotels

SUNDAY, MAY 14, 2023

7:45 AM

Departure by bus to the tasting hall
Meeting point hotel Plavi Plava Laguna,
Zelena Resort, Poreč city

8:30 AM – 1:15 PM

3rd tasting session - Žatika Sport Centre, Poreč city

11:45 AM – 12:15 AM

Official announcement of the 2024 CMB host
country

1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

Lunch provided by the CMB 2024 host country
Hotel Parentium Plava Laguna, Zelena Resort,
Poreč city

6:00 PM

Gathering in the lobby and departure by bus
Meeting point hotel Plavi Plava Laguna,
Zelena Resort, Poreč city

7:00 – 11:00 PM

Dinner and closing ceremony - Meneghetti Wine
Hotel & Winery, Stancija Meneghetti, Bale

9:30 PM – 11:00 PM

Shuttle transfers to the hotels

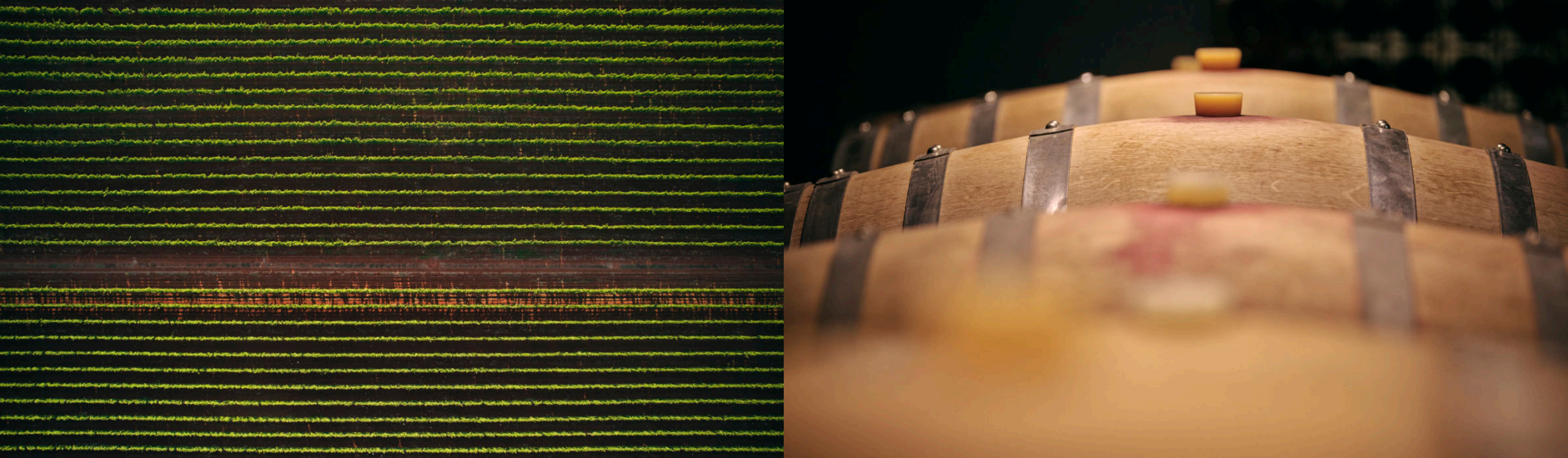
MONDAY, MAY 15, 2023

Departure of the judges

Meeting point hotel Plavi Plava Laguna, Zelena Resort, Poreč city

8:45 AM

Departure of the press tour – Gathering in the lobby
Meeting point hotel Plavi Plava Laguna, Zelena Resort, Poreč city





KAŠTEL
MOROSINI-GRIMANI
SVETVINČENAT

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- + Birthday celebrations +
- + Wedding ceremonies +
- + Escape Castle game +
- + Multimedia Exhibition +
- + Antique Weapons collection Ferlin +



Istria

Fast food as it should be



About Istria

Istria beckons with its views, smells and tastes. With magical blue and green landscapes dotted with olive trees and vineyards, sinkholes, lavender and poppy fields, hills, rivers and waterfalls. With its picturesque towns, stone streets, clear sea and small islands, seductive cosy architecture. With bell towers of thousand-year-old churches painted with frescoes, piercing the Istrian sky. With drywall houses, scattered across Istrian fields, the Istrian kažuni, so small that a grown man can barely stand upright in them. Most of them were built in the 19th century. They sheltered shepherds from the storms and heat, while farmers kept their tools in them.

