



KVARNER REGION TOURIST BOARD

KVARNER

Diversity is beautiful



FOOD & HERITAGE FOR THE FUTURE:

Diversity is beautiful



EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

KVARNER CANDIDATE 2026





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1 JOINING FORCES

Our journey towards the title of the European Region of Gastronomy is paved with a great support of key players in Croatian and regional tourism. Meet our partners and allies!

Ministry of Tourism and Sport

The Ministry of Tourism and Sport recognizes the importance of gastronomy and enology for the overall Croatian tourist offer and the competitiveness of Croatian tourism and has included them in our new Strategy for the Development of Sustainable Tourism 2030, with a focus on encouraging excellence in gastronomy – all with the aim of creating high-quality year-round tourist offer throughout Croatia. The strategy is very clearly connected to sources of financing, and we are especially proud to say that hospitality professionals and chefs collaborated with us in proposing specific measures, tailored to their needs. The measures introduced in the National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Tourism 2027 are also aimed at encouraging investments in setting up and equipping hospitality establishments owned by small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, with special attention given to digitalization and the use of innovative technologies, as well as the protection of the environment, energy efficiency, and the use of renewable energy sources.

In recent years, the Kvarner region has made significant progress and positioned itself as the leading destination in the Croatian gastronomic scene. Continuous development of gastronomy products, participation in the European Region of Gastronomy, and the candidature for the title of the European Region of Gastronomy in 2026 are just some of the development activities which have prepared this destination to take a step towards the international market, branding, and the development of local community in terms of sustainability, further emphasizing gastronomy as a motive for the arriving visitors. What is most important to us in the context of strategic planning is that all these activities imply the protection and promotion of local culture and ingredients, sustainable development, improvements in quality, and encouraging networking among various tourism sectors. I believe that all of this is enough to show how important gastronomy is to us in further development of quality and sustainable tourism in Croatia, and what an important role the Kvarner region plays in the process.

*Nikolina Brnjac, PhD
Minister
Ministry of Tourism and Sport*



Croatian National Tourist Board

Dear Mrs. Peršić Živadinov,

Thank you for presenting the European Regions of Gastronomy business platform, managed by the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts, and Tourism - IGCAT, for the purposes of preparing the candidate book for the title of European Region of Gastronomy 2026.

The Croatian National Tourist Board supports the inclusion of the Kvarner Region Tourist Board to this business platform and recognizes the importance of winning the title of the European Region of Gastronomy 2026. We highly appreciate your initiative and recognize the significance this title has for local food producers, restaurateurs, and local tourist boards, with whom the Kvarner Region Tourist Board has been actively cooperating for more than a decade.

The Croatian gastronomic scene progresses year by year and follows global trends, and the Croatian National Tourist Board, through its promotional activities, strives to strengthen the positioning of all regions of Croatia as high-quality, sustainable, and desirable destinations on the world's food and wine map.

In the Kvarner area, this is largely reflected in the support and promotion of food and

wine activities, such as the WineRi Festival and numerous wine and food workshops, as well as successful ongoing cooperation with eminent world gastronomy guides, such as the Michelin Guide, 50 Best, Gault&Millau, and JRE, which highlighted numerous quality restaurants and thus contributed to the reputation and attractiveness of the destination.

As a result of all the above, we believe that this business platform and the title of European Region of Gastronomy 2026 will greatly contribute to the visibility of not only the region, but also the entire country, bringing guests closer to the excellence of the area's enogastronomic offer and encourage further development and excellence of the tourism sector in Croatia.

The Croatian Tourist Board expresses its full support for the candidature of the Kvarner Region Tourist Board for the European Region of Gastronomy in 2026.

We wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

*Kristjan Staničić, MSc
Director
Croatian National Tourist Board*



Primorje-Gorski Kotar County

Primorje-Gorski Kotar County in cooperation with the Kvarner Region Tourist Board, educational institutions, hospitality industry, as well as local producers, has been working on branding and positioning the region as a gastronomic destination for years. We are proud that our gastronomic offer is already widely known and recognized, contributing significantly to the entire tourist offer of Kvarner. We are especially proud that gastronomy of our county is based on autochthonous local products, specific for each part of our region – the Kvarner islands, the littoral area and Gorski Kotar, which carries the title of the “green heart of Croatia” for a reason. In addition to our excellent restaurants and taverns, carrying the certificates “Kvarner Gourmet” and “Kvarner Food”, our acclaimed chefs, especially those awarded prestigious Michelin stars, contributed to this success story as promoters of excellence. Thus, this nomination would be a reward for them and everyone else who took part in building the uniqueness of Kvarner gastronomy.

Primorje-Gorski Kotar County is an area of great biodiversity, which is why it can offer such a wide range of local and varied food. Many of these dishes and products bear the seal of originality and top quality. If we start from the sea, Kvarner abounds with fish stocks, and it’s famous for the Kvarner langoustines, while our islands are known for olive growing, sheep farming, and in recent decades, development of viticulture, especially on the island of Krk and in the Vinodol region. Kvarner also has one of the most developed communities of honey producers in the whole of Croatia, and there are increasing investments in the cultivation of indigenous fruit.

