



# COMPLETE COURSE ON CROATIAN WINE - HANDBOOK -



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# QUICK GLOSSARY OF WINE TERMS

## TERMS RELATED TO GRAPES AND WINE MAKING

**Aging** — keeping wine in barrels, tanks, or bottles in order for it to evolve and develop

**Barrel** — mostly made out of oak, barrel is a fermenting and aging container for wine. It comes in variety of sizes

**Blend** — wine produced using different varieties of grapes (as opposed to “varietal” wines made from one variety of grapes)

**Barrique** — a 225-litre oak barrel used to give more pronounced oak aromas to wine as it is smaller than most

**Enology (Oenology)** — science of wine and winemaking

**Fermentation** — process during which grape juice gets converted into alcoholic beverage

**Tank Method** — refers to sparkling wine production. Tank method (aka Charmat Method, Metodo Italiano, Cuvée Close) consists of producing a still wine, placing it in stainless steel tank to which yeast and food for the yeast is added to initiate second fermentation. Once second fermentation is done, the wine is filtered and filled in bottles ready to be sold.

**Traditional Method** — refers to sparkling wine production. Traditional method (aka Méthode Champenoise, Methode Cap Classique, Metodo Classico, klassische Flaschengärung) consists of producing a still wine, filling it into bottles and adding yeast and food for the yeast to initiate second fermentation. This second fermentation goes on in the bottle while the wine ages. After this, the sediment of dead yeast is removed, bottles topped off and sealed.

**Variety** — different variation in grape vines producing grapes of different characteristics

**Vitis Vinifera** — Latin name of the species of grape vine that accounts for 99% of world wine production

**Vintage** — vintage is the year a wine is bottled

**Yeast** — microorganisms feeding on sugar in grape juice during fermentation, producing alcohol and carbon dioxide

**Yield** — quantity of grapes produced by the vineyard



**TERMS RELATED TO WINE TASTING AND ANALYSIS**

**Acidity** — characteristic of wine that gives it freshness

**Aeration** — adding oxygen to wine to release the aromas and soften it (e.g. by swirling wine in the glass)

**Aroma** — scent of wine

**Balance** — characteristic of good wines where different aspects of wine: acidity, fruitiness, alcohols and tannins are in such a balance, not one is overpowering the rest.

**Body** — description of the mouthfeel of wine. Wines higher in expressive aromas and tastes, alcohol and tannins will be of bigger body than those of light aromas and high acidity.

**Breathing** — exposing wine to air in order to let aromas develop before tasting it

**Cork taint (corked wine)** — fault in wine that happens when the wine inside the bottle reacted with the cork. The resulting wine has dulled aromas and colour, as well as an underlying aromas of wet cardboard or mould

**Decanting** — pouring wine over from the bottle into a wide glass contained called decanter and keeping it there for a short while in order for wine to mix with air and to be able to remove sediment more easily. The process makes aged wines or full bodied complex wines develop their aromas before tasting and drinking

**Flavours** — tastes of wine

**Tannins** — polyphenols, compounds of wine coming from the skins of the grapes, seeds, stems or oak barrel that add a drying-like characteristic to wine that you can feel on your gums or the roof of your mouth.

**Length (Finish)** — duration of the flavours of wine in the mouth after swallowing

**Oaky** — aromas added by oak barrels or oak additives. Mainly smoky aromas or aromas of vanilla, coconut, cinnamon, etc...

**Sommelier** — Professional wine taster/server

**Structure** — term describing the feeling of robustness of wine. Structure usually has to do with alcohol, tannins, and fruitiness, and the harmony between them.

**Terroir** — describes different characteristics of wine related to differences in vineyard locations.



**Bijelo vino** – white wine

**Crno vino (crveno vino)** – red wine. Crno vino literally means “black wine” which is a traditional Croatian term for red wine. However, lately we are seeing more people referring to red wine as crveno vino (literally means “red wine”). While some wine enthusiasts in Croatia might distinguish between crveno vino for lighter reds and crno vino for darker reds, most commonly both terms will be translated simply as “red wine”.

**Kvalitetno vino** – quality wine. Part of the old classification slowly being abandoned. Kvalitetno vino is the middle quality level of wine in Croatia commercially sold.

**Metoda vrenja u tanku** – tank method (see Tank Method)

**Pjenušavo vino (Pjenušac)** – sparkling wine

**Ružičasto vino** – rosé wine

**Slatko vino (polu-slatko vino)** – Sweet wine (semi-sweet wine). Sweet wines are those wines that contain more than 50 grams of residual sugar, while semi-sweet wine (polu-slatko vino) is wine with 12 – 50 grams of residual sugar

**Suho vino (polu-suho vino)** – Dry wine (semi-dry wine). Dry wines are those wines that contain up to 4 grams of residual sugar (left over from fermentation) per 1 Litre. Polu-suho vino is semi-dry wine, containing between 4,5 grams and 12 grams of residual sugar per litre

**Stolno vino** – table wine. Part of the old classification slowly being abandoned. Stolno vino is the lowest quality level of wine in Croatia commercially sold.

**Tradicionalna metoda (Metoda vrenja u boci)** – traditional method of second fermentation in the bottle (see Traditional Method)

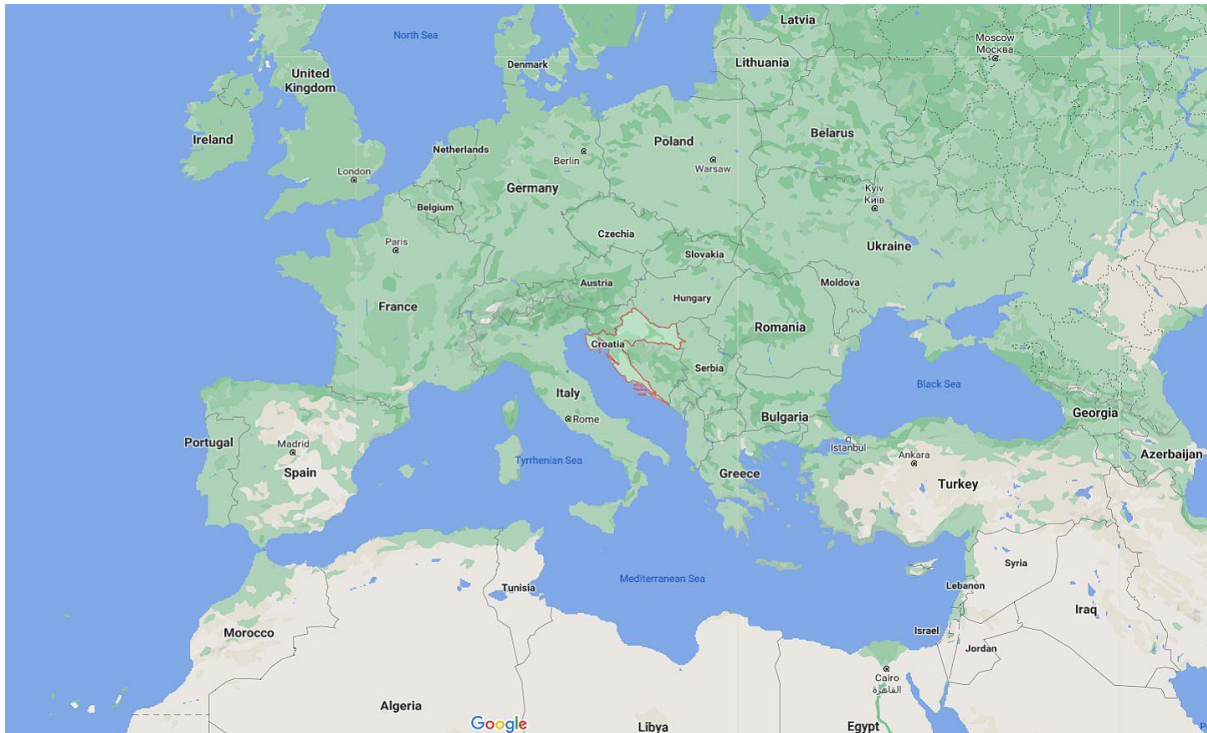
**Vrhunsko vino** – top quality. Part of the old classification slowly being abandoned. Vrhunsko vino is the highest quality level of wine in Croatia commercially sold.

**Vino iz Hrvatske** – Wine from Croatia, written on the label

**ZOI (Zaštićena Oznaka Izvornosti)** – stands for Protected Designation of Origin. It is a geographical designation describing specific area which produces wine of special characteristics

# INTRO TO CROATIA

Croatia is one of Europe's best kept secrets when it comes to wine. This European country, stretching from the Adriatic Sea on one side to border of Hungary and the Danube on the other side, is very much a wine producing and wine loving nation. Croatia occupies a very interesting space, on the crossroads of several historical regions. In fact, if you ask a random foreigner with a basic knowledge of Croatia, what part of Europe the country is in, you will hardly get a straight answer. Some will say Croatia is in Eastern Europe. For some we are a Central European country. Some will undoubtedly classify us as a Balkan country. Some say we are a Mediterranean Country. Others will call us a part of southern Europe. And for some we are still a part of the Soviet Union, even though we never were, and Soviet Union does not exist anymore.

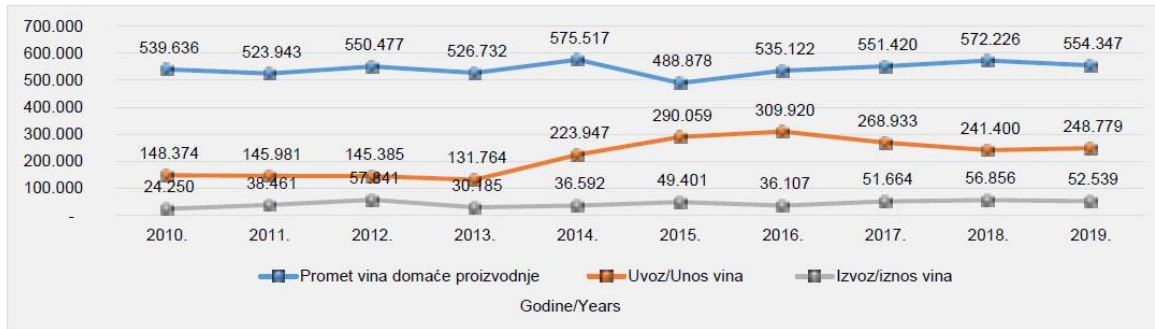


The thing is, aside from the Soviet Union answer, all the others are at least partially correct. For me, the best description of Croatia's location is in the south of Europe, or Eastern Mediterranean, but then again, I am a southerner, so I am looking at it from my own viewpoint. People from Zagreb might feel as a part of Central Europe. All of these differences in opinions have root in not just geography, but history as well.

Today, Croatian wines are mostly unknown outside of the national borders or at least the borders of the surrounding countries. This is mostly due to the fact most of our production is in the hands of small, family owned wineries. These producers have limited budgets and operational capabilities and exporting for many of them involves too much hassle and red tape. More importantly, many of them will be able to sell what they make locally. Croatian wine production is sufficient for national consumption plus tourism consumption by travellers to Croatia. The country is a big travel destination and many coming to holiday in Croatia are quite aware of the quality levels of local food and wine. Not only that, but due to the high diversity of Croatian wines, one thing you will be learning plenty about within this course, there is little wine being imported into Croatia. There are local wines in all styles able to be paired with any types of food, leading to the fact you will mostly find Croatian wines on the menus of local restaurants.