Istria is a cultural treasure. The Romans left behind the magnificent Pula Arena; way back in the 6th century Bishop Euphrasius built the Poreč Basilica with beautiful mosaics, and nature rewarded it with the Brijuni National Park, Cape Kamenjak, the Pazin and Baredin Caves, the Učka Nature Park...

ISTRIA, the most dynamic wine region in Croatia

Istria - terra magica

Istria is a beautiful region of rolling hills, terraced vineyards, olive groves, and medieval hilltop villages. It's surrounded by the Adriatic on three sides, with the Julian Alps to the north. The area is shared by three countries: Croatia, Slovenia, and Italy. Such favourable geographic position, almost at the heart of Europe, halfway between the Equator and the North Pole, Istria has always represented a bridge connecting the Middle European continental area with the Mediterranean.

The climate is sub-Mediterranean to Mediterranean, with warm summers and mild winters, so snow and winter frost damage are rare. The region tends to be breezy, with relatively low fungal pressure thanks to the winds.

Among legally protected landscape in the Istrian Region are well-known natural reservations-national park Brijuni, nature park Učka, protected landscape Limski Bay and the Motovun wood where can be finned one of the finest truffles of the world.

Top notch Malvasia and Teran wines

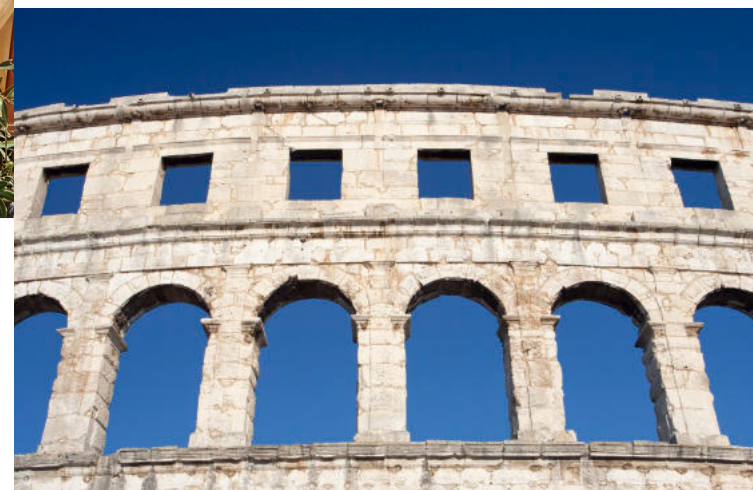
There is no doubt - Istria is a wine peninsula! Everyone who visits it and enjoys the top-quality wine and dine offer, as well as those who visit Vinistra every May, the longest-running wine event in Croatia, will be convinced of this.

The most awarded variety of the Istrian peninsula is the Malvasia Istria. It is found everywhere in Istria and forms an inseparable part of the region's identity. You will enjoy this golden coloured wine with a pleasant aroma of acacia flowers and moderate freshness. Istrians will also offer you a seductive Teran, ruby-colored and fruity.

Don't miss the muscat variety with its distinctive aroma - the Momjan muscat, which is grown in the vineyards on the hills in the northwestern part of Istria.

In addition to these autochthonous Istrian varieties, the peninsula also produces top wines of international varieties, as evidenced by numerous medals and awards at international competitions, as well as great reviews from world-renowned wine critics and sommeliers.

Istrian wines are a reflection of the quality of the Istrian land and the God-given Mediterranean microclimate, but also of the experience and knowledge of the Istrian winemakers. They are a perfect combination of tradition and modern technology, and they have delighted well-known experts, as well as wine lovers around the world who are happy to come to this piece of Mediterranean paradise for a memorable vacation.



You complete us

Poreč

Istria, Croatia



Experience Poreč 365 days

A perfect vacation in any season

Lulled into the Mediterranean climate, our territory is an ideal stay location throughout the year. Winter, spring, summer and autumn take turns as well as numerous entertainment and fun opportunities...

You will be delighted by long paths by the sea made for walks, friendly chatter, bike rides or recreational jogging. There are established bike routes through untouched nature inviting you to explore them.

Everything is there, the traditional Istrian cuisine offered by your hosts, new modern interpretations of local dishes for slow food fans, excellent world class wines and olive oils, natural beauties, preserved cultural heritage, numerous reasons for outdoor stay.

All the above is only one part of what Poreč and its surroundings have to offer.

If on business, there is a number of superbly equipped congress halls followed by some relaxation in one of our wellness centres.

It is easy to be our guest...