Through the Administrative Department of Tourism, Entrepreneurship and Rural Development, and through the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County financially supports local farmers, manufacturers, food producers and restaurateurs. We are also

the carrier of numerous activities aiming to improve quality, preserve and strengthen the growth of native varieties, which are the real wealth of our gastronomy. Furthermore, we built a fruit processing factory and honey bottling factory. We supported the construction of an olive oil mill, and continuously work on the expansion of infrastructure in agricultural areas. We also opened an exhibition and sales center in Rijeka – Kašetica, providing the space where local and native products can find their way to end users, local people, visitors, and restaurateurs. Kašetica is also an active educational center involved in marketing activities as well as direct promotion of indigenous products from the coastal, island and mountain areas of Kvarner.

Along with supporting institutions, we are constantly creating new ways to develop, encourage and promote a colorful “table” of local diversities that enrich the cuisine of our region. Therefore, we justifiably and proudly believe to be a worthy nominee for the European Region of Gastronomy Award in 2026.

As I am writing this letter, our vineyards and olive groves are amidst the harvest, while in the hinterland of the coastal town of Lovran visitors enjoy ripe Lovran chestnuts, one of the specialties of this region. In the forests of Gorski Kotar, mushroom pickers are enjoying the wealth of the autumn “forest fruits”, while our fishermen work hard every day to provide local people and restaurants with fresh seafood.

Kvarner, as one of the most developed tourist regions in Croatia considering the variety and quality of the offer, can rightly be called one of major Croatian gastronomic destinations. In addition to its natural beauty, our wonderfully clean sea and green forests, gastronomy is one of our strongest tourist assets.

Zlatko Komadina
President of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County



Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management

The Faculty of Management in Tourism and Hospitality, based in Opatija, is a respectable higher education institution within the University of Rijeka, fully focused on education in hospitality, tourism and sustainable development as well as scientific development.

Our key values are dedication to students, partnership with the economy, excellence, academic freedom, and ethics and social responsibility. In our studies we carry out university undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs as well as postgraduate specialist studies and various programs of lifelong education from the areas of tourism, hospitality and sustainable development. The Faculty has a developed partner network of over 60 related universities in the country and abroad, and fosters cooperation with numerous other companies and professional associations.

The Business Economics in Tourism and Hospitality study program is the holder of the prestigious certificate of quality in higher education - UNWTO TedQual - awarded by the World Tourist Organization. Within the study course “Management in the hotel industry”, students learn about management of hospitality companies, gastronomy and restaurant management, international enogastronomy, food and nutrition, trends in nutrition, sustainable nutrition, etc. For more than ten years, we have been running a lifelong education program called Specialist in the Food and Beverage Department, consisting of two modules: gastronomy and restaurant management.

In the field of food and gastronomy, the Faculty has been actively involved as partner in European projects related to

education in food and gastronomy (FoodBiz – University and business learning for new employability paths in food and gastronomy; ERASMUS+, 2017-2019), sustainable food production (AdriAquaNet – Enhancing Innovation and Sustainability in Adriatic Aquaculture, Interreg Italy-Croatia, 2019-2022) and the establishment of two competency centers for vocational education in hospitality and tourism (Recept and ReCeZa, European Social Fund, 2020-2023).

In the field of tourism, hospitality and sustainable development, the Faculty is a contractor in many scientific and professional projects. Recently, the Faculty carried out an exceptional project of national importance: The Strategy for the Development of Sustainable Tourism until 2030, for the Ministry of Tourism (2021-2023). Our teachers also prepared the Action Plan for the Development of Gastronomy of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (2022-2023), which makes a good reference point for the Faculty’s participation in the Kvarner – the European Region of Gastronomy project.

Our contribution to the candidature of Kvarner for the European Region of Gastronomy Award 2026 will be made through education activities and participation, together with other stakeholders, in the planned activities from the field of gastro tourism. The Faculty is a leader in higher education, scientific and professional research in the field of sustainable and innovative tourism and hospitality, responding to social challenges, and providing scientifically based solutions through creative partnerships with key stakeholders.

Sandra Janković PhD
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management



Kvarner Wines association of winemakers

The Kvarner Wines association, established primarily at the initiative of wine producers with the aim of branding Kvarner wines, sees the project of the European Gastronomy Region as a key project in the development of the region's enogastronomy, promoting the region as a specialized, boutique destination for fine wines and native gastronomy. Therefore, we are extremely proud to be able to participate as one of the key stakeholders and responsibly commit ourselves to full involvement in the implementation of the tasks.