**Grafikon 5. Usporedba prometa vina domaće proizvodnje, uvoza i izvoza vina prema količinama (hL)**  
Comparison of domestically produced wine turnover, import and export of wine by quantities (hL)



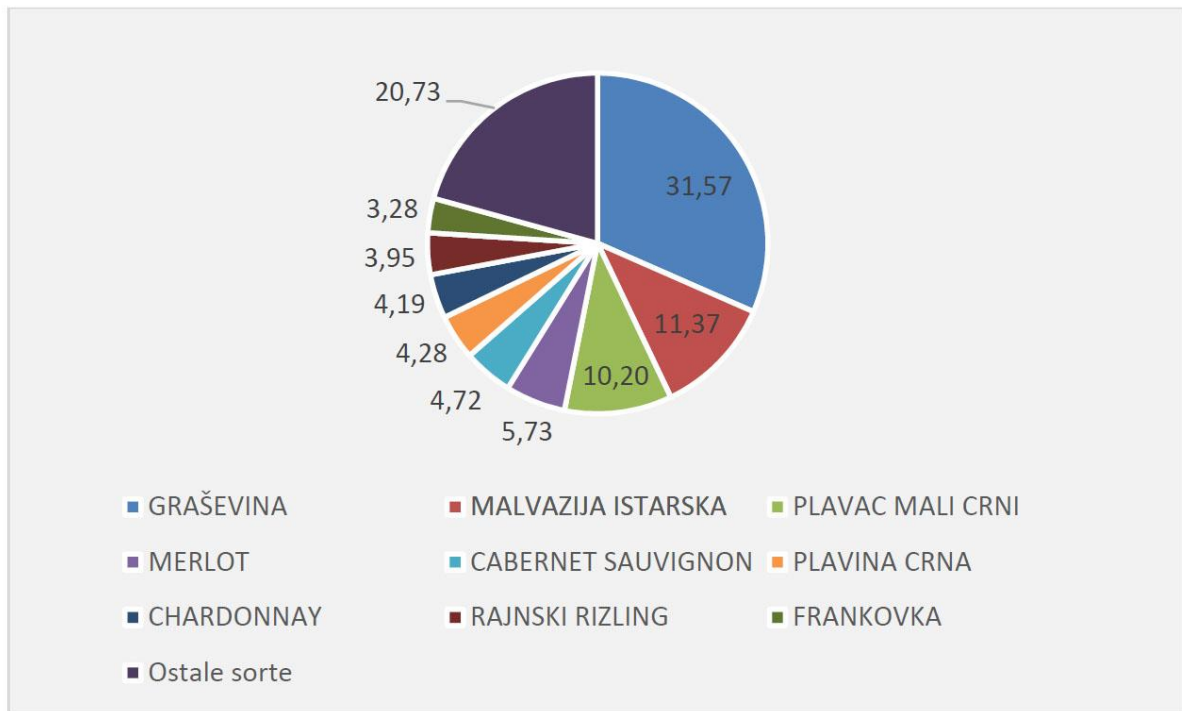
Izvor / Source: HAPIH i DZS

So, most of what is made is sold locally. This leaves very small quantities of Croatian wine that gets exported. This is however a global village we are living in, so the interest from Croatian winemakers to export their products is rising. Many times it is not even a matter of profits as much as it is a matter of international recognition. Simply put, Croatians are becoming more and more determined to make quality Croatian wine better known globally. This course is made with the same motivation.

Wine making in Croatia is today marked by a drop in winemaking for personal consumption – which was the hallmark of the traditional way of life in many of this country's regions – and an increase in quality of the professional production.

The country is also small as is its wine output. Around 1600 professional producers working close to 19000 hectares / 46900 acres, produce 732500 hl of wine (2018). In global terms, this is very small. But, oh boy is it interesting when you get into the details.

Croatia is divided into 4 major wine growing regions, each very different from the others. Main varieties planted are white Grasevina (Welschriesling) found in continental regions, white Malvasia Istriana (indigenous variety) found in Istria, and red Plavac Mali (indigenous variety) which is the main variety grown in the southern coastline region of Dalmatia. We will cover these and several more varieties in detail in the section dedicated specifically to Croatian wine varieties. Among the top ten most planter varieties are a handful of well-known international ones as well like Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Riesling, and Blaufränkisch. Other than these, Croatia is a home to around 120 other indigenous varieties. It is a country of immense winemaking history and pedigree.



Izvor / Source: APPRRR. Obrada HAPIH.

All in all, Croatia is perfect for exploration with its wine regions being not only interesting from viticulture and winemaking points of view, but also from the point of view of a thirsty traveller. This country's wines are gaining international acclaim at breakneck speed and this is the right time to get in on Croatian wine either as an enthusiast collector, wine traveller, distributor, or potential vineyard owner.



# CROATIAN WINE REGIONS

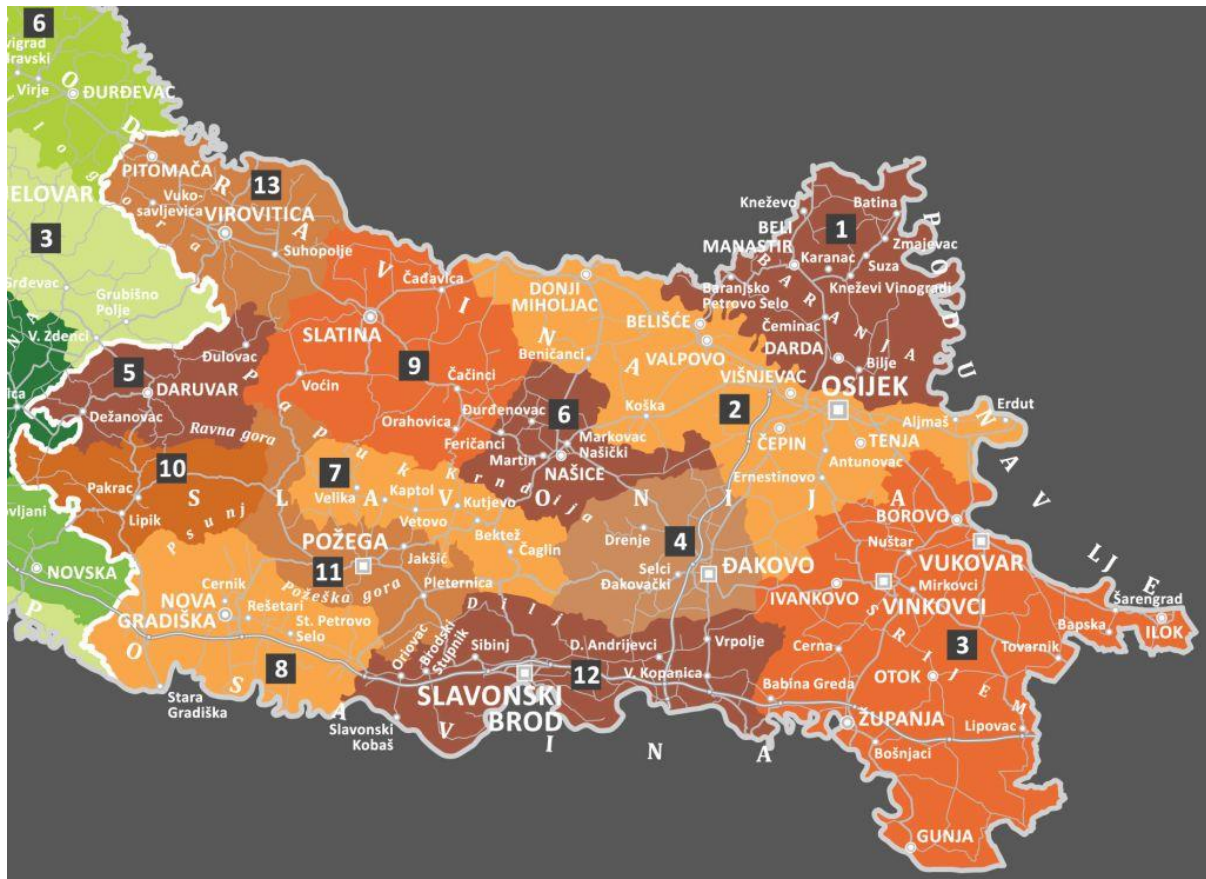


Croatia is divided into four major wine regions. Two continental regions are Croatian Uplands and Slavonia and Croatian Danube, while the two coastal regions are Istria and Kvarner, and Dalmatia. Almost entire country is covered in wine areas as it's visible from the map above.

Below is a closer look at the four individual wine regions of Croatia.

## Slavonia and Croatian Danube

Slavonia and Croatian Danube Region is Croatia's north-eastern continental wine region. It is set between the borders of Hungary, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is an area renowned for agriculture. Winemaking here has been an integral part of the local economy for centuries. Some of the biggest vineyards and highest output wineries are in this region. The area is also the home of the most planted variety in Croatia – Graševina (Welschriesling). During Croatian Homeland War the area took a great toll and many agricultural businesses had to rebuild and rediscover themselves. Today, it is known for good food and good wine and it is only a matter of time before this undervalued area of Croatia is discovered by international travellers.



### Geography / Climate / Soil

Slavonia sub-region features wine growing areas on moderately steep banks of local mountains Dilj, Punsj, Papuk, Krndija and Požeška Gora. These are south-east and south-west facing vineyard positions. Eastward, Dilj and Krndija mountains transfer into loess flats with vineyards occupying silicate enriched terraced areas. To the south of Slavonia, south facing vineyards are at the base of Moslovačka Gora and Dilj mountains.

Soil types vary in Slavonia and Croatian Danube region. Often it is loess based brown soil on various bases like quartz, granite, soft limestone or clay.

Climate of this region is moderate continental climate with well defined, equally distributed seasons, very fitting for grape growing. Only threat to grapes with regards to climate are rather high humidity levels during the ripening season. Average yearly temperature is 10,9°C, while average temperature during the growing season (April – October) is around 18°C. During the year there is 714mm to 890mm of precipitation recorded, evenly distributed around the year.

## Protected Designation

Protected designations of origin (ZOI) in this region are ZOI Hrvatsko Podunavlje (Croatian Danube Region), ZOI Slavonija and general ZOI Istočna kontinentalna Hrvatska (Eastern Continental Croatia)

## Winemaking and Varieties

Region is divided into sub-region Slavonia and sub-region Croatian Danube. This is one of the most important regions in the country, especially from the output standpoint, accounting for around 30,5% of total grape output of Croatia. More than any other region of Croatia, here large wineries are a common form of production.

Even though it is perfect for producing everything from sparkling wines to ice wine, this region is mostly renowned for white wines. They are crystal clear wines, of yellow green to golden colour, medium to strong alcohol levels with medium acidity, medium fruitiness and varying degrees of aroma intensity. This area is good for late harvest, bortrytis influenced or even ice wines. All of these predicate wines are complex, intense in colour, thick and rich. Sparkling wines are predominately made as blends so they vary in primary aromas and effervescence.

Red wines are usually clear, with varying intensity of ruby red colour, with medium to strong alcohol levels, medium acidity, medium tannins and pronounced fruitiness.

Vines are mostly trained in medium tall single or double Guyot form.

The most renowned grape variety in this part of Croatia is Graševina, known internationally as Welschriesling. This region is perhaps the best growing region for this variety and here it gives not only great results, but is also used to create a variety of styles of wine.

In Slavonia sub-region, aside from Graševina, most widely planted white varieties are Pinot Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Silvaner, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling. Most planted red wine varieties are Frankovka (Blaufränkisch), Ružica Crvena, Portugizac, Pino Crni (Pinot Noir) and Zweigelt.

In sub-region of Croatian Danube the most important white varieties are, of course, Graševina, then Traminac Mirisavi (Gewürztraminer), Traminac Crveni, Pinot Bijeli, Pinot sivi, and Riesling. Mostly planted reds are Frankovka, Portugizac, Pinot Crni, Ružica Crvena and Cabernet Sauvignon.

## Best Regions / Positions

There are 10 wine growing areas of Slavonija and 3 wine growing areas of Croatian Danube region. Most important to note are areas around Kutjevo and on the banks of mountains surrounding Požeška Kotlina - Požega Valley, part of the Pannonian Basin. Here, Graševina grapes give some of the best results this variety is capable of producing. Vineyards are set on mildly steep banks between 150m and 450m above sea level.