Feel the pulse of the old town

Entering the historical centre of Poreč means stepping on a stage built more than two millennia ago. In this magical setting where towers interchange with medieval palaces and the beautiful Euphrasian Basilica, inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, a walk through Poreč will feel like travelling in time and tickle all your senses.

The ground floors of many of the fascinating old town buildings are home to **gastronomic gems** such as wine bars, fusion restaurants, fish *konobas* and street food bistros, all with an irresistible ambiance. Their lively terraces and bar stools will tempt you to pick a seat and enjoy the vibe while waiting to be served local delicacies such as fish, cheese and prosciutto, paired with superb wines and brandies. You can also order fish burgers, various versions of fish & chips, fried Adriatic fish, and Asian cuisine favourites, such as sushi and tuna, all reflecting the unique touch of local chefs.

A walk through the old town is all the more magical when accompanied by the **sounds of the classical music** echoing from the Euphrasian Basilica, where the combination of excellent acoustics and impressive Byzantine architecture lends each chamber music piece an added value. To experience the modern DJ scene of Poreč be sure to visit La Vecia Cantina, an enchanting wine bar nested in a secularised church built nearly 700 years ago and offering a truly spectacular ambiance.

Jazz lovers will get to enjoy **great concerts at the lapidarium of the Poreč Heritage Museum** throughout July and August. They will be featuring a whole range of global jazz genres, from chamber jazz, combinations with other music genres (such as hip-hop or electronic music) to performances by Poreč jazzers.

The **Street Art Poreč** festival is another fantastic summer event that additionally livens up the town streets and squares with impressive performances that are both funny and surprising, sometimes even confusing, but undoubtedly a feast for the eyes and ears of passersby.

It is precisely Poreč's narrow stone alleys that encapsulate all the magic of the town, lovingly nurturing the spirit of old times and offering a real treat for all your senses.

www.myporec.com



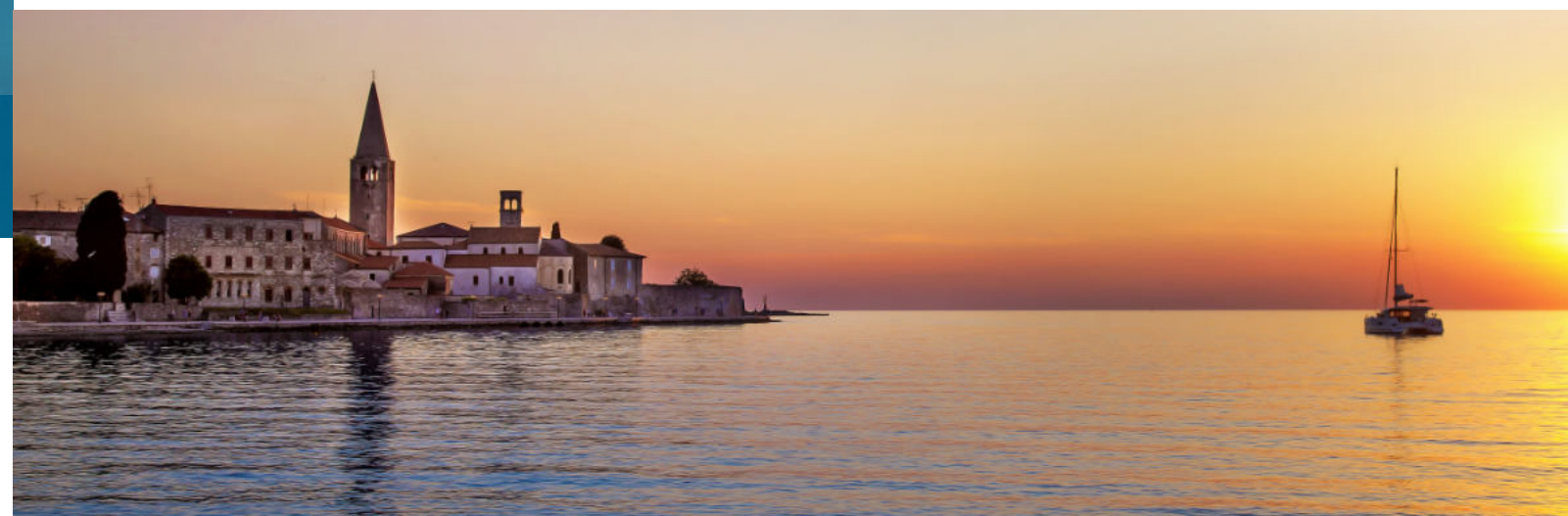
Poreč

Poreč tourist board

POREČ TOURIST BOARD

Zagrebačka 9, 52440 Poreč
T: +385 (0)52 451 293

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Malvasia and Teran – Istria’s Crown Wines

Imagine a family of four generations, each of which was born under the same roof and yet in a different country – welcome to Istria! Over the past century alone, the region has been Austro-Hungarian, then Italian, Yugoslavian and finally Croatian. These facts explain why people in this area see themselves first and foremost as Istrians rather than Croatians, Slovenians, or Italians. But while nationalities play only a secondary role, the Istrian identity is very clear and strongly reflected in the wines produced here.