Wine production and viticulture are among the most important agricultural branches in the region, and also a very important part of the tourist offer of Kvarner. As grapevine is one of the oldest agricultural crops in our area, we have a large variety of native grape varieties here, such as the indigenous Žlahtina, Belica, Trojiščina and Sansigot, which are produced only in Kvarner, within the area of 192 ha. Revitalization of viticulture and winemaking in Kvarner and the Croatian Littoral started through the project "Characterization of Native Grape Varieties of Kvarner", and with the help of local administrations as well as the academic community. Research showed that among endangered and neglected varieties there is a significant number of grapevines which, due to their varietal characteristics and quality potential, deserve to be re-cultivated in commercial vineyards. As a result, this project prevented the extinction of certain native grape varieties, enabling increased wine production and the planting of new vineyards with indigenous assortment.

This led to promotion and market presence of Kvarner wines, building connections between agriculture and the tourism and hospitality sector. On the global market and on the EU market, we see an increasing demand for autochthonous products, such as wines from native grape varieties. Wines from Kvarner respond to that demand fully. From a simple tavern with traditional dishes, to sophisticated presentation in restaurants with the Kvarner Gourmet quality mark, as well as Michelin, JRE and Gault&Millau recognitions, our wines find ways to enrich the existing gastronomic offer. However, we took another step – we designed the "Kvarner Wines Route" with wine tasting programs throughout Kvarner wineries, focusing on indigenous varieties and implementing a storytelling method in hospitality services. Also, we can host tourists during the grape harvest and gladly invite them to our food and wine events taking place in Kvarner, Croatia and abroad. We believe that all these activities have contributed to the development and recognition of Kvarner as a gastronomic destination with a beautiful wine diversity.

Last but not least: modern science proved that a glass of wine a day is good for health. We say that drinking a glass of wine from native grape varieties of Kvarner is a true experience that can easily turn into a motive for returning to our destination. Visit us, visit Kvarner!

Anton Katunar
President, Kvarner Wines – cooperative of winemakers



And now... a word from the host!

Kvarner Region Tourist Board

Dear food lovers, welcome to our Kvarner! It is a great honor for me to invite you to feel, meet and taste the places of beautiful diversity in our region. Small but beautiful, Kvarner is the pioneer of tourism and hospitality in Croatia, taking pride in more than 180 years of experience in the fields, and it's also the leader in gastronomy on a national level. Moreover, our gastronomy is intrinsically connected with the terroir and its people, agriculture and food production, heritage, and respect for local authenticity. We strive for a holistic approach that connects gastronomy with genuine sustainability, education and interpretation as methods and ways of preserving, passing on and presenting the values, emotions, and flavors of our gastronomic culture. Kvarner is the place where the Mediterranean, continental, and pre-Alpine climates meet, and a melting pot where food and dishes from Venetian, Austrian and Hungarian tradition mix with the common cuisine of peasants, fishermen, and herders (cucina povera). The common cuisine is deeply rooted in the customs of local inhabitants, expressing their connection with the climate, soil, flora and fauna, knowledge, the way of life and experience passed on from generation to generation.

The idea to apply for the European Region of Gastronomy came to us as the continuation of the gastronomy strategy set in our strategic documents. It puts gastronomy among the pillars of the region's identity, together with culture and food production. Our motto "diversity is beautiful" refers to the heritage, food, customs, arts and history, grounding its richness on a delightful diversity of eight subregions: the Opatija Riviera, Rijeka and its surroundings, the Crikvenica-Vinodol Riviera, the islands of Krk, Cres, Lošinj and Rab, and the mountain subregion of Gorski Kotar. These eight subregions share the richness of three cuisines – the littoral cuisine, the island cuisine and the highland cuisine.

Working on the field of gastronomy systematically, the Kvarner Region Tourist Board introduced the Kvarner Gourmet and Food project back in 2012 to present the region's rich and varied gastronomy, heritage and food culture, including drinks. A specially formed committee classified food establishments based on their excellence, and the result was the publication of the Kvarner and Gourmet restaurant guide, with practical information about the region's gastronomy and its three cuisines but also about the restaurants and their specialties. In 2020, Rijeka, the capital of Kvarner, bore the title of the European Capital of Culture, listing gastronomy high on the list of its strategic goals, and once again strengthening its position. This brings us to present day, when we have three restaurants awarded with a Michelin star, while more than 80 restaurants, wineries and pop-up places are listed in the Gault&Millau guide. In addition, we are proud to have Kvarner members in the Jeunes Restaurateurs association and in the Small Luxury Hotels group. However, we have not slowed down: in 2023 experts from the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management created the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for Kvarner until 2030, putting regional and seasonal gastronomy, ecologically-oriented tourism, organic farming and green transition on the list of strategic goals. For all these reasons, we consider ourselves to be a worthy candidate for the prestigious title of the European Region of Gastronomy in 2026.