Croatian Danube region is characterised by mildly hilly areas around the bases of mountains Fruška Gora, BANSKO BRDO and DALJSKA PLANINA. Along the Danube, growing areas of Srijem, Erdut and Baranja are located. Here, some of the most notable results are achieved with Traminer varieties, especially the area around the town of Ilok.

Vineyard positions worthy of note include: Goldberg, Principovac, Vukovo, Vučedol.

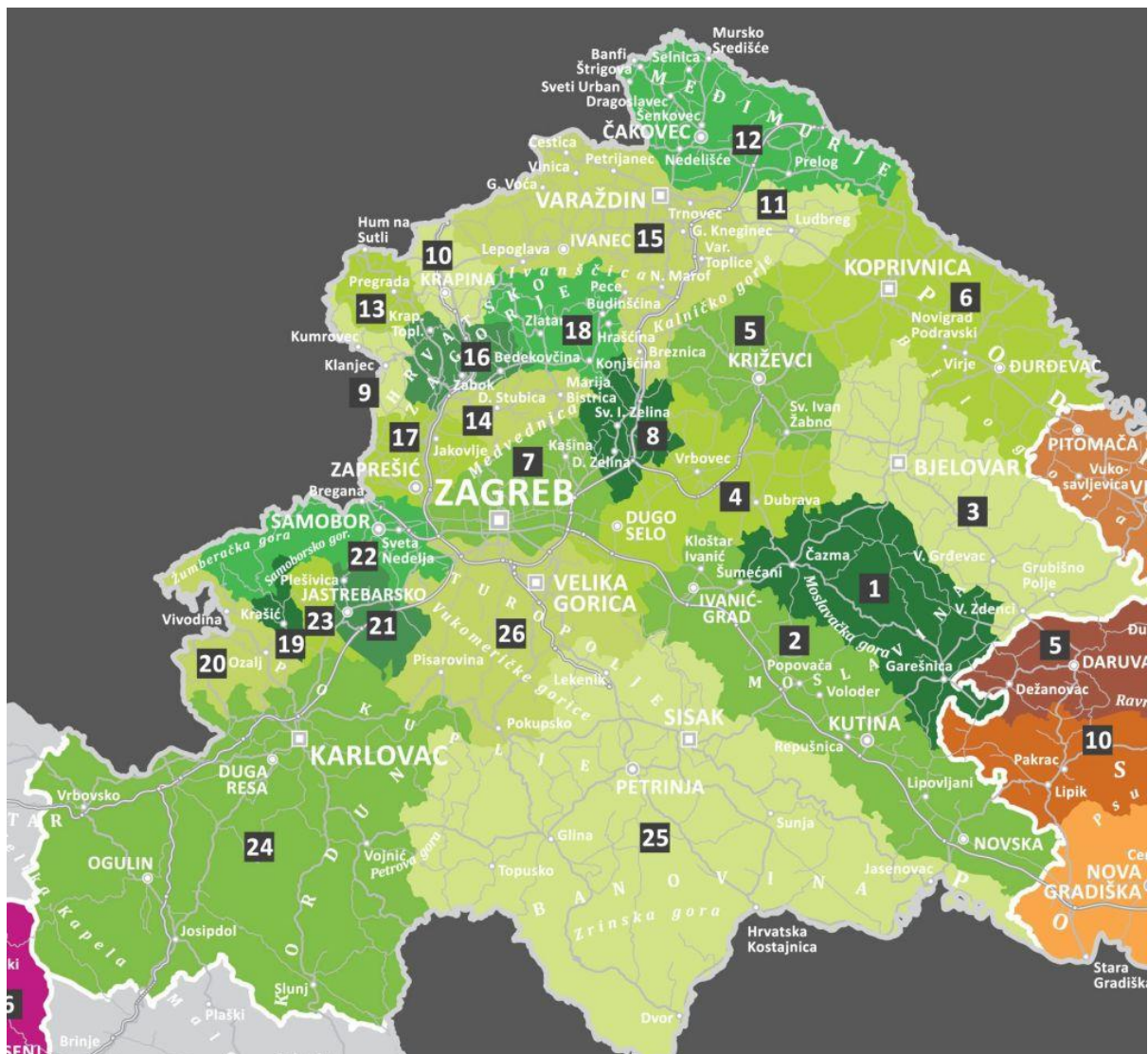
## Winemakers of note

Winemakers of note in this region include Krauthaker, Enjingi, large wineries of Iločki podrumi, Belje, Feravina, Galić, Sontacchi.



## Croatian Uplands

Many know it as “Central Croatia”, which is a general geographical region these winemaking areas belong to. The term Središnja Bregovita Hrvatska or Croatian Uplands is getting to be accepted more and more commonly as the official name of this winemaking region. As you can see from the map, Croatian Uplands stretches around the capital city of Zagreb. The border of the wine region to the north is the corner between the national borders of Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia. To the west, the region ends with the border to Slovenia, to the east with the beginning of Slavonia Region and to the south with the Dinaric Mountain Range. Croatian Uplands is further divided into 5 sub-regions: Moslavina, Prigorje-Bilogora, Zagorje-Međimurje, Plešivica and Pokuplje. Out of all of them Plešivica is the most renowned, especially when it comes to production of sparkling wines. Moslavina also enjoys good ranking nationally as well as Zagorje-Međimurje sub-region which is developing very interestingly lately.



All wine regions in Croatia have a long history of grapevine cultivation to them. Interestingly, Croatian uplands is where some of the fossilized remains of today's grapevine predecessor have been discovered. These date back to over 60 million years ago. Let me see some other wine region top that!

### **Geography / Climate / Soil**

Throughout this region, majority of vineyards are located in hilly areas on slight or medium slopes. Vineyards are usually 150 to 400 metres above sea level. In the easternmost part of the region, vineyards are found on the southern slopes of Mount Moslavina. Here, newer soil was created over a granite base, much of it being sand and clay. Receding ancient Pannonian Sea left behind quartz sand which today benefits local vineyards greatly.

Northern part of the region sees majority of the vineyards on the banks of hills which are a part of the larger Alpine area, while some are in flatlands. One of the most interesting areas is that of Plesivica sub-region in the west of the Croatian Uplands. Here, amphitheatre shaped vineyard areas have been renowned for centuries. Soil resides on a sediment mixture of carbonite, clay and sand. Southern part of the region features a variety of different terrain configurations slopes and orientations. In the central part of the region, vineyards are mainly on the banks of Medvednica, Kalnik and Bilogora mountains and have east to southwest exposures. Because of small land plots and uneven terrain, many of these are unfit for mechanised harvesting.

Throughout Croatian Uplands vines are trained mainly in guyot and double guyot configurations.

### **Climate**

Dominant climate in the Croatian Uplands wine region is moderate continental. Median temperature during the ripening season falls between 17,4°C and 17,9°C depending on the vintage. This area gets between 800 and 1070mm of rainfall annually which is well distributed throughout the year. Around 55% of the rainfall is experienced during the vegetation period. During the ripening season the area benefits from warm weather during the day and significant temperature variations between day and night.

### **Protected Designation**

Protected Designations of Croatian Uplands ZOIs are: ZOI Moslavina, ZOI Plešivica, ZOI Pokuplje, ZOI Prigorje-Bilogora, ZOI Zagorje-Međimurje, and general ZOI Zapadna kontinentalna Hrvatska (West Continental Croatia)

### **Winemaking and Varieties**

Croatian uplands owe their wonderful grapevine potential to the soil, climate and vineyard locations.

Graševina (Welschriesling) is an important variety in this region. Here, it gives an expression of refreshing wines with lovely acidity, medium alcohol and usually no residual sugar. Local varieties are also important for Croatian Uplands. White wines dominate the spectrum with Graševina, Riesling, Chardonnay, Kraljevina and Moslavac (Pušipel, Furmint) being the most represented.

These are mainly used to produce lighter, young and energetic wines that are best consumed within a few years since bottling. However, with proper vineyard management refreshing but more complex wines of great minerality and good ageing potential can also be produced here. There are significant differences between the western and eastern part of the region with sugar levels rising as you move east.

When it comes to the red wine varieties, Frankovka (Blafränkisch), Pinot Crni (Pinot Noir), Cabernet Sauvignon and Portugizac (Portugiser) are the most represented. They mostly make lighter to medium bodied reds of significant acidity and wonderful fruitiness. They are usually fruity and lively. Some are suitable for ageing, but most are consumed young. Frankovka (Blafränkisch), and Pinot Crni (Pinot Noir) are often used to make rose wines.



Relatively warm autumns make good conditions for late harvest wines and noble rot development. Sweet wines produced in this region have very good acidity levels and are thus more energetic than those from the Slavonia and Croatian Danube Region.

Sparkling wines are an important category in Croatian Uplands because of the already described acidity. Base still wines needed to produce quality sparkling wines have to be highly acidic and this region is perfect for those. Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Frankovka (Blafränkisch) are used to produce sparkling wines here with local varieties added to enrich the aromas and body.

### **Best Regions / Positions**

The most notable sub regions here are Plešivica, Moslavina and lately Međimurje.

Plešivica's pet name is Croatian Champagne and we can almost finish the description there. Rolling green hills and moderate climate provide great conditions for production of sparkling wines, many of which are produced using traditional method of second fermentation in the bottle. Plešivica features five vineyard areas: Samobor, Plešivica-Okić Sveta Jana, Krasić and Ozalj. The sub-region is protected from northern winds by Plešivica, Okić, Žumberak and Samobor hillsides. Most important varieties are Chardonnay, Kraljevina, Zelenac, Graševina, Riesling - when it comes to whites; or Portugizac, Pinot Crni, Frankovka – when it comes to red wines.

Međimurje is the northernmost part of the region and has lately emerged as a well organised sub-region with winemakers changing the traditional perception of the local wines as being too acidic and sharp. This area today produces some of the best Sauvignon Blancs in the country, as well as plenty of Pinot Crni, Gewurztraminer and Graševina. The star of Međimurje, however, is Pušipel, which is a local name for Furmint, a grape made popular in Hungary in their iconic Tokaj wines.

Moslavina is a traditional region with sub regions of Prigorje-Bilogora and Pokuplje. Southern banks of Mount Moslavina provide great vineyard locations. Voloder-Ivanic Grad is an important example of these. Čazma is another important wine growing area. Here, wine varieties Moslavac (Pušipel) and local grape Škrljet dominate traditionally, but are lately losing ground to Graševine and some international favourites like Chardonnay, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Crni. In Prigorje-Bilogora sub-region there are six main vineyard areas. Graševina is the most common variety here with Frankovka being very important as well.