Istria is among the most renowned wine regions in the Balkans and the most developed in terms of wine tourism. The history of winemaking in Istria is connected to the ancient Greeks, who settled on the coast in the 6th century BC. Although it only has 3,200 hectares of vines today, compared to over 40,000 hectares pre-phylloxera, the region is leading the way in Croatia's wine quality revolution.

Caroline Gilby MW describes Istria as *“a beautiful region of rolling hills, terraced vineyards, olive groves, and medieval hilltop villages.”* The vineyards in the Istrian wine region span an altitude range from near sea level to around 400 meters, creating a wide variety of microclimates that are ideal for growing a wide selection of grape varieties and producing various wines.

The soils of the Istria wine region divide the peninsula into Red Istria, Grey Istria, and White Istria:

*“A huge part of the peninsula on the south-east side is covered by red soil or terra rosa, which is the most commonly used for wine production”,*explains Caroline Gilby MW. *“The color of the soil is a result of the high level of iron that it contains. White Istria stretches to the north and northeast, where the topsoil is thin, typically rocky, white, and carbonate rich. Further south and inland is the central zone of Gray Istria, where you can find flysch soil with marl and sand, as well as humus-rich deposits of black soil.”*

Terra rosa is used mainly for the growth of red grape varieties, but it also produces well-structured and full-bodied whites. The wines made in Gray Istria have good levels of acidity, pronounced aromatics and are medium-bodied. White Istria’s wines are known for their high acidity and aromatics as well as for their elegance.

There is a wide range of grape varieties grown in Istria, but the two most emblematic ones are the native varieties of Malvasia Istriana (Malvazija Istarska) and Teran.

Malvasia Istriana

Malvasia Istriana is the flagship varietal of the region and makes up over two-thirds of Istria's wine production. It is the leading Istrian grape variety and the second most planted grape in Croatia. Malvasia Istriana accounts for 1,583 hectares or 60% of Istria's plantings and according to Caroline Gilby MW it is made by nearly every one of the approximately 250 producers in the region:

“For most wineries in Istria, Malvasia is the core of their production, typically between 60-70%.”

Malvasia is a name shared by numerous varieties around the Mediterranean, but Malvasia Istriana or Malvazija Istarska is found only in Istria. It's speculated to have developed from another Malvasia brought to the peninsula during the Venetian rule. Today it plays a significant viticultural role in Croatian and Slovenian Istria as well as in the region of Friuli in Italy.



Most parts of the Istrian peninsula are covered by Malvasia Istriana, but it grows best on terra rosa soil. Malvasia can be made in a variety of styles including fresh and fruity, barrel aged and complex, macerated, and made into orange wines, sweet or sparkling. *“Malvasia is not just a one-year wine, with aging, it acquires a new dimension”,* recounts Caroline Gilby MW. *“It’s a grape suited to skin contact, more typically cold maceration before fermentation, but some producers also use extended maceration (weeks or even months) along with alcoholic fermentation to make genuinely orange wine styles, sometimes in clay amphora. These techniques can produce wines with wonderful texture and mouthfeel, and with layers of complexity. The grape also benefits from fermentation and aging in barrels. Options in use include large and small oak, acacia, and even mulberry. In fact, Malvazija often has a gentle honey note, that works particularly well with the fragrance of acacia barrels but there is only a handful of producers who use acacia in practice.”*

Although aged Malvasias and orange wines are gaining more and more in popularity, the consumer’s favorite remains the fresh and fruity style vinified cool in steel. According to Luka Rossi, president of the Istrian's wine growers' association Vinistra wine tourism and exports are some of the main sales drivers for Malvasia wines: *“Around 30% of the wines are exported internationally to the surrounding countries like Italy, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Austria but they can also be found in Germany, Poland, the UK, the USA and Canada for example.”*

The best food pairings from Malvasia Istriana include various seafood dishes, grilled fish, fresh oysters, risottos and pastas as well as dishes with the local white truffles.