As the Director of the Kvarner Region Tourist Board, I strongly believe that this candidature and its legacy will strengthen our aim to showcase our distinct and unique food culture and gastronomic identity, giving it significant visibility, enhancing the existing cooperation between institutions, organizations, entrepreneurs, education sector and local community, bringing economic benefits to all the players in the chain. Our perspective is strongly focused on the development of sustainable tourism, innovation and lifelong learning, with a

determination to raise wider awareness of food issues, from understanding the customs to concerns about health and well-being. Along these lines, we strongly encourage the use and support the promotion of local, organic, artisanal food, celebrating the beautiful diversity of Kvarner flavors from the sea to the mountains.

To achieve these goals and develop the initiatives set in this candidature, we have carefully selected our founding stakeholders. We are proud to work together as a team with Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality and Kvarner Wines winemakers association. We have recognized them as the strongest allies in this processes, and look forward to join forces and tackle the extensive fields of agriculture and food production, education, civil society and entrepreneurship, in particular SMEs based on innovation, continuity, and creativity.

Irena Peršić Živadinov, PhD
Director of the Kvarner Region Tourist Board



2

KVARNER – DIVERSITY IS BEAUTIFUL

The region of Kvarner is situated in the northeast part of the Adriatic Sea. It sits at the intersection of three different climates (Mediterranean climate, continental climate, and mountain climate), ancient cultures and significant transport routes. The capital of Kvarner is Rijeka, named the European Capital of Culture in 2020.

Here, on a relatively small area, great diversities get along: lovely rivieras with historical towns, aristocratic villas, and cultural monuments, then large Mediterranean islands with numerous islets, and finally and unexpectedly, the highlands with pastures, rivers and forests.

Due to an outstanding diversity of natural beauties, favorable climate conditions and geographical position on Europe's main travel routes, **Kvarner has the longest tourist tradition in Croatia, with more than 180 years of hospitality, being the pioneer in health, gastronomy, and convention tourism.**



LITTORAL + ISLANDS + HIGHLANDS = KVARNER

Kvarner is a destination where islands, littoral and highlands meet in one region. Here one can set off from the shore towards sunny islands, and then sail back to seek peace and quiet of mountain peaks and forests.

Within a span of 10 km, an elegant and classy riviera in the littoral area can be exchanged for perfect peace and fresh mountain air of Gorski Kotar and its forests inhabited by eagles, wolves and bears.

In the wintertime, Gorski Kotar turns into a snowy fairy tale, offering a wide array of activities, while along the coast and on the islands one can enjoy the benefits of mild Mediterranean winters.

But the diversity of Kvarner does not end there. It goes on to Krk and Cres islands, the healing island of Lošinj, the sandy island of Susak, the flower-covered island of Ilovik and the forested island of Rab.

Though diverse among themselves, the islands and the coast of Kvarner have something in common. In the 19th century, they were recognized by European aristocracy, who chose this particular area, blessed with mild climate and lush Mediterranean vegetation, for their holidays. It is thanks to them that the first luxurious villas and hotels were built, and **the foundations of the first Croatian resorts were laid in Opatija, Crikvenica and Novi Vinodolski and the island of Lošinj.**

The illustrious members of the nobility were not the only global travelers; the mariners of Lošinj also sailed all over the world, bringing back over 80 species of exotic plants from their voyages. Across the islands and along the coast, gardens of small towns are filled with flowers; the landscapes are resplendent with forests and olive groves, shrubs of sage, rosemary and lavender.



Photo: Luka Tabako

FACTS AND FIGURES

SURFACE:

3,588 km² (land area) + around 4,000 km² of the marine area including large islands and their archipelago

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN PEAK:

Risnjak (1,528 m) – Risnjak National Park

HIGHEST INHABITED VILLAGE:

Begovo Razdolje (1,060 m)

LENGTH OF THE SHORE:

1,235 km

LARGEST ISLANDS:

Krk and Cres

POPULATION:

265,000 inhabitants.

The largest city is Rijeka with a population of 108,000 inhabitants.

LARGEST LAKES:

Lake Vrana on the island of Cres with an area of 6 km²; Lake Lokve with an area of 2 km²

DRIVING DISTANCES:

Within 500 km Vienna, Munich, Budapest, Belgrade, Milan, and even much closer Trieste, Zagreb, Ljubljana.

CLIMATE:

Coastal region and the islands:

Mediterranean climate with hot summers and mild winters

Mountains: moderate continental climate and, in the higher regions, mountain climate with moderately warm summers and cold winters

REGIONAL AIRPORT:

Rijeka International Airport

NEAREST AIRPORTS:

Zagreb, Trieste, Ljubljana, Pula

GASTRONOMY MILESTONES

49 BC

The first written mention of wooden barrels used for wine, on the island of Krk, in Pharsalia, an epic poem by Roman poet Marcus Annaeus Lucanus



Photo: Ivana Čutura

≈350

De re coquinaria collection of recipes was compiled by Roman gourmet Marcus Gavius Apicius, with a recipe for preparing snails from the forests of Gorski Kotar