### **Winemakers of note**

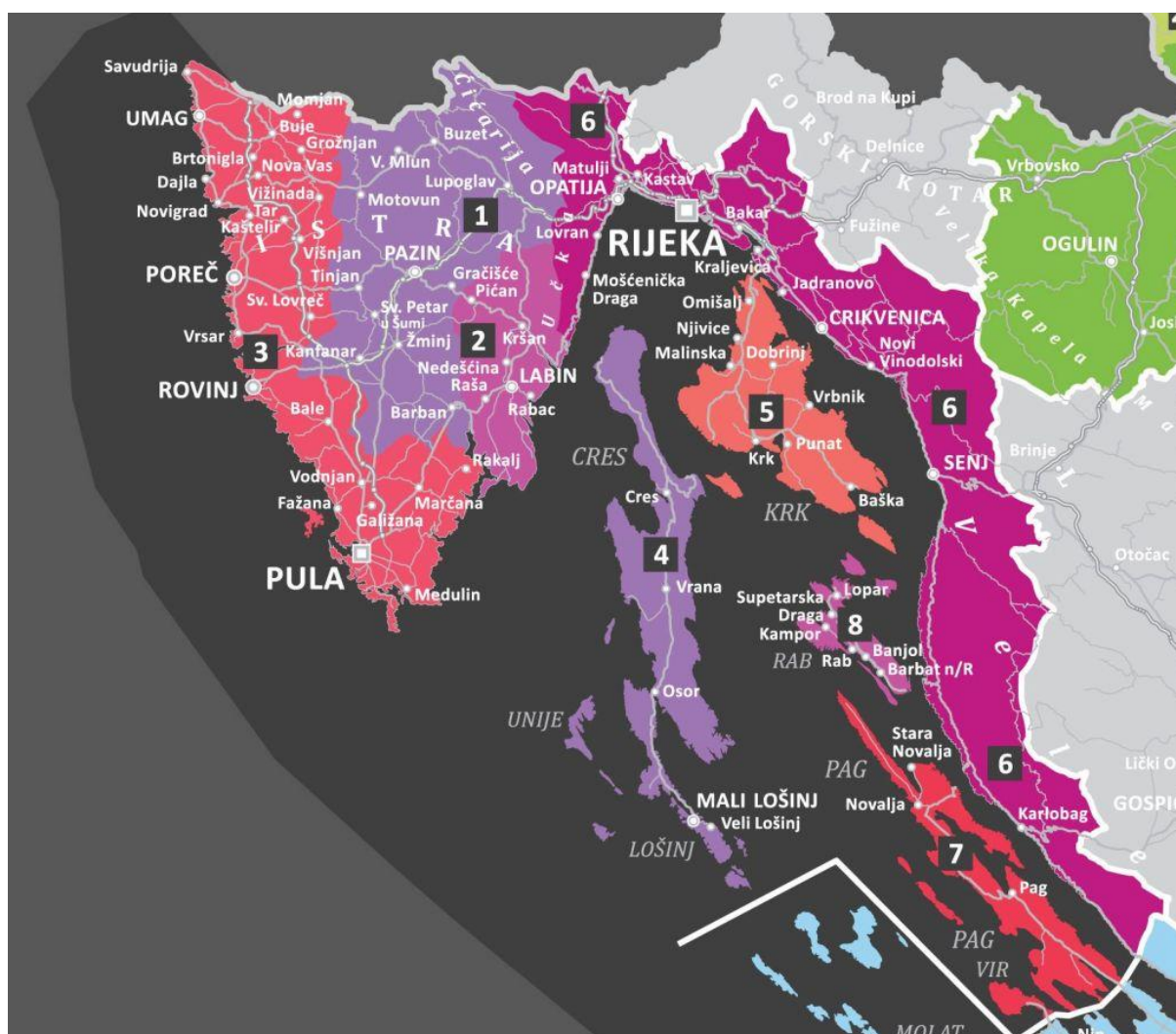
Winemakers of note include Tomac, Korak, Kolarić, Šember, Jagunić, Ivančić and Kurtalj in Plešivica. In Međimurje Dvanajščak-Kozol, Štampar, Jakopčić, Kocijan, Cmrečnjak. In other parts of Croatian uplands, don't miss Voštinić-Klasnić and Bolfan wines.



## Croatian Istria and Kvarner

Croatian Istria and Kvarner Region covers northernmost part of the Croatian coast. This renowned region is divided into two sub-regions: Istria and Hrvatsko Primorje (aka Croatian Littoral). Out of the two, Istria is more established. In fact, Istrian Peninsula is considered Croatia's best wine region by many. It is a region rich with beautiful villages and towns, plenty of amazing wine and top quality local food. Aside from wine, this region is internationally known for top quality truffles found in this area and wonderful olive oil. Italian influence is visible all around and has historically shaped this region. Istria is known as a travel destination as well. Here, wine is very much a part of local life and there are numerous local wineries and wine events that attest to this.

Hrvatsko Primorje encompasses mostly Kvarner region and important islands: Cres, Lošinj, Krk, Rab and Pag. It is a region of great potential and several developed wine areas which are constantly producing quality wine.



### Geography / Climate / Soil

Istria is renowned for a reason. Its wine growing potential is immense and soil and climate provide for perfect growing conditions in much of its geographical area.

Complex geological formation of Istria resulted in flysch base over which the different soil types are found. When it comes to soil, there are three types known as red, grey and white soils. Western and southern parts of

Istrian Peninsula is known as Red Istria for the red soil which dominates this area. This is the most planted area of Istria. As it climbs the hillsides it transfers into Grey Istria and ends up as White Istria in the north-eastern part of the Peninsula.

Red soil of Istria is known as Crvenica or Terra Rossa. It is reddish, well-drained soil, which is clay and silt in structure with neutral pH conditions. It retains moisture well but is poor in nitrogen and phosphorous which are added through fertilisers.

Grey Istria is characterised by marl, sandstone and limestone composition. Grey soil ground is often dry, relatively shallow and susceptible to erosion. The best grapevine growing areas here straight terraced areas and not so steep hill banks.

Areas with white soil are the least interesting for grape growing.

Climate conditions in Istria are very unique. Its position and shape account for an interesting mix of influences from all sides. Istria is essentially a Peninsula, surrounded on three sides by the sea and located in the northern corner of the Adriatic - at the meeting point of the Mediterranean region and greater Euroasian continental region. Istria gets warm and wet climate influenced by the Atlantic and Western European climate. At the same time, Mediterranean Sea and the Adriatic modify the warm and dry African climactic influence which accumulates moisture by the time it reaches Istria. All this results in Istria enjoying Mediterranean climate along the coast with long, dry summers and mild and wet winters. Smaller part of the eastern coastal area is more humid and cooler, displaying characteristics of Sub-Mediterranean climate. Average temperatures in Istria are a bit lower than further south.

Elevation and configuration of the terrain also plays a key role. Istrian coastal area is the warmest and reaches up to 150 metres above sea level. Through river valleys influence of the sea reaches somewhat inland, but generally Istrian interior is, on average, cooler than the coastline.

Average yearly temperature in Istria is 13,9°C, while in the grape growing period of April through September it is 19,5°C. Istria boasts an average 2400 sunshine hours per year.

When it comes to precipitation levels, they grow going from west to the east of Istria, but the entire peninsula measures a yearly average of 907mm of rainfall, 421mm during grape growing season.

Northern wine Bura brings dry and cool weather, while southern Jugo brings warm, humid or rainy weather fronts.

### **Protected designations**

General Protected Designations of Origin (ZOI) in this region are ZOI Primorska Hrvatska (Coastal Croatia), ZOI Hrvatska Istra (Croatian Istria) and ZOI Hrvatsko Primorje (Croatian Littoral). Very recently EU accepted Istrian Muškat Momjanski or Moscato di Momiano into protected names. It is a specific area of cultivation of Moscato grapes that yield amazing quality results and are thus worthy of international protection.

### **Winemaking and varieties**

Generally, white wines of Croatian Istria and Kvarner region are usually lower medium to higher medium bodied, elegant, refreshing and with plenty of pleasant varietal aromas. Red wines are usually medium bodied with some fuller bodied top-quality examples as well. They benefit from pleasant acidity and are most commonly elegant and inviting.

All around Istria, one variety is a household name. Malvazija Istarska or Malvasia Istriana is an indigenous local white variety, extremely popular around the country. It is the second most planted white variety in Croatia. Aside from Malvazija Istarska, other notable white plantings include Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Pinot Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Moscato and very interesting Muškat Momjanski (Moscato di Momiano).





Out of the red varieties, indigenous Teran is a very important grape. Aside from it Merlot, Borgonja (Bleufraenkisch), Cabernet Sauvignon, and Refošk (Refosco) are popular.

In the sub-region of Hrvatsko Primorje you can find most notably white variety Žlahtina. Other white varieties planted include Malvazija Istarska, Trbljan, Maraština.

Red wine varieties of Hrvatsko Primorje are Plavina, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Plavac Mali.

### **Best regions / positions**

Areas of Western Istria and Central Istria are the most important wine growing areas of Istria. Within, there are top quality vineyard positions and wineries, too numerous to list all here. The stretch between towns of Umag and Motovun is known to produce amazing results. Long tradition of winemaking, positive practices and good organisation of the local winemakers made this region the most respected wine making region in the country. It might be less diverse and exciting than some other parts of Croatia, but Croatian Istria constantly produces top quality wines, especially in its western and central areas. With much of the region's tourism offer being tied to wine and gastronomy, Istria is constantly ranked as one of the best wine destinations in Europe.

Hrvatsko Primorje might be less important on a national level than Istria, but growing areas of Pag and Krk are well worth noting and known to produce some amazing wines. Vrbničko Polje on Krk island is renowned for Žlahtina, which is also known as Vrbnička Žlahtina. Areas around steep banks descending from Učka mountain and those around the valley of Vinodol are also very important locally. Aside from Pag and Krk, Rab island is known for wine production, as is Susak, which is very interesting indeed. Susak island is known for mainly sandy soils which were pretty much immune to the late 19th, early 20th century grape Phylloxera epidemic.

### **Winemakers of note**

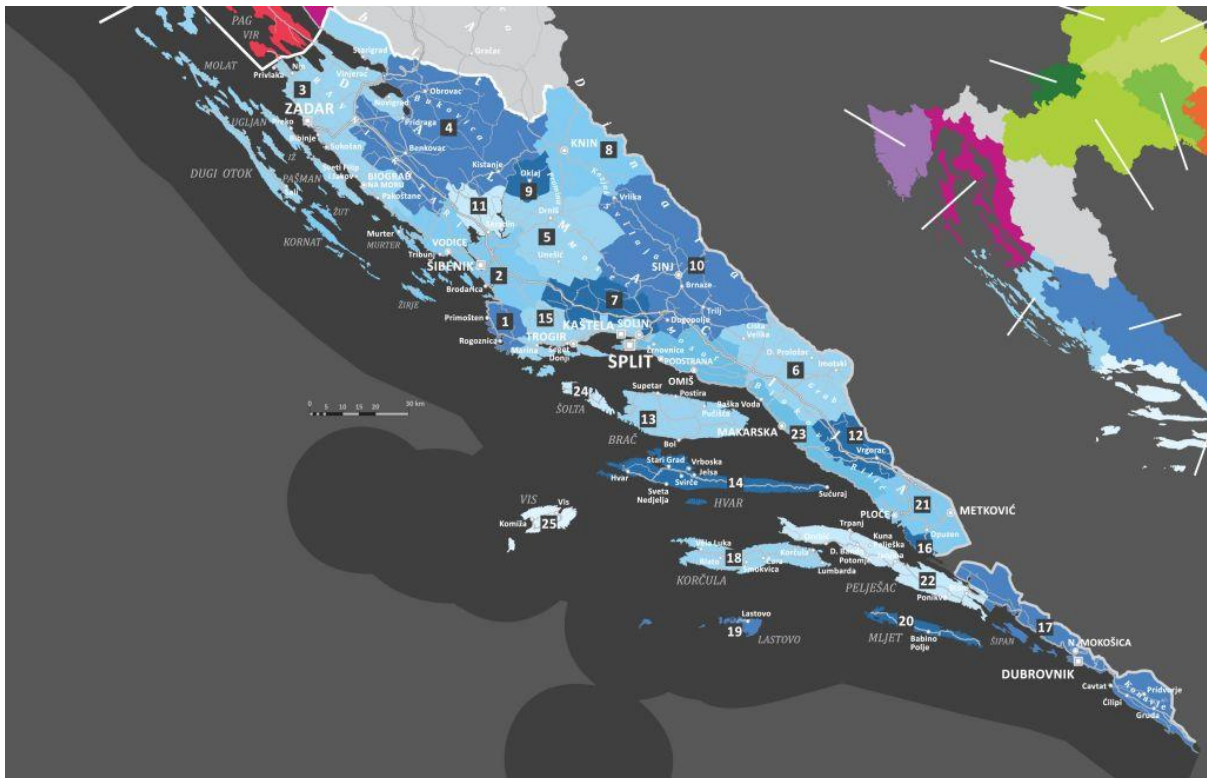
Again, too numerous to list all, but when exploring Istrian wines pay special attention to Coronica, Kabola, Vina Laguna (large producer), Kozlović, Fakin, Clai, Matošević, Meneghetti, Tomaz, Benvenuti and many more.