Teran

Is the most common red grape variety in the region covering 250 hectares. Teran has been grown in the Istrian peninsula for over 600 years. During the 19th century it was the most widespread grape variety in Istria and occupied more than 80% of vineyard area. It is native to the region and can be found only on the Istrian peninsula, mostly in Croatia and in small parts of Slovenian and Italian Istria.

Croatian Teran should not be confused with the Italian Terrano nor with the Karst Teran, a wine produced in Slovenia from the grape variety Refošk or Refosco.

“On the Slovenian side of the border, the main red grape is Refošk and Teran was often mistakenly identified as Refosco”, clarifies Luka Rossi. *“Today, it has been proven that Teran and Refosco (Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso) are two different varieties.”*

Teran is known for its rich aromas of black and red fruits, such as sour cherries and sweet cherries, with notes of fern and blackberry. The range of acids and extracts gives strength of taste, spicy, full body, as well as pleasant and sumptuous tannins, leaving a sweetness on the tongue after the acids recede. The color of Teran ranges from garnet red to dark, almost purple.

Teran is grown in terra rosa but also in white soil. In fact, some of the best examples of Teran are grown in the so called “terre bianche”. Though in general Teran is a very fragile grape and presents many challenges to Istrian vintners:

“Teran is very sensitive, both to extremely strong sun (risk of sunburn) and to excessive humidity (botrytis), but when the grapes are fully ripe and all other required conditions are met, they produce very good quality red wines”, explains Rossi.

Teran shows the best results when aged in wood for at least 3 years, although it has a much longer aging potential. Because of its naturally high acidity, Teran pairs well with fattier meat dishes and well-aged cheeses.



Valentina Phillips



The association of winegrowers and winemakers of Istria “Vinistra” has been operating since 1994 with the main goal of improving and developing viticulture and winemaking in Istria. Today, it consists of more than 120 members from the area of Istria and Kvarner, since in August 2020 the Assembly of the Association adopted amendments to the statute, and the area of activity of the Association expanded to the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County.

The members of the Association are engaged in growing grapes, making wine and grape products, production of planting material, selection, research and other types of viticulture and winemaking, with their permanent place of residence or headquarters being in the area of Istria County and Primorje-Gorski Kotar County.

The activities of the association focus on many tasks, such as:

- creating the reputation of Istrian and Kvarner wines as quality and natural products
- expanding the market through organization and joint participation at exhibitions, fairs and in other types of activities
- support for research, selection and reproduction of quality materials
- providing professional assistance and other types of assistance to members
- nurturing and reviving traditional customs and festivals related to viticulture and winemaking
- cooperation with educational and scientific institutions, as well as other similar associations in the country and abroad
- preparation of strategic documents of the Association in the field of viticulture and winemaking
- encouraging and protecting the common interests of members before public authorities, regional and local governments and the general public
- participation in proposing and creating regulations, projects and plans for activities of interest to the Association
- cooperation with competent institutions, lobbying, participation in the drafting of regulations and measures, informing members and providing support in the segment of withdrawing funds from the EU and national funds
- engaging experts to ensure professional and scientific assistance

The Strategy for the Development of Istrian Wine and Viticulture until 2030 (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy) was adopted in 2018, making Istria the first wine region in Croatia to make such a step forward.

The strategy has two strategic directions: **increasing demand and moderately increasing supply.**

The implementation of strategic guidelines is foreseen through 4 strategic steps:

1. Professional and structured marketing management
2. Development of wine experiences and stronger use of the tourism benefits
3. Reorganization of the management system
4. Product improvement (viticulture and winemaking)



EVENTS

Vinistra, more than a wine fair!

In fact, it all started here in Poreč! Poreč is a wine mecca with many years of experience in organising the wine fair as well as a number of other festivals.

Vinistra is the most renowned regional wine event organised by the Istrian Association of Winemakers and Winegrowers, Vinistra, in cooperation with the Istrian Tourist Board, Plava Laguna hotel company and Istrian Region.

The association of winegrowers and winemakers of Istria, Vinistra, has been operating since 1994 with the main goal of improving and developing viticulture and winemaking in Istria. Today, it consists of more than 120 members from the area of Istria and Kvarner.

Wine and winemaking it's a part of Istrian tradition and have made Istria a recognisable brand on the global market.

En Primeur

With the en primeur tastings, i.e. presenting young Malvasia wines, we want to show the potential of the vintage to professionals in enogastronomy and make it easier for them to make a decision about buying or booking young wines. Winemakers present their young wines, usually still unclarified, like must, and the whole idea is to try to deduce what the wine will be like in its maturity.