1288

Several provisions in the Vinodol Statute, an old law text, mentioned vineyards and wine sales, probably referring to the grape varieties of Malvasia and red Škrlet



Photo: Ivana Čutura

1438

In the cove of Preluk, near Volosko, schools of tuna were caught using the high wooden structures called *tunolovka*, with around a hundred of them in the Kvarner area

1600

White fish from Veli Lošinj preserved in aspic was highly valued in Venice in the 17th and 18th century and was paid for with gold coins

1650

The beginnings of Gašpar's mill in the village of Martinovo Selo in Grobnik Field, where wheat and corn are still ground today, to produce flour for bread that tastes like the one from the time of our grandmothers

1177

In the monastery of Saint Andrew on the island of Rab, a special Rab cake was prepared as a gift for Pope Alexander III, whose galleon ship took shelter from storm on the island



Photo: Lili Bašić

1441

The first written mention of olive oil production on the island of Cres was documented in the Statute of the Town of Cres, and for centuries the islanders used the oil to pay part of their taxes to Venice



Photo: Lili Bašić

1686

The recipe for Frankopan cake, which used to be made at courts of the noble Frankopan family, was included in the *Granat-Appfel* cookbook, written by Duchess von Eggenberg

1906

Merica Majetić from Vrbovsko wrote her cookbook, with a number of recipes for dishes full of aromas specific for Gorski Kotar



Photo: Maja Danica Pečanić

2020

"Frankopani za stolom" (The Frankopans at the Table) written by chef Dragan Visković was published, as a gastronomic guide with recipes for dishes from the times of the Frankopan noble family, who came from the island of Krk

1858

The sardine canning factory owned by Czech Karel Warhanek was opened in Rijeka, encouraging others to open on the Adriatic coast, thanks to the high quality of Adriatic pilchard



Photo: Petar Lupić

1996

"Gaštronomija grišnoga fra Karla z Dubašnice" (The Gastronomy of the Sinful Friar Karlo from Dubašnica) by Branko Fučić was published, containing 18 recipes for monastery dishes from the island of Krk in the 17th and 18th century



1902

In Rijeka, Hungarian violinist Rigo Jancsi created *rigojanči* cake for his mistress, noblewoman Clara Ward, "brown as my skin and sweet like your heart"

1920

Italian politician and writer Gabriele D'Annunzio said that the langoustines from the Kvarner sea were the most delicious in the world and awarded a medal to the waitress who served them to him



Photo: Lili Bašić

2024

An exciting year! IGCAT recognizes the Kvarner region's enogastronomy and all its achievements and efforts. The Kvarner region becomes a candidate for the prestigious title of the European Region of Gastronomy 2026.

ECOLOGY, BIODIVERSITY, FLORA AND FAUNA – Kvarner, a destination of unique and protected natural heritage

Regardless of the season, Kvarner's diverse nature offers not only beautiful scenery but also unique experiences such as watching large carnivores, or walking, trail running and hiking through protected areas, adopting dolphins, visiting an ornithological camp, and much more. It is a fact that Kvarner boasts more than 30 protected localities on a relatively small area. Here are some of them:

RISNJAK NATIONAL PARK

located in Gorski Kotar, Kvarner's mountain area, is a natural link between the Alps and the Dinarides, only 15 km in a straight line from the sea. It was named after the area's highest mountain (Veliki Risnjak, 1,528 m) and its most famous inhabitant, the elusive lynx. **Risnjak is a natural habitat for all three large European carnivores: the bear, the wolf and the lynx.**

The national park also offers a bear watching program, as well as many other activities, such as climbing the peak of Veliki Risnjak or Snježnik, walking to the source of the Kupa River, wildlife watching, seeing the visitor center, participating at educational workshops, taking an educational trail, fishing or, for those more active, mountain biking.

UČKA NATURE PARK,

situated just above the stunning Opatija Riviera, is an oasis of greenery and peace. The area includes a number of marked hiking and educational trails, as well as a network of bike trails also suitable for electric mountain bikes, which can be rented in the park. There are also locations for climbing, paragliding, outdoor schools, bird watching, and events such as adventure races, which are gaining popularity among visitors who like outdoor activities.

Učka's highest peak Vojak (1,396 m), offers an unforgettable 360-degree view of the Kvarner islands, Gorski Kotar, and the neighboring Istria region, while the modern visitor center tells the story of this subregion's heritage.

PLATAK REGIONAL SPORTS-RECREATIONAL AND TOURIST CENTER

Platak Regional Sports Center is a popular excursion destination, as it's located only half an hour's drive from the city of Rijeka, about two hours from the city of Zagreb, and ten kilometers in a straight line from the sea.

This unique environment offers services and facilities to visitors throughout the year, ranging from sports pitches, bicycles and panoramic chairlift rides, to bike trails and a bike park, as well as ski and sledding slopes in the snow season. There's also the Radeševo tubing track, 160 meters long.