When coming to Croatia, you can't allow yourself to miss Istrian wine. Malvazija Istarska is a variety to watch out for internationally and Teran might be coming up fast as well.



## Dalmatia

Wine region of Dalmatia is Croatia's sunniest region. It has a long tradition of not only cultivating grapes and making wine, but actually living off these crops. Grapes have historically been one of the rare plants in this area people could make a living off cultivating on un-even, small plots of karst land with long, dry summers. For countless of Dalmatians throughout history, wine meant life. Region stretches from Zadar Region, down to Dubrovnik Region at the very south of the country and its southern border with Montenegro. It encompasses important urban areas of Zadar, Šibenik, Split and Dubrovnik. Within the context of this region, islands are worthy of a special note because of the role they play in winemaking, historically and presently.



### Geography / Climate / Soil

Dalmatia is known for hilly and karst terrain for most part. It is the largest Croatian region with typical Mediterranean climate. It is known for long, dry and hot summers and relatively mild winters with plenty of rainfall. Many areas of Dalmatia can have strong winds affecting them. This is mostly true of northern wind Bura which is known to be quite powerful, especially in the northernmost part of the region.

### Soil and Vineyards

Prevalent soil types vary between specific areas with regards to type, texture, fertility, drainage and similar, but are always on limestone or less frequently dolomitic base. They range from red soil, brown soil over limestone, brown soil over flysch, and carbonic-grey soil.

Vineyards in Dalmatia are often on slopes which vary in level of steepness. Some vine planting hills in Central and Southern Dalmatia are very steep allowing for very good sun exposure. Traditionally, drystone walls have been erected to prevent the soil from eroding during rainy season.

In the hinterland, vineyards are also set in valleys between the hills and karst fields. The latter feature deep alluvial soils mainly featuring clay and loam. Some of these fields are close to the water as it's the case on certain islands (like Korčula) or in Neretva River Valley. Most of these fields needed human intervention in order to stop flooding and water retention during certain parts of the year.

Average yearly temperature in Northern Dalmatia is around 15,6°C, while during the period of grape growing (April – October), it is around 20,8°C. The same region records an average of 819mm of precipitation – mainly rainfall - during the year, 425mm during the growing season.

In Central and Southern Dalmatia the yearly average temperature is around 16,9°C and the average temperature during the grape growing part of the year is around 21,8°C. Yearly rainfall is 870mm, while the amount of rain during the growing season is 300mm. Amount of rainfall increases as you move from the islands towards the coast and from north-west towards south-east.

In the entire region rainfall is concentrated mostly around autumn and winter. Summers are often marked by prolonged periods without any precipitation.

### **Protected designation**

Protected Designations of Origin (ZOIs) in Dalmatia are ZOI Primorska Hrvatska (Coastal Croatia), ZOI Dalmatinska Zagora (Dalmatian Hinterland), ZOI Srednja Dalmacija (Northern Dalmatia), ZOI Srednja i Južna Dalmacija (Central and Southern Dalmatia), ZOI Dingač, ZOI Ponikve.

### **Winemaking and varieties**

Dalmatia is further divided between Central and Southern Dalmatia, Northern Dalmatia and Dalmatinska Zagora (Dalmatian Hinterland). Central and Southern Dalmatia are the sunniest area with many winegrowing areas featuring over 2500 sunshine hours per year.

Throughout Dalmatia the vines are grown and trained mostly in Gobelet, fan, guyot and one sided and double sided Cordone forms. Gobelet or bush vines is a very popular style for Plavac Mali grapes, especially in the best growing positions as air flow is never a problem and protective shade formed by the canopy helps to prevent over-exposing bunches directly to the sun.

Central and Southern Dalmatia is known for producing medium to full bodied whites and reds. These are warm climate wines with warm aromas and substantial alcohol content. Reds are usually characterised by strong tannin structure and medium acidity. Northern Dalmatia and Dalmatinska Zagora wines usually tend to have a bit more acidity to them than their southern counterparts, but they also range mostly from medium to full bodied wines. Entire Dalmatia produces wonderful food wines.

Quintessential variety of Dalmatia is Plavac Mali. This is the most common red wine variety in the country and is responsible for some of the finest wines produced in Croatia. In Central and Southern Dalmatia it gives the best results. Another red variety worthy of a special mention is Babic, grown mainly in Northern Dalmatia. Crljenak Kastelanski (Tribidrag, Pribidrag), known internationally as Zinfandel or Primitivo in southern Italy, is less common, but very important, seeing how it was determined to have the oldest mention here. In other words, for now, the world is treating Zinfandel as a Croatian variety. Plavina is very common in certain parts of Dalmatia and is known for producing lighter bodied red wines than Plavac Mali. There are, of course, international varieties planted around Dalmatia as well with Merlot, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah being the most common.

When it comes to white varieties, there is quite a bit of diversity in Dalmatia. One of the most widespread is definitely Maraština, also known as Rukatac or internationally as Malvasia Bianca Lunga Bianca or Malvasia del Chianti. Northern Dalmatia is also known for Debit and Ugni Blanc. Dalmatinska Zagora boasts several



interesting white varieties out of which Kujundžuša and Zlatarica Vrgorska deserve special attention. Central and Southern Dalmatia are known for a few island varieties like Pošip and Grk originating from Korčula Island, Bogdanuša on Hvar and Vugava a.k.a. Bugava on Vis. Malvasija Dubrovačka, also known as Malasia di Lipari (Malvasia de Sitges) is famous in Konavle area. Cetinka might not be an island variety, but is also worthy of note.

### **Best regions / positions**

Central and Southern Dalmatia is a thin strip of land by the sea which stretches from the far-southern region of Konavle, up to Trogir area. It is known for a number of top quality wine growing areas like Pelješac Peninsula, Kaštela, Komarna, Konavle, as well as islands of Korčula, Hvar, Brač, Vis and many more.

Northern Dalmatia encompasses areas of Šibenik and Zadar and is known for great quality wines. Area of Primošten is worthy of a special note.

Dalmatinska Zagora is in the hinterland of Dalmatia and is known for a large number of indigenous varieties. Areas like Skradin and Benkovac-Stanković are very popular in this region.

Dalmatia is a region brimming with amazing vineyard locations. Out of the myriad great positions we need to emphasize a few. Starting from the north, Primošten terraces, close to Šibenik, are a very important location. This area is also known for so-called Primosten lace – densely put together dry-stone walls keeping the soil from eroding. This is Croatia's top Babić growing area.

Going further south we are getting into Plavac Mali territory. Hvar Island boasts amazing positions for Plavac Mali with its Ivan Dolac and Sveta Nedjelja positions.

Pelješac Peninsula is Croatia's most renowned wine region with the two most prominent positions, Dingač – which was the first recognised appellation in the country in the year 1961 - and Postup. Both are located on the western banks of the hills of Pelješac Peninsula and provide stunning views.

From Dingač and Postup the view carries towards Korčula Island and Lumbarda Village with its sandy soil vineyards renowned for Grk variety. The only top quality area in the region not to be destroyed by the phylloxera pest at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Winemakers/Wineries of note**

Dalmatia is quite large and diverse region and has plenty of winemaking names worthy of attention. For now, we will mention (starting from north to south), Gracin, Testament, Ante Sladić, Grabovac, Plenković, Tomić, Ahearne, Dubroković, Stina, Bire, Zure, Čara, Merga Victa, Saints Hills, Korta Katarina, Miloš, Križ, Madirrazza, Crvik, Karaman.



# MOST IMPORTANT GRAPE VARIETIES IN CROATIA

When talking about grape varieties planted in Croatia one must keep in mind few things. Firstly, there is a wealth of autochthonous varieties in Croatia that have developed through centuries in this area. There is also plenty of popular international varieties planted across the country. Finally, there are some lesser-known international varieties that are quite popular in Croatia. When all this is said and done, it is no wonder we need to mention quite a few of these grapes in this course.

## GRAŠEVINA



Graševina Grapes, source: [krauthaker.hr](http://krauthaker.hr)

### **Name, international name and popularity**

Graševina is Croatia's most planted variety and while its local name might not mean much to you, Welschriesling is a bit more familiar with international wine lovers. This variety is one of the old varieties of Central Europe, unrelated to the more famous Rhine Riesling. It is said Croatian Welschriesling vineyards in the north-eastern region of Slavonia produce some of the highest quality grapes of its kind in Europe. Brought over by the ancient Romans, its history in this area of today's Croatia is so long it is widely seen by many Croatians as our national variety. Globally, it is not one of the most mentioned white grape varieties, although it is 15<sup>th</sup> most planted white grape in the world, so it is not exotic by any account. Welschriesling is not a Riesling related grape except in the name. In fact, this name is a bit misleading on the international stage as it makes

potential consumers think it is a Riesling-like grape, while in reality it is vastly different. In Croatia, it found its real home as no other country dedicates such a large percentage of its total vineyard area to this variety.

### **Grape properties**

Graševina is quite resilient to pests, can grow on different soils, and gives good and dependable yields making it popular with vintners. The grapes grow on relatively small bunches and have smaller berries. Graševina is a local name in Croatia given to the grape because the berries look like peas while still young. (Grašak = Croatian for "Pea").

Good vineyard positions at around 200m to 300m with southern orientation and potassium enriched soil will produce grapes of very high quality. Graševina starts budding late so it can avoid spring frost.

### **Wine characteristics + Food pairing**

Most Graševina wines are of medium alcohol levels and refreshing acidity. Sourced from best vineyards Graševina grapes can be used to produce top quality ample-bodied whites as well. High acidity in many Graševina wines makes it a good sparkling wine variety, but don't be surprised to find it in some wonderful late harvest sweet wines or even ice wines. Graševina wines come in a wide range of quality levels with lower quality Graševina wines being notorious for sharp acidity.

Young Graševina wines are of greenish-yellow colour and exude freshness. They exhibit green apple over the nose, mixed with hints of pear, vineyard peach and sometimes floral aromas like jasmine.

In Baranja, loess dominated soil around the Danube combined with summer heat result in reduced yield, but very concentrated sugars and aromas. This makes Graševinas from Baranja more full bodied than is the case in Ilok area. This vineyard area is shaded by Fruška Gora Mountain so the resulting grapes exhibit more freshness and acidity, lighter body and elegant aromatics.

Kutjevo area Graševinas are rich in aromas. Primary aromas of apples and herbs, nice body and lovely acidity define these wines. They are lively and inviting. In hotter years, they can display aromas of exotic fruits like mango or pineapple

Alcohol levels are medium and the finish is lightly bitter. All this accounts for refreshing wines served chilled, perfect for a warm day or as aperitif wine. Food pairings abound with lighter seafood, fresh water fish or salads being at the top of the list. More complex Graševina wines pair well with white meat risottos and pastas as well. For local pairings, Slavonian winemakers recommend Kulen, traditional smoked sausage made from best pork meat and red bell pepper.

### **Plantings / best positions**

Graševina in Croatia thrives in continental regions. It can be found in Croatian Uplands Region and Slavonia and Croatian Danube Region. It is by far the most popular variety in the latter. The best areas for Graševina are found around Kutjevo in Slavonia as well as in Baranja and Ilok in the Danube sub-region.

Some of the best vineyard positions for Graševina are Mitrovac, just west of Kutjevo, Mandićevac on the east banks of Krndija mountain, Vinkomir, Hrnjevac, Vetovo, Turković.