For professionals and the public

The tasting is divided into two time frames; for professionals (caterers, sommeliers, wine shop owners, etc.) and for the media and the public representatives. The event is also open to the public so that passionate lovers of this holy drop, who did not dedicate their professional lives to winemaking, can still enjoy it.

The continuous growth of the number of winemakers and regions participating in this event speaks in favor of the importance of young vintage tastings and such events, and it certainly contributes to the development of wine culture in our region.



VINTAGE by Vinistra

Events with a focus on the promotion of Istrian autochthonous malvasia and terana varieties and the demonstration of their versatility. It represents the knowledge and effort of Istrian winemakers and gives professionals and a limited audience the opportunity to taste these interesting wines.

The event is of a closed nature, for the business audience and is held at the Esplanade Hotel in Zagreb.

Wine and Spirits Awards

The judging of wine and spirits made by producers from Croatia is organized every year. The judging takes place in Poreč at the beginning of April, and the judges are international professionals, journalists and figures from the wine world.



The World of Malvasia

International competition of wines made from the Malvasia grape variety.

The World of Malvasia is an international Malvasia competition that has been held since 2009 and is organized by Vinistra - the association of winegrowers and winemakers of Istria, under the auspices of the Istria County. This eno-event is a result of global trends in the production and consumption of wines produced from indigenous wine grape varieties that have a strong connection with the area where they thrive, and are produced in limited quantities.

Goal of the World of Malvasia competition

The goal of the World of Malvasia competition is to:

- gather as many Malvasia grape varieties as possible
- promote the special characteristics and qualities of different Malvasia grape varieties
- show the latest trends in the production of Malvasia
- reward the best wines

The commissions judging the samples submitted to the competition consist of top national and international experts who judge the wines according to the strict competition regulations harmonized with the provisions of the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV). The wish of the organizers of this competition is that in the future Istria becomes a central place for producers, consumers and experts interested in this grape variety, which gained its fame among wine connoisseurs a long time ago.



Indulge in the Flavors of Istria: A Journey Through the World of Wine and Truffles

Exploring a region through its food and wine is an experience like no other, a sensory journey that takes us on a cultural adventure through history, traditions and geography. When it comes to Istria, this statement could not be more accurate. Istrian cuisine is a blend of Mediterranean and Central European influences, resulting in a unique gastronomic experience that cannot be found elsewhere. And there is one ingredient that stands out above all others – the truffle. Dubbed the “diamond of Istrian cuisine,” truffles are a prized delicacy that grow in the local forests and are used in a wide range of traditional dishes. Istrian truffles are highly sought-after for their unique flavor and aroma and make a perfect match for the region's fresh, fruity wines. Discovering Istria through truffles and wine is a unique opportunity that should not be missed.

Today, the Croatian peninsula is one of the largest producers of truffles in Europe but for a long time the world wasn't aware of the fact that truffles have been grown in Istria for thousands of years. They were considered a delicacy by various civilizations who inhabited the region down through history like the Illyrians and the Romans. After Istria became part of the Venetian Republic in the 16th century, truffles became a status food for the ruling class in Venice. In Istria, truffle hunting developed into an occupation, and the coveted fungus was bartered for other goods and services.

Unfortunately, many of Istria's truffle forests were abandoned during the political unrest that plagued the region in the 20th century. Until one November day in 1999 when truffle hunter Giancarlo Zigante made a discovery that put him in the Guinness Book of Records. Led by his dog Diana, Zigante unearthed a white truffle weighing a spectacular 1.31 kg – the largest ever found to date. The hunter gave it the name “Millennium” and had a bronze replica made of it before serving it as the main course at a public feast attended by around a hundred guests. At this point the news that Istria was a hotspot for truffle hunting quickly spread across the globe.

Over the past 20 years, Istrian truffles have seen a renaissance. Truffle hunting once again became a popular profession and the region has become one of Europe's leading producers, prized by connoisseurs around the globe.

Currently, four major truffle species can be found on the peninsula. Croatia's two-time top sommelier and F&B manager at Plava Laguna, Emil Perdec, describes the differences between the four types: *“Tuber Brumale and Tuber Aestivum are black on the outside and white on the inside. These are simple types of truffles that can be cultivated and are widespread around the world. They pair well with various types of food. Tuber Melanosporum is black both on the outside and inside and is less widespread in Istria. It makes the perfect match for pasta and meat dishes. And then there is, of course, the queen of truffles – Tuber Magnatum Pico, the most highly valued truffle in the world and a special delicacy that can be paired with pasta, fish and meat dishes.”*

When matched with the local wines, the truffles become a culinary delight equally appreciated by tourists and natives. The earthy, nutty flavor of the tuber pairs perfectly with the rich, complex flavors of Istrian wines. In fact, winemakers often create special blends that are designed to complement the flavors of truffles.