Photo: Hrvoje Jurić

DOLPHINS, GRIFFON VULTURES, LOGGERHEAD TURTLES

Kvarner is the final refuge for several endangered species – the griffon vulture on the island of Cres, bottlenose dolphins inhabiting the Cres-Lošinj archipelago and loggerhead turtles.

On the island of Cres, there is the Griffon Vulture Rescue Center and an aviary. These birds, with a wingspan reaching 2.80 meters, are among the largest bird species in the world. Around 100 pairs nest on the steep cliffs above the sea on several Kvarner islands and islets.

As for the bottlenose dolphins, which are an endangered species in the Adriatic, the Cres-Lošinj archipelago is their natural habitat. The size of the dolphin community is estimated to be around 180 individuals! The Blue World Institute protects this rare species and provides education about endangered species.

The Institute includes a Marina Turtle Rescue Center, dedicated to the protection of loggerhead turtles.

BEAR WATCHING? YES, WE HAVE IT!

There are few remaining places in Europe where this is possible. Up in the foothills of the majestic mountains of Gorski Kotar, in Risnjak National Park, visitors can look for European brown bears, which usually appear from early June (with cubs in tow). You need to be able to sit quietly for hours in an observation hut... and wait. A stay at the lodge in the National Park's base also provides numerous opportunities for walks and hikes in untouched nature.

DIVERSITY ILLUSTRATED



Photo: Lili Bašić

HONEY AND HONEYDEW (PDO)

Due to its exceptional biological diversity, the region of Kvarner is Croatia's pride with about twenty varieties of honey, from floral to honeydew, linden, and sage. Honey is produced in the highlands of Gorski Kotar, on the islands of Krk, Cres, Rab and Lošinj, and in the littoral area. Among Kvarner honeys, a special category is *medun*, which is not based on nectar like honey, but on honeydew.

Honeydew is a sweet sap which, under favorable conditions, most often occurs on some coniferous (fir, spruce) and deciduous trees (oak, beech, maple). It is produced by insects, usually aphids and scale insects. Bees add their own specific substances to the collected honeydew, deposit it, extract water and store it in the cells of the comb until the honeydew matures.

Depending on the season, *medun* has darker color than honey: brown to dark brown, almost black, often with greenish oil-like toppings. The smell is medium to strong, balsamic, vanilla-like, with notes reminiscent of caramel, resin, dry leaves and burnt wood. It is relatively less sweet, with an aroma of medium intensity, which is associated with malt.

Due to its chemical composition, with a high content of mineral substances, it can crystallize faster compared to the nectar types of honey. *Medun* has specific properties that distinguish it in many ways from other types of honey.

Goranski medun has been granted the European mark for protected designation of origin (PDO): the European Commission announced this in the Official Journal of the European Union on February 13, 2023. By this certificate, *Goranski medun* entered the Register of Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications, which means it is protected throughout the European Union.

INDIGENOUS GRAPE VARIETIES OF KVARNER

It has been proved that the first inhabitants of Kvarner, the Liburnians, produced wine. This tradition was continued and perfected by the arrival of the Romans, who built rustic villas along Kvarner. **There are numerous historical evidences from the Middle Ages about vineyards, viticulture and wine production on Kvarner islands and in the littoral, such as the famous Vinodol Code from the 12th century, the Krk Statute, the Vrbnik Statute and the Rijeka Statute. The first mention of vines on the island of Krk dates back to 1163.**

In medieval times, Benedictine monks undoubtedly produced wine in Kvarner. In the time of Austria-Hungary, there are records of intensive cultivation of grapevines around Bakar, encouraged by the Empress Maria Theresa herself. Alberto Fortis in 1774 reports that on Krk "they produce more than 24,000 barrels of wine for export". (A Venetian barrel equals 64.39 liters, which means that the people of Krk were already exporting 1,550,000 liters of wine, not counting what was left for their own consumption). Today, Kvarner produces around one million bottles of sparkling wine per year and it is the third Croatian region in terms of sparkling wine production. Kvarner sparkling wines are light, easy drinking, with aromas of fruit, yeast and fresh bread, and a pleasant palate.

Speaking of modern times, Kvarner is the homeland of *Žlahtina*, a native grape variety that produces delicate and light wines celebrated for their seductively mild aromas of flowers, citrus and summer apples. This variety gives a wine that is refreshing and light, without strong acids, with a delicate structure and light body, perfectly drinkable.

Another native variety is *Sansigot*. The sandy soil of the island of Susak (Lošinj archipelago) has preserved this endemic variety for ages. It gives complex wines with a light body. The aromatic profile is characterized by cherry, blackberry, and currant. Barrel aging adds spicy notes. *Sansigot* is the second most common variety in the region of Kvarner.

Beside *Žlahtina* and *Sansigot*, there is *Trojšćina*, also grown in small quantities, which produces beautiful, vibrant, pink wines. The list of indigenous varieties continues with *Brajdica*, *Gegić*, *Jarbola*, *Belica Meja*, *Divjak*, and *Verdić*.