## PLAVAC MALI



Plavac Mali and its uneven ripening

### Name, international name and popularity

Plavac Mali. This, the most beautiful of tongue twisters of Croatian viticulture is an indigenous black grape variety that produces medium to full-bodied reds. Its name translated into English means Little Blue One or Small Blue, which is basically the description of the berries. They are small, blue in appearance and characterised by thick, tannin rich skin. Plavac Mali is the most planted red wine variety in Croatia and is the signature variety of Dalmatia

### Grape properties

Parent varieties of Plavac Mali are Crljenak Kastelanski and Dobricic, although recent evidence is putting the role of Dobričić in doubt. Regardless, Crljenak Kaštelanski, is one of the parent varieties. Interestingly, Crljenak or Tribidrag or Pribidrag as it is also known in Croatia is the same variety as Zinfandel. Plavac Mali gives good, dependable yields and is fairly pest and disease resistant. Over time this variety has taken over and dominated the vineyards in karst, hilly areas of Croatian region of Central and Southern Dalmatia. Here, mostly limestone rich soils, often times sloping sharply towards the deep blue waters of the Adriatic provide for perfect growing areas for Plavac. On better positions it gives great results producing concentrated wines of over 13,5% alcohol with powerful tannin structure. It is noted that Plavac Mali has between 10% and 30% of dry berries during regular harvest which gives its aroma profile a rich and layered character. Uneven ripeness of the berries can also pose a challenge as the tannins become quite astringent if under ripe.

### **Wine characteristics + Food pairing**

Color of Plavac Mali wine is usually vibrant ruby going towards garnet with aging. These wines can be fruity reds of medium body and refreshing acidity characterised by aromas of sour cherry, red plum, liquorice and sweet spices. On the other end of the spectrum are thick, chewy Plavac wines of the hottest areas like the protected geographical appellation of Dingač of Pelješac Peninsula. These usually feature dark berry aromas like those of blackberry, blueberry, or plum jam, while also often releasing aromas of dried figs, carob, raisins, sweet spices, etc... This variety is only now starting to be explored properly with many small-scale winemakers having their own idea of what the perfect Plavac Mali should be. Until very recently, these wines were often a bit too astringent, heavy, and suffering from a lack of energy. Today, various techniques are used to keep Plavac Mali wines drinkable, vibrant and within reasonable alcohol levels.

Pair your Plavac Mali wines with high protein foods as well as some high fat foods, anything from tuna steaks and beefsteaks to aged or blue cheese. Expressive Plavac Mali with a bit of oak influence will pair well with dark chocolate as well.

Plavac Mali was known to be used for production of prošek, traditional Croatian sweet wine. Prošek is made using apassimento method that sees grapes picked in late harvest and then additionally dried indoors to accumulate the sugars. During fermentation, the sugar content is so high, it kills off the yeast before they've been able to convert all of the sugar to alcohol, resulting in residual sugar that makes the wine sweet.

### **Plantings / best positions**

As already mentioned, Plavac Mali dominates the vineyards of Central and Southern Dalmatia. It thrives on steep south facing slopes facing the sea. Reflection of the sun from the water accounts for a secondary source of heat and energy in the vineyards. Rocks covering the soil in the vineyards absorb heat during the day, releasing it after sunset. This is tertiary source of heat in top vineyard locations for Plavac Mali. Three distinct sources of heat are known as triple insulation. Locally, this type of vineyard position was said to have "three suns". Most of these positions are not suitable for mechanised harvesting, so all the work in the vineyard is done by hand, adding to the cost of production.

Top Plavac Mali vineyards are found on Pelješac Peninsula and the islands Hvar, Brač, Vis and Korčula. Konavle region, Kaštela and Makarska region are also known for high quality Plavac Mali grapes, while the new region of Komarna, close to Neretva River is the most exciting new area where these grapes give great results.

Most renowned positions are Dingač and Postup on Pelješac Peninsula and Ivan Dolac and Sv. Nedjelja on Hvar island.

There are Plavac Mali vineyards in flat areas as well. Here, the grapes are suitable for medium bodied wines of fruity character and refreshing acidity. They also tend to have a more astringent tannin structure.





## MALVAZIJA ISTARSKA – MALVASIA ISTRIANA



Malvazija Istarska Grapes, source: [Coronica.eu](http://Coronica.eu)

### Name, international name and popularity

Malvasia is a name shared by numerous varieties around the Mediterranean, most of which are distinctly different from each other. It is unclear exactly why all these different varieties share a common name, but it is likely it stems from ancient sales practices of the Venetians who may have created a brand of sorts by selling “Malvasia Wines”. Regardless of the name origin, so far there was no genetic identical discovered for the Malvasia found on Istrian Peninsula – Northernmost part of Croatian coastline. So, we are treating Malvazija Istarska as an indigenous variety. First written account of Malvazija Istarska dates back to 1891 when it was described for a wine expo in Zagreb.

It is the second most planted variety in Croatia and accounts for around 60% of wine produced in Istria. It is renowned for being able to produce a variety of styles of wine and because of excellent growing conditions on Istria combined with good practices of local winemakers through decades this variety has become a synonym for a “safe” choice when ordering white wine in Croatian restaurants.

### Grape properties

Malvazija Istarska is a grapevine of relatively high yield so good canopy and fruit management is important in the vineyards. The bunches are medium in size while the berries are medium to large. They are green-yellow and turn full golden on the sunniest parts. The grapes tend to be sensitive during ripening. On average they will accumulate around 17-22% of sugar and 5-7g/L of acidity.

Malvazija Istarska falls into semi-aromatic category of grapes and exhibits great potential when it comes to fruity and floral primary aromas.

## Wine characteristics + Food pairing

Range of styles of Istrian Malvasia are found on local menus and in local Croatian shops from light and fruity/floral ones all the way to sweet wines or amber (skin contact) wines. Most wines made from this grape will fall in 11,5%-13,5% alcohol level bracket. They exhibit green-yellow or straw-yellow colour.

Seeing how wine consumption in Croatia spikes over the summer when many international guests visit hot coastal regions of the country, fresh and fruity expressions are the most popular. These wines will usually exhibit aromas of stone fruit like peach or apricot, usually with slight almond and floral aspect, acacia blossom being the most common one. Often there will be some mineral and/or almond notes to your Malvasia wines as well. On the palate, these wines are pleasant and elegant, but still warm and rich with fruity and floral aromas. Well balanced, with fitting acidity, Malvazija Istarska wines will be a perfect middle ground between lovely food wines and refreshing aperitif wines.

Most Malvazija Istarska wines will be consumed while still young and energetic, but there are some examples on the market that can benefit from aging, either in oak barrels or even in acacia barrels. When aged, these wines will get an inviting gold colour and will evolve towards candied and jammy fruits with addition of secondary spicy aromas from the barrel and hints of tertiary nutty aromas.

This variety is used to produce some sparkling and dessert wines as well.

Many of Malvazija Istarska wines will be perfect for pairing with various seafood dishes, grilled fish fillets, fresh oysters, chicken salads, risottos and pastas. With a strong Italian influence in Istrian cuisine, you will never go wrong ordering this wine while visiting this region known for delicious pastas.

## Plantings / best positions

Malvazija Istarska can grow on different soils, so we find it in both red and white Istrian soils. It will exhibit better results on sloped vineyards and lighter soils.

Today we can find Malvazija Istarska on the Islands of Kvarner area and even parts of Northern Dalmatia, but it is Istria where all the best Malvazija wines come from.

Best positions include Buje region with Sv. Lucija and Kontarini positions.

Interesting to note is the advent of quality designation for Malvazija Istarska wines put out by Vinistra, Istrian wine society. IQ or Istrian Quality designation award is reserved for wines that meet high quality standards of wine making.





Pošip grapes at harvest time

### **Name, international name and popularity**

Pošip is a white grape native to the Island of Korčula. In the year 1967 it became the first Croatian white variety with a protected geographical designation. It is also known as Pošipak, Pošipica and Pošip Bijeli. There were several theories about the origin of the variety, but eventually it was settled that Pošip is an indigenous Korčula variety created by spontaneous crossing of local varieties Bratkovina and Zlatica Blatska. It was found growing in the wild by a man called Marin Tomašić Barbaca in second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century while clearing a land plot in village of Smokvica, close to the village of Čara. It is these two villages that are now the most famous for top quality Pošip wines.

**Grape properties**

This variety is characterised by slightly elongated berries. It is known for very good yields and capability of thriving in a hot Mediterranean climate. It thrives in sandy soils, protected from the wind. The bunches are rather large.

**Wine organoleptic properties + Food pairing**

Long hot summers can be quite a challenge for sensitive grapes, but even more challenging is harvesting, transporting and handling such grapes while outside temperatures exceed 28°C or 30°C. Because of these conditions Pošip grapes are sturdy and the wines are most commonly medium or full-bodied white wines with 13-14% alcohol content. They are rich and fruity in character featuring ripe lemon or golden colour. Primary aromas are often those of apricots, peaches, almonds, apricot jam, sun-dried fruits and similar. Pošip grapes have spread beyond Korčula Island to other parts of Croatian coast making this variety the most important variety for high quality white wines of Croatian south. While it is nothing new to use Pošip for traditional dessert wine known as Prošek, recent efforts have confirmed that this variety does very well in oak and can benefit from *sur lie* stirring or *sur lie* method.

Quality Pošip wines with sufficient acidity will usually be refreshing accompanying wines that pair well with seafood dishes like white fish carpaccio, raw oysters, grilled seabass or bream, prawn and zucchini risotto. These are some of the best sellers in Croatian coastal restaurants, so it is no wonder all the producers of Pošip are going to insist on these pairings. However, considering the ample body of many Pošip wines, don't be afraid of getting creative and pairing them with different chicken dishes, pork cutlets, falafel or stir fries.

**Plantings / best positions**

Korčula island is the birthplace of Pošip and the most renowned growing region for the grapes. Namely, it was villages of Čara and Smokvica which gave us best Pošip growing areas so far.

Because of its rising popularity and versatility, Pošip is now being found more and more in wine areas of Dalmatia. Its popularity will rise for the foreseeable future.





Babic grape, source: [dalmatiandog.eu](http://dalmatiandog.eu)

### **Name, international name and popularity**

Babić is an indigenous Croatian variety grown in Dalmatia, especially the sub-region of Northern Dalmatia. The quantities of Babić in Croatia are not the main reason why we are talking about it here, but rather the quality potential of this variety, which is quite impressive. This variety is receiving much attention lately which is very good news indeed.

### **Grape properties**

Babić is a grape of medium sized berries. They are dark blue in colour and have fairly thin and soft skin. Crucial thing for Babić wines is a good vineyard position. In sub-par positions it gives wines of average quality. However, if you plant it in karst, rocky areas with plenty of sunshine, the resulting grapes will have the potential of producing amazing wines. Grapes in these top-quality locations can gather up to 23% of sugar

Babic wines are best when the grapes used to make them are allowed to fully ripen and the winemaker subsequently allows for the end wine to age in barrel for a period of time. This is done to enrich the aromas and smooth out the tannin structure.

### **Wine organoleptic properties + Food pairing**

Babić wines are dark blue/ruby colour and of substantial thickness. Dominant aromas are pleasant fruity primary aromas of red and dark berry fruit. It is a wine of higher alcohol and higher acidity levels, as well as a strong tannin structure. This makes the wines produced with Babić very interesting for aging as well. Many

Babić wines are made in 12-13% alcohol level. Babić is a terroir wine and its potential places it among the most interesting wine varieties in Croatia. It is exciting to see where Croatian winemakers will take this variety next.

Babić wines pair beautifully with grilled meats, traditional beef dish with thick sauce called Pašticada, prosciutto and various cheese.

#### **Plantings / best positions**

Terraced vineyards above Primošten are the most popular area for Babić grapevines and create a specific terroir unto itself. Perhaps the most renowned position is Bucavac. Other important vineyard positions around Primošten include Jasenovik, Strana, Kremik and Tovrh.