The fresh and fruity Malvasia makes a good match for dishes that feature white truffles. The strong acidity and minerality of the native Teran is a great complement to the earthy flavor of the black tuber. And because in Istria truffles are used even in deserts, these are typically coupled with sweet Muscat.

The highly sought-after truffle is an integral part of many classic Istrian recipes. *“Typical Istrian truffle dishes combine homemade pasta called fuži and pljukanci with all types of truffles”,* recounts Emil Perdec *“As neutral, warm ingredients that bring out the flavor of the white truffle, ‘frittata’ and ‘sunny side up’ eggs with white truffles make popular traditional specialties. Of course, meat dishes such as beefsteak or lamb chops also pair perfectly with truffles. And when it comes to desserts, chocolate soufflé with white truffle is a must.”*



The only way to truly appreciate truffles, beyond just sampling them in a restaurant, is to go on a truffle hunt. Truffle season provides unique insight into the centuries-old hunting traditions of the local population. Autumn, namely between the months of September and December, is prime season for truffle hunting in Istria. During this period, the truffles are ripe and may be easily detected by trained dogs. It's also the time when the weather is cooler and damper, making it ideal for the growth of truffles. They thrive in the wet, grey soil and plentiful oak woodlands of Istria. In general, black truffles are located in the hills, while the whitest, most precious versions are found in the valleys.

“The epicentre of truffles begins in the damp Motovun-Montona Forest constantly moistened by the Mirna River flowing through its woods”, describes Denis Ivošević, managing director of the Istrian Tourist Board. *“Truffles are mainly spotted around Oprtalj-Portole, in Livade, in the village of Motovun and in the area of Buzet which has been renowned as the ‘Town of Truffles’. This area stretches south to the Pazin region and ends around the river Raša”.*

In the towns and villages of Istria's truffle region there are many restaurants offering truffle-themed menus and wine pairings. One of the more popular ones is *Zigante*, located in Livade. The restaurant is known for its truffle-based dishes and extensive wine list featuring local wines. Another good choice is *San Rocco* situated in the village of Brtonigla. The restaurant offers a fine dining experience with emphasis on local ingredients, including truffles and wine.

Additionally, there are several truffle festivals held throughout the year in Istria, which offer opportunities to taste and buy truffles, even outside of the main hunting season. These include the Truffle Days festival in Buzet, the Truffle Festival in Livade and the Istrian Gourmet Festival in Porec.