To tell the story about their wines, the winemakers of Kvarner founded an association called Kvarner Wines. Together they own about 200 hectares of vineyards, of which 150 belong to the most coveted native variety – *Žlahtina*. The association's members are: OPG Ružić, OPG Plovanić Wines, Pavlomir Wine House, Katunar Estate Winery, Gospoja Winery, Ivan Katunar Wine House, Šipun Winery, PZ Vrbnik, and Nada Winery in Vrbnik.

The members of Kvarner Wines have received many awards, the most recent coming from the most famous international wine tasting contest, Decanter World Wine Awards 2023, where they won 19 medals in total.

JARBOLA

On the slopes of *Čićarija*, in the village of *Zvoneća*, grows a native grape variety called *Jarbola* – saved from extinction by local winemakers. According to the DNA analysis, it is most similar to the Slovenian *Rebula*, and due to its high acidity, it is ideal for producing sparkling wines. *Jarbola* is included in the national list of grapevine varieties for the wine region of *Hrvatsko Primorje*.

VINODOL = THE VALLEY OF WINE

The Latin name of *Vinodol* is *Vallis Vinearia*, meaning "the valley of wine", which confirms that this area was recognized as a winemaking region as early as the Roman times. The *Vinodol Statute* from 1288, one of the oldest law codes in Europe, states that *Vinodol* vineyards have to be watched by guards. It also regulates the operation of taverns and the duties of winemakers, because wine was an important item in trading. In 1904, vineyards in the *Vinodol* valley covered an area of 600 hectares and included grape varieties of *Žlahtina*, *Žimić*, *Vrbić*, *Bilana*, and *Debeljana*. There were also 400 hectares of orchards. In the late 19th century, the *phylloxera* insect pest appeared, destroying *Vinodol* vineyards almost completely. Winemaking



Photo: Frank Heuer

was eventually brought back to this area in 1994. **Today, this wine region comprises 40 hectares of Žlahtina, Graševina, Chardonnay, Blaufränkisch, and Cabernet Sauvignon, producing high-quality wines.**

ŽLAHTINA

Krk's native white grape variety owes its name to the Slavic adjective žlahten, meaning "noble," and produces a clear, dry wine, golden yellow in color.

It is grown in the magnificent Vrbničko Polje, a field in a protected area occupying 210 hectares of green and fertile plains. Žlahtina has a fruity aroma and pronounced minerality, so it cools you down wonderfully in the summer heat. It is most often enjoyed young, and **from the Žlahtina variety, in addition to still wine, excellent sparkling wines are produced using the Charmat method.** Žlahtina pairs perfectly with dishes from the Krk and Kvarner sea and coastal cuisine.



Photo: Luka Tabako

SANSIGOT

Sansigot is an indigenous red variety from the sandy island of Susak. Today it is grown in the vineyards of Vrbnik. It manages to acquire acceptable levels of sugar, and matching good levels of acidity. The varietal wines are light, ideal summer wines, with wonderful color, not too high tannins, and they can be enjoyed either as a young wine or after some aging.

BELICA

Belica is a blend of native grape varieties of Verdić, Mejsko, Divjaka, Brajkovac, Jarbola, and Istrian Malvasia. It is produced in very small quantities, only in the Kastav area. In the past it was served to Kastav bell ringers during the Carnival season, paired with traditional Carnival dishes.

GREEN BALM OF KVARNER AWARDED THE PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN (PDO)

In Kvarner, olives were traditionally salted, baked, cooked, but above all, because there was no other oil, olives were mashed in olive mills (locally called toš) into a paste from which olive oil was extracted.

Due to its excellent quality, extra virgin olive oil from the indigenous olives varieties growing on the islands of Cres and Krk has been awarded the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), the most valued mark of quality in the EU.

This label guarantees that the product originates from a specific place, it owes its quality or characteristics exclusively to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural factors (raw materials, environmental characteristics, location) and human factors (traditional and craft production), but also the production, transformation and elaboration phases, all of which take place in a defined geographical area, in respect of the strict production regulations established in the procedural guidelines.

THE KVARNER EFFECT: HEALING AND WELL-BEING

The Kvarner effect, or simply Kvarner open-air aromatherapy, is another of the region's unique features. The *bora* – a dry, cold wind that blows from the north-east and brings cold and fresher weather – is the engine that drives the healing process known as the Kvarner effect.

This wind comes into contact with the surface of the sea, which releases sea particles into the air. It's something like applying processed seawater from a spray. But in Kvarner, this process takes place with style: the *bora* moves the sea, the waves lap against the shore, and the finest particles of sea salt, trace elements and minerals fly through the air.

Sodium, magnesium, iodine, calcium, potassium, silicon, manganese and cobalt travel through the air and penetrate the deepest regions of the pulmonary alveoli. During the breathing process, a fantastic healing therapy takes place. We call it the Kvarner effect.