Aside from those areas, Babić is traditionally grown around Kaštela, in Šibenik hinterland, and on the island of Brač.



**Name, international name and popularity**

Croatian Teran is not to be confused with Slovenian Kraški Teran which is a different variety as was recently proven, but is rather a Croatian variety of its own. When it comes to the actual grapevines, Teran has medium

large bunches of varying density. The berries tend to be egg-shaped and darkly coloured, black with purple hue. They are medium sized with tough skin and reddish meat. It gives abundant yields. These grapes accumulate 16% sugar on average, over 19% for best examples, and 10 g/L of acidity. They do well with changes of temperature and can withstand both periods of heavy rain as well as very dry and hot periods.

#### **Wine organoleptic properties + Food pairing**

Teran wines are of medium to high intensity ruby colour with distinct purple rim. Primary aromas are fruity with red berry fruit like raspberry being dominant. Spicy aromas of black pepper or certain earthy aromas are often found within as well. They will have higher acidity and stronger tannin structure. They have also made this wine gain a reputation as a medicinal wine in the past. Because of these characteristics Teran wines make for very interesting food wines and when done right they can also be very age worthy wines.

It pairs wonderfully with high protein foods. It is a lovely wine pairing for Istrian prosciutto, steak, and certain types of game as well. For a local pairing, try giving heartier truffle pastas of Istria an acidic and fruity counterbalance with a medium plus bodied Teran wine.

#### **Plantings / best positions**

Teran is popular in many parts of Istria. It is supposedly an indigenous variety and as such, Istria is its main home and the land that gives it its distinct features. Wineries around Umag, Brtonigla and Momjan are known for producing some of the best Teran wines in Istria.







### **Name, international name and popularity**

Grk is a special variety in many ways. This wonderful white variety from island of Korčula was reduced to just a few locations. Its origin is unknown and so far the genetic identical has not been found. The name might refer to Greek origin or the bitter kick its wines often display on the back palate. Regardless, it is one of the most exciting varieties in the country.

### **Grape properties**

The grapevines have only female functioning flowers, so Grk needs to be planted alongside other varieties for pollination. Usually, this means alongside Plavac Mali. Since pollination of this variety is challenging and does not always lead to success, the ripened clusters often contain large, fertilised berries alongside smaller, unfertilised ones that give the wine its distinct bitter notes. The reason for this are acids that can be found in the undeveloped grapes in much higher quantities than in large berries.

### **Wine organoleptic properties + Food pairing**

Wines produced from this variety display very interesting fruity aromas, but also a signature hint of pine resin and minerality. Grk wines are usually of ample alcohol and will do well in oak, but due to lovely acidity will rarely feel their alcohol content. There is very little Grk around. The entire world's production is concentrated in Croatia and it usually hovers around 25000 bottles. Get one of those while in Croatia. Because of these wonderful characteristics, Grk wines are great food wines. They can be paired with simple seafood like fresh oysters or sea bass carpaccio. However, they are usually ample bodied so provide for great pairing for anything

from grilled fish, through lobster to chicken. Grk wines will pair the best with seafood dishes where their often present herbal or pine aromas will shine the brightest.

#### **Plantings / best positions**

As already mentioned, there is little Grk around, so there are not a lot of recognised top positions. The grape thrives on sandy soils of Lumbarda village on the island of Korcula. This renowned village is where you will find the biggest concentration of Grk at the moment. Defora is a great nearby vineyard position that is gaining more and acclaim, but this one features red soil and crushed limestone. The variety is being planted elsewhere as well, especially on nearby Peljesac Peninsula.



## Other Important Varieties in Croatia

### CRLJENAK KAŠTELANSKI (TRIBIDRAG, PRIBIDRAG, ZINFANDEL)

Recent research proved this variety is genetically identical to Zinfandel and Primitivo. Out of all of these, Croatian variety has the oldest mention. So, for now, the world is treating Zinfandel as having Croatian origins. As already mentioned, with Plavac Mali entering the picture some 300 years ago, it took over as the dominant red variety in Dalmatia. Plantings of Crljenak are now on the rise seeing how the news of the variety's origin makes it very interesting from a marketing perspective. Of course, aside from good PR, Crljenak is an amazing variety. It can produce red wines with a fruity character that also do well with oak aging. You will not find many Crljenak wines around Croatia, but some examples are of very high quality.

### MARAŠTINA (RUKATAC, MALVASIA DEL CHIANTI)

For decades, the most popular white variety of entire Dalmatia. It is a resilient grape that can survive in very hot areas and produces robust whites of medium or more often full body. It is fruit forward, displaying ripe or even overripe apple and stone fruit aromas, often accompanied by dried florals. Alcohol levels are relatively low to medium. In Croatia it is also known as Rukatac, while its international names include Malvasia del Chianti and Malvasia Bianca Lunga. Maraština. It produces great results on Korčula island, in Šibenik and Pelješac regions and several other spots along the coast. It is known as a wonderful grape for Prošek dessert wines and a great variety for production of skin contact, amber (aka orange) wines.

### DEBIT

Often regarded as an indigenous variety of Dalmatia, but Debit probably originated in Italy. Other common names in Croatia include Puljižanac, Bjelina, and Pagadebit. It is a popular white variety in the areas of Šibenik, Skradin, Promina and Drniš. It takes a while to ripen and accumulates sugar over a period of time. It used to be even more popular producing some Dalmatian wines that were exported to international markets. It creates simpler, but interesting and pleasant wines. They make great aperitif wines, but also great wines to be paired with lighter seafood or even lighter white meat dishes.

### MALVASIJA DUBROVAČKA

Malvasia from Dubrovnik is a popular and important local white variety that was an important planting in the far south region of Croatia since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is not an indigenous variety. Its international names include Malvasia delle Lipari, Malvasia di Sardegna or Malvasia De Sitges. During the time of Communism and socialism in former Yugoslavia, the variety almost went completely extinct, only to be revived and replanted by the vintners of Konavle region. It was traditionally used for sweet wines and alongside Maraština it is traditionally considered the best variety for Prošek wines. Today, it is mostly used to produce dry white wines of medium or full body with lovely fruity aromas that are intense on the nose and do well to mask high alcohol content many of these wines have. Combined with medium acidity, these wines are great food wines and are vastly popular in Dubrovnik region restaurants.

### PLAVINA

Plavina is a red wine variety popular around Northern Dalmatia and some other areas in within Dalmatia. It usually gives light red wines with good acidity. Light in alcohol and pleasantly fruity, Plavina is a rare variety that is able to produce light reds in Dalmatia. Due to the relatively neutral character of the wine, it is almost always used in blends.



### PUŠIPEL (MOSLAVAC, ŠIPON, FURMINT)

Pušipel is much better known internationally as Furmint, the grape variety from which famous Tokaj wines are produced. Pušipel is a white grape variety planted mainly in Croatian Uplands region. It is known as Moslavac in many areas, but in Međimurje sub-region it is known as Pušipel and represents the most important grape variety. In fact, Međimurje winemakers are diligently building up their reputation through this variety, becoming known around Croatia as an area from which some of the best light whites are coming to the market. Moslavac or Pušipel gives great results around Međimurje and Moslavina with Štrigova village in Međimurje becoming one of the areas to keep an eye out on. Pušipel wines are mostly dry, light, crisp and refreshing, and they still mostly keep very accessible prices on Croatian market.

### KRALJEVINA

Kraljevina grows in central Croatia as well and is also known for its high acidity and light alcohols. It is one of the oldest indigenous varieties in the country. Kraljevina was mostly known for producing overly acidic wines which would be mixed with sparkling water into a spritzers or so called gemišt in Croatia. It would also be added to blends. However, it is lately being used to make light varietal whites and it's potential for creating interesting sparkling wines is being explored to very interesting results.

### ŠKRLET

Škrlet is another variety of mainly Croatian Uplands producing light white wines. This one, neglected, but maybe on the verge of making a comeback. It produces wine with lovely aromatics displaying aromas of white florals, apple, apricot and sometimes pineapple. It is a refreshing and light wine worth sampling while visiting this region.

### ŽLAHTINA

Žlahtina or Žlajtina is an indigenous white grape variety from Croatian Littoral region. Its name derives from the Slavic word žlahten, which means "noble". Vrbnička Žlatina, as it is also known, gets its name from Vrbnik Field or Vrbničko Polje on Krk Island where it is grown most prominently, even though you will find it in Istria as well. Since it grows only in this limited area, the Vrbnik Žlahtina is a variety with a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). Žlahtina grows in large grape clusters and is considered a high-yield variety. The dry wine it produces is clear, golden yellow and moderately strong, with a fruity aroma, high minerality and mild salinity, and a smooth and harmonious taste.

### KUJUNDŽUŠA

The most important grape variety in Dalmatinska Zagora region is Kujundžuša. This white grape variety originated in sandy soil around the town of Imotski. Kujundžuša is an indigenous white variety that is capable of producing high quality refreshing white wines of light or medium body. Wines made with this variety are usually lemon-yellow in colour and display lower alcohol content. Usually, alongside subtle citrusy fruitiness they display some minerality as well. Proximity of the vineyard areas to some of the warmest and most popular seaside destinations makes Kujundžuša wines potentially a very important addition to many restaurant wine lists.

### BOGDANUŠA

Bogdanuša is a wine variety indigenous to the island of Hvar, as it was originally found in the Stari Grad Plain on the island. It is a white wine of a very rich greenish-yellow colour, unexpectedly fresh taste, with just the right amount of bitterness and quite low alcohol content, almost always around 12%, and a hint of herbs (lavender!) in the aroma.



## VUGAVA

Vugava also known as Bugava is an old indigenous variety. Its home is the island of Vis, once the first important Ancient Greek port on Croatia's coast. It thrives in the island's karst and sandy soils. Due to difficult terrain where it is traditionally grown, Vugava is not as popular today as it might be considering the powerful white wines it is able to produce. It was historically used for sweet wine called prošek as well. Vugava wines are lemon-yellow or golden-yellow in colour and after exhibits very ripe aromatics, higher alcohol content and medium acidity. It is slightly growing in popularity and will most probably continue producing very interesting food wines.

## TRAMINAC (TRAMINER)

Internationally popular variety most probably originating from Italian South Tyrol region is an important name in Croatian continental regions. There are two popular Traminer grapes in Croatia – Red Traminer and Aromatic Traminer. The most renowned Croatian Traminer is grown around the town of Ilok. Here it produces some of the most renowned wines in the country mainly semi-sweet and sweet styles. Top traminer positions are in Croatian Danube sub-region with Principovac being one of the most renowned.

## FRANKOVKA

You will probably know Frankovka by its German name Blaufraenkisch or another internationally popular name Blue Frankish. It is very popular in warmer positions in the continental areas of the country, but also in Istria where it is known as Borgonja. Perhaps the best results it produces in Ilok area of Croatian Danube sub-region. It produces lighter to medium red wines of fruity character and primary aromas of cherries and blackberries. It is ruby red in colour and can achieve very interesting results with shorter aging. Made as a great food wine or a refreshing alternative to fuller bodied reds made on the coast, Frankovka grapes are far from declining in popularity in Croatia. In fact, this just might be one of the varieties to watch out for in the upcoming years.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL VARIETIES.

Other important international varieties in Croatia include famous grapes of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Grenache, Portugiser, Pinot Noir, Refosco, Riesling, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Pinot Blanc and many other.

Merlot vineyards can be found from Konavle to Istria on the Coast, to Slavonia in the north-east. Cabernet Sauvignon is also popular both for so called Bordeaux blends with merlot and to make varietal wines. Syrah is perhaps not as popular as the aforementioned two, but it is also planted in warmer locations and produces great wines. Grenache is very popular in Northern Dalmatia and Refosco is one of the most popular varieties in Istria. Pinot Noir thrives in cool climate of Croatian Uplands as does Riesling, Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc. You can find these varieties in Slavonia as well alongside Pinot Blanc. Chardonnay has gained momentum along the coast as well at one point, but thankfully, local winemakers seem to be directing their attention to local varieties more.