Valentina Phillips

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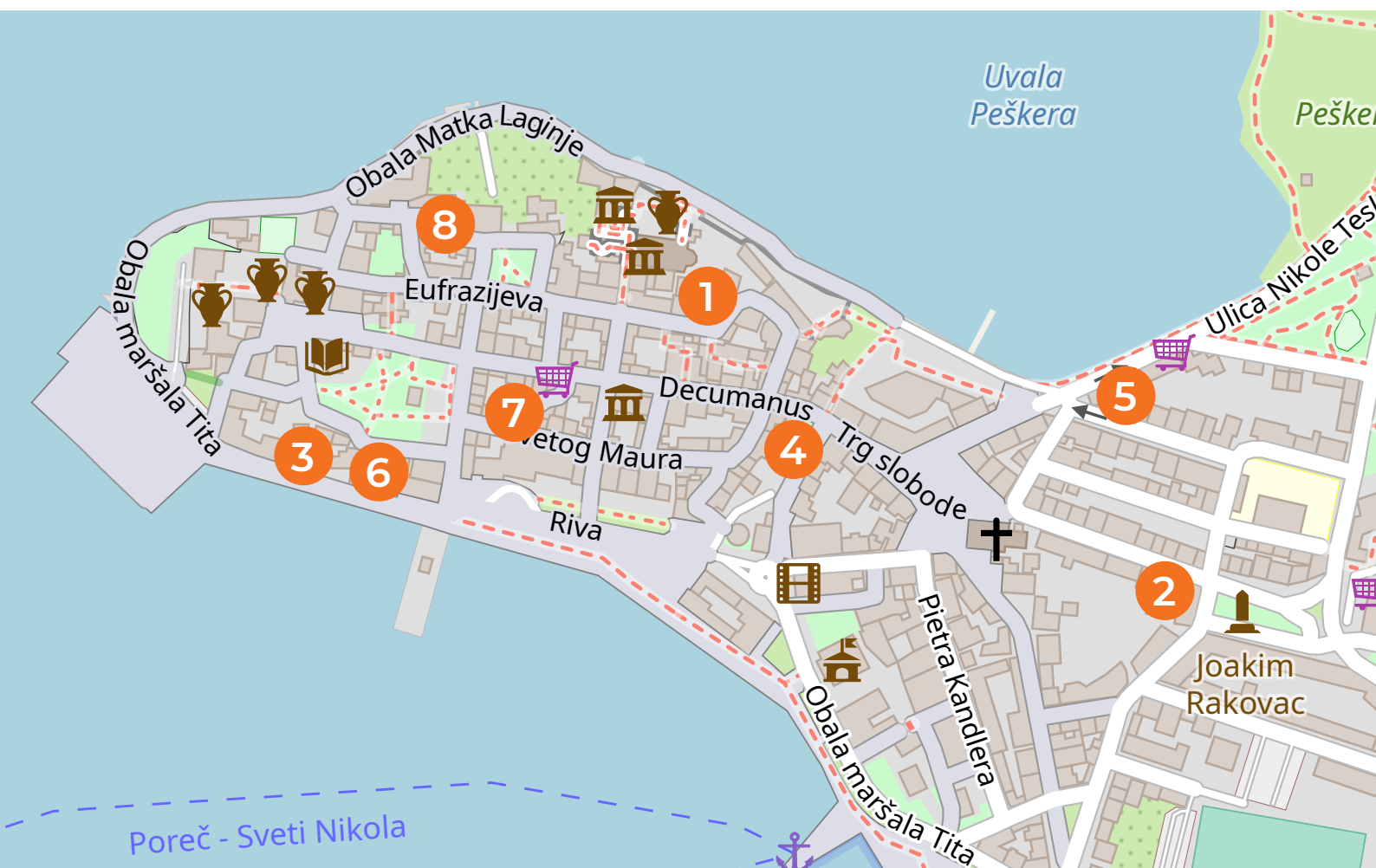


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Publisher:
Vinistra - Udruga vinara i vinogradara Istre
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52 440 Poreč
info@vinistra.hr
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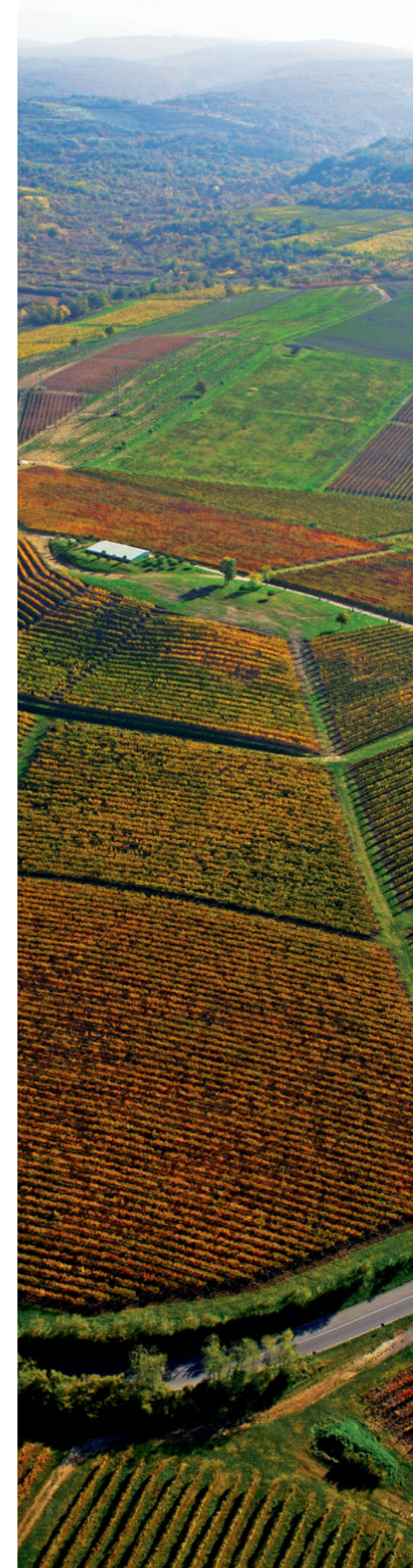
Main Editor:
Luka Rossi

Editorial:
Ivan Marić
Sanja Brnobić
Julija Pletenac
Monika Jurcan

Design:
intuo, Pazin - www.intuo.hr

Published in: 2023

Copies: 500



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