If this course was simply prepared following the quantity of grapes grown, many of these would be much higher up in the order of presentation. However, it is the intent of this course to teach mostly about the most important Croatian indigenous varieties or those international varieties that give some of their best expressions here. Having said that, do not be swayed from trying your favourite international varieties in Croatia. Some of these produce wines that are among the highest rated Croatian wines in big international wine fairs.



## LOCAL CULTURE & CUISINE

After all the detailed and very factual information on Croatia, its wine regions and wines, I would like to take a few minutes to tell you something about the country's wine culture. As already mentioned, Croatia is very diverse when it comes to its regions. Different climate and different soil might be the most important factors when it comes to wine, but when it comes to local culture, there is another piece of the puzzle worth mentioning – historical influences.

Along the coast, there is historically an important Mediterranean and specifically Italian cultural influence. In Dalmatia, this was mainly through Venetian rule and cultural ties to the other coast of the Adriatic Sea. In Dubrovnik area, historically strong ties were kept with various Italian city states like Florence, Venice, Puglia and so on, as well as with Spain as another Mediterranean powerhouse. Istria still has a strong Italian minority populating its towns and villages even today. You can see the Italian influence in local dialects, architecture and of course - wine and food. In continental parts of the country, there are more Austro-Hungarian influences. Germanic grape varieties abound. There is a certain influence from Hungary as well. After all, Croatia was joined with Hungary not just in Austro-Hungarian Empire, but in Croatian-Hungarian Empire as well. There are some traditional Turkish, or more precisely Ottoman influences along the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. All this makes Croatia very interesting to explore when it comes to local culture. And by now you know what my favourite part of local culture is. Yes, food and wine.

Basically, within most of Croatia, wine is traditionally a very popular drink. Around the continental parts of the country, beer has been produced much more prominently than on the coastal areas. However, even those continental regions will cherish their local wines.

### Local traditions

Cheap wines have traditionally been technically lacking in one way or another. This gave rise to certain old-school trends like drinking red wine mixed with water in Dalmatia. This is known as bevanda and it was usually a way of watering down powerful Plavac Mali wines to make them more palatable (because of high tannin content) or cooler during warm weather. Rosés were not very popular, but we did have them in the shape and form of the style of wine called opolo. These were basically rosé wines made by short maceration of black grapes, usually Plavac Mali. The resulting wine would be a lighter version of a red wine, usually heavier than most modern roses.

Similarly to bevanda in Dalmatia, we've had gemišt in the continental parts of the country. This is a simple spritzer drink, combination of, usually overly acidic white wines with sparkling water. Resulting drink is refreshing and lightly alcoholic.

If you appreciate wine, none of these will knock your socks off.

Speaking of technically suspect wine, when you are a guest in someone's house in Croatia, you run the risk of having to drink their own wine or wine made by one of their relatives. This is sometimes a pleasant surprise, but many times it means having to drink a somewhat rough wine which you will have to pretend is nice. Don't overdo it, or you will have to drink a lot of it.

Speaking of wine manners in Croatia, having a glass of wine with food is very common. So much so, that having a glass of wine during a business lunch or some other professional occasion falls very much within the realm of polite behaviour. Of course, one should always keep in mind, we are talking about a glass of wine in this case, not a bottle.



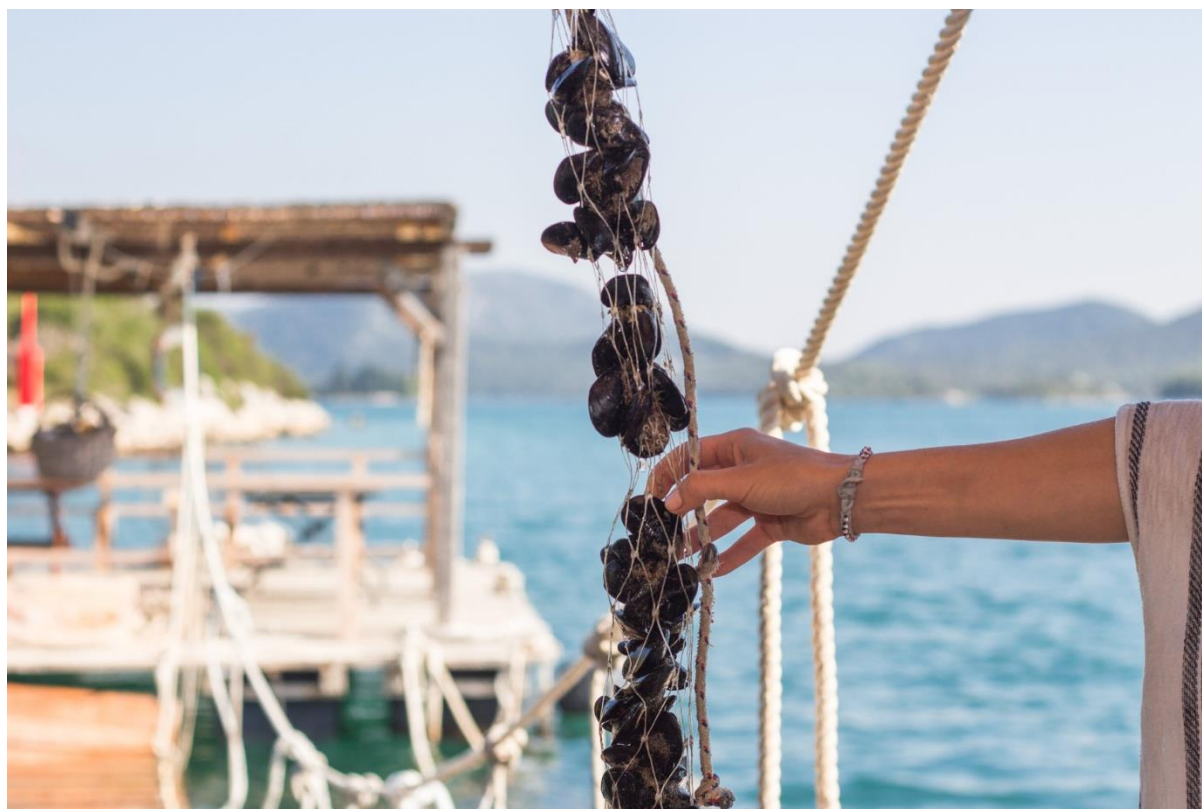


## Food

Food in Croatia is as diverse as the wine. Historically, in order to survive in the south of today's Croatia versus the north, you would have to eat very different foods and you could grow or catch very different animals and plants. So, it comes as no surprise that all of the regions or even sub-regions we've mentioned for wine making, will also have different traditional foods. There is no such thing as a Croatian national dish. Every main region has its own. On the other hand, Croatian food is not incredibly exotic. It is full of influences from all sides and is a lovely mix of Central European, Danube region, Mediterranean, Italian, Balkans and even Turkish cuisine. Generally, when it comes to food, you will have a great choice where ever you are in Croatia.

Dalmatia will have plenty of seafood dishes in its coastal areas. In Croatia we make a distinction between what we call white fish and blue fish. It is all about the difference in meat. White fish is lighter and typical examples include sea bass, bream, red scorpion fish, John Dory and the like. Blue fish is what we call more Omega3 heavy fish such as tuna, sardines, anchovies, mackerel, amberjack (which is actually borderline blue fish) and similar. While white fish is generally paired beautifully with white wines of various complexity, depending on the dish, blue fish might do better with roses and red wines.

Shellfish is also big in Croatia, especially in parts of Dalmatia and Istria. Oysters are delicious and usually eaten raw with a bit of lemon. They pair beautifully with sparkling wines, lighter or earthier white wines, but also certain amber wines or dry roses. Mussels, clams and other shellfish will sometimes be made into buzara sauce, which you will definitely want to try and pair with lighter to medium bodied white wines or dry sparkling wines. Don't miss seafood brudet, which is a tomato based mixed seafood stew, often served with polenta. It is sometimes a bit spicy and will be paired well with lighter red wines. White wines are also an option, light and refreshing if it is spicy or white wines with a more serious body if it is not.



However, don't think Dalmatia is all about seafood. Far from it, as soon as you leave the coast, you will get to countryside areas that are renowned for meat dishes. Specialties include Prosciutto, which can differ from prosciuttos coming out of Spain or Italy as Dalmatian prosciutto is usually smoked while cured and cut thicker, so it will pair with heavier reds than more delicate prosciutto coming out of for example certain producers in Istria which will pair better with heavier roses or lighter reds. The most important thing in the hinterland is peka. Peka is not so much a dish, but a cooking technique. It is most often meat (lamb and veal most prominently), potatoes and Mediterranean herbs, covered in heavy iron dome or what we call "bell", which is then covered with hot ashes. This creates a slow roasting process that takes around 3 hours to complete. The resulting dish is tender, succulent and flavourful. Have it with medium to full bodied reds. Personally, I love peka from Sibenik area and I love pairing it with a nice refreshing Babić wine.

In Istria they are also rightfully proud of their truffles. Truffles are world renowned mushrooms with very distinct and strong aroma. People usually either hate them or adore them. Cream of truffle pastas in Istria are to die for. They pair well with crisp white wines, medium bodied dry whites or even some amber wines. Beefsteak with cream of truffle sauce will pair amazingly with Teran wines. Speaking of steaks, Istrians have their indigenous cattle as well called Boškarin. These guys are massive and they are very tasty. Their meat pairs lovely with medium bodied, ample tannin reds.

In Central Croatia you will find plenty of hunting lodges. Some of the favourite game includes venison, wild boar or even bear. Depending on the exact dish, you can pair these dishes with refreshing, medium bodied reds or full bodied reds. Locals will sometimes prefer refreshing white like graševina, to cut through the heavy sauce or fatty content. When meat is dominating the dish, go for a well-structured red and you will not be sorry. Plavac Mali will be amazing for this. Dingac area Plavac Mali and wild boar stew is a pairing on another level.

Around capital city of Zagreb you will find plenty of Austrian and Germanic influence in the food. Turkey with Mlinci – a traditional pasta like side dish in gravy is a popular traditional dish. It pairs well with refreshing



medium bodied or even some full bodied oaky whites, but you will not go wrong with a nice refreshing red. For example Frankovka or Portugizac varieties will do nicely.



Štrukli, cheese filled pastry that come in savoury and sweet versions are also one of the iconic dishes of Zagreb region. Pair them with refreshing whites like young Pušipel from Međimurje when they are savoury and when they are sweet, try them with local late harvest and noble rot white wines.

In Slavonia you will find some wonderful cured meats. Kulen, the country's most popular sausage is a special treat. This pork based sausage with plenty of red pepper is a real treat. It pairs well with medium bodied reds, but also with heavier, whites with some residual sugar or oaky notes. Locally, it is often paired with refreshing Graševina to counter the fat content, or in cases where it is a bit spicy, which many Kulen sausages are. Spicy, Hungarian influenced dishes like fish paprikash or čobanac are also popular in Slavonia. Čobanac is a dish prepared over fire where meat and vegetables are cooked for a long time. It usually features three types of meat: pork, young beef and some game meat. Meat is stewed in a delicious sauce which uses plenty of white wine as well. It is usually paired with refreshing whites, most probably Graševina, but a more substantial Rieslings could work really well.

Croatians are usually very proud of their regions and local areas. It is therefore quite funny that some of the best wine pairings can actually be done by combining food from one region and wines from another.

We are scratching the surface here. There is so much delicious food around the country, it is quite a challenge to discover it.

Just so you know, when toasting in Croatia, we usually say Živjeli or Nazdravlje or Uzdravlje, depending on where you are in the country. Živjeli means, long live and nazdravlje or uzdravlje means "to your health"!

Thank you for becoming an ambassador of Croatian wine!

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