Photo: Luka Tabako

KVARNER – BEST KEPT SECRET or “Did you know?”

The UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage includes the Kvarner region’s famous traditional sounds of an old shepherd’s musical instrument, as well as the loudest group in the processions during the Carnival season – the Halubian Bell Ringers, the keepers of folklore tradition.

The Kvarner region celebrated 900 years of the Frankopan noble family, who played an important role in the Croatian history. “The Route of the Frankopans” cultural trail presents their castles, fortified towns above the sea, endowments, victories, defeats, battles, diplomatic intrigues, conspiracies, personal dramas, and their role in nation’s turning points. The Frankopans had an important role in gastronomic developments on the Crikvenica-Vinodol Riviera and on the island of Krk.

The longest lungomare (seaside promenade) in Croatia is in Kvarner, stretching over 12 kilometers, from Volosko in the east to Lovran in the west, passing through Opatija, Ičići and Ika, embracing the coast, passing pretty coves and impressive fin-de-siècle villas. Lungomare was built in stages, starting in 1889.



Photo: Ivan Sardi



Photo: Frank Heuer

The Kvarner islands prove that size matters because out of Croatia’s 1,185 islands in total, the largest two are in the Kvarner Bay – the islands of Krk and Cres. But Kvarner also has one of the smallest inhabited islands – Ilovik, with only around 100 inhabitants. Its circumference is around 15 kilometers and the surface area is less than 6 square kilometers.



Photo: Vladimir Franolić

The City of Rijeka was named the European Capital of Culture 2020. Rijeka thus became the first Croatian city to hold this prestigious title. Rijeka won it with their program called the Port of Diversity, aimed to create a city of culture and creativity for Europe and the future.

The Greek connection with Mali Lošinj was established in 1999, when the Apoxyomenos, a bronze statue of a Greek athlete, was found on the seabed near Mali Lošinj. Completely restored, the Croatian Apoxyomenos returned “home” (after appearing in several exhibitions across Europe) to be the central piece of the new Museum of Apoxyomenos, opened in 2016. Situated in a historic maritime building on the waterfront, the story of the island’s rich seafaring and marine history is also told alongside the famous Greek, now a resident of Kvarner.

“Sea Champagne” is made on the island of Krk from crisp white Žlahtina, handpicked in the vast vineyards near Vrbnik. Local producers started making “sea Champagne” in 2006, by storing bottles of wine in steel chests under the sea, 30 meters deep. The semi-darkness, the peace and quiet, and higher pressure resulted in a superb sparkling wine named Valomet. An added bonus is a beautiful bottle covered with seashells and coral barnacles as the result of months spent under the sea.

Mistletoe brandy is a great dinner party conversation stopper! In the hills of the Kvarner region, many places make *biska*, a distinct brandy or *grappa* made from mistletoe leaves (one has to be careful because the leaves are edible, while the mistletoe berries are poisonous).



Photo: Town of Mali Lošinj Tourist Board archive

POINTS OF INTEREST AND INTERPRETATION CENTERS

- ▶ **Interpretation Center Kraljevica - Cultural-tourist route "The Route of the Frankopans"**
www.frankopani.eu
- ▶ **Interpretation Center for the Fishing and Maritime Heritage of the Mošćenička Draga Ecomuseum**
www.arcaadriatica.eu
- ▶ **Krk Island Maritime Heritage Interpretation Center**
www.tz-krk.hr/hr/interpretacijski-centar-maritimne-bastine-otoka-krka
- ▶ **DUBoak Maritime Heritage Interpretation Center**
www.duboak.org
- ▶ **Nerezinac Lugger – Sailing Interpretation Center for the Maritime Heritage of the Island of Lošinj**
www.visitlošinj.hr/hr/losinjski-loger-nerezinac-interpretacijski-plovidbeni-centar.aspx
- ▶ **Museum of Apoxyomenos**
www.muzejapoksiomena.hr
- ▶ **Poklon Visitor Center – Učka Nature Park**
www.pp-ucka.hr/en/poklon-visitor-centre/
- ▶ **Visitor and Rescue Center for Griffon Vultures**
www.belivisorcentre.eu
- ▶ **Cres-Lošinj Reserve for Bottlenose Dolphins – The Blue World Institute of Marine Research and Conservation**
www.plavi-svijet.org
- ▶ **Large Carnivores Visitor Center**
www.centar-velikezvijeri.eu
- ▶ **Geopark Rab**
www.geoparkrab.com
- ▶ **Lošinj's Fragrant Garden**
www.miomirisni-vrt.hr
- ▶ **Olive-Growing Interpretation Center "Stari Toš"**
www.tzpunat.hr/hr/o-puntu/kulturna-bastina/interpretacijski-centar-stari-tos/
- ▶ **The House of Krk Prosciutto**
www.kuca-krckog-prsuta.com
- ▶ **The House of Rab Cake**
www.rabskatorta.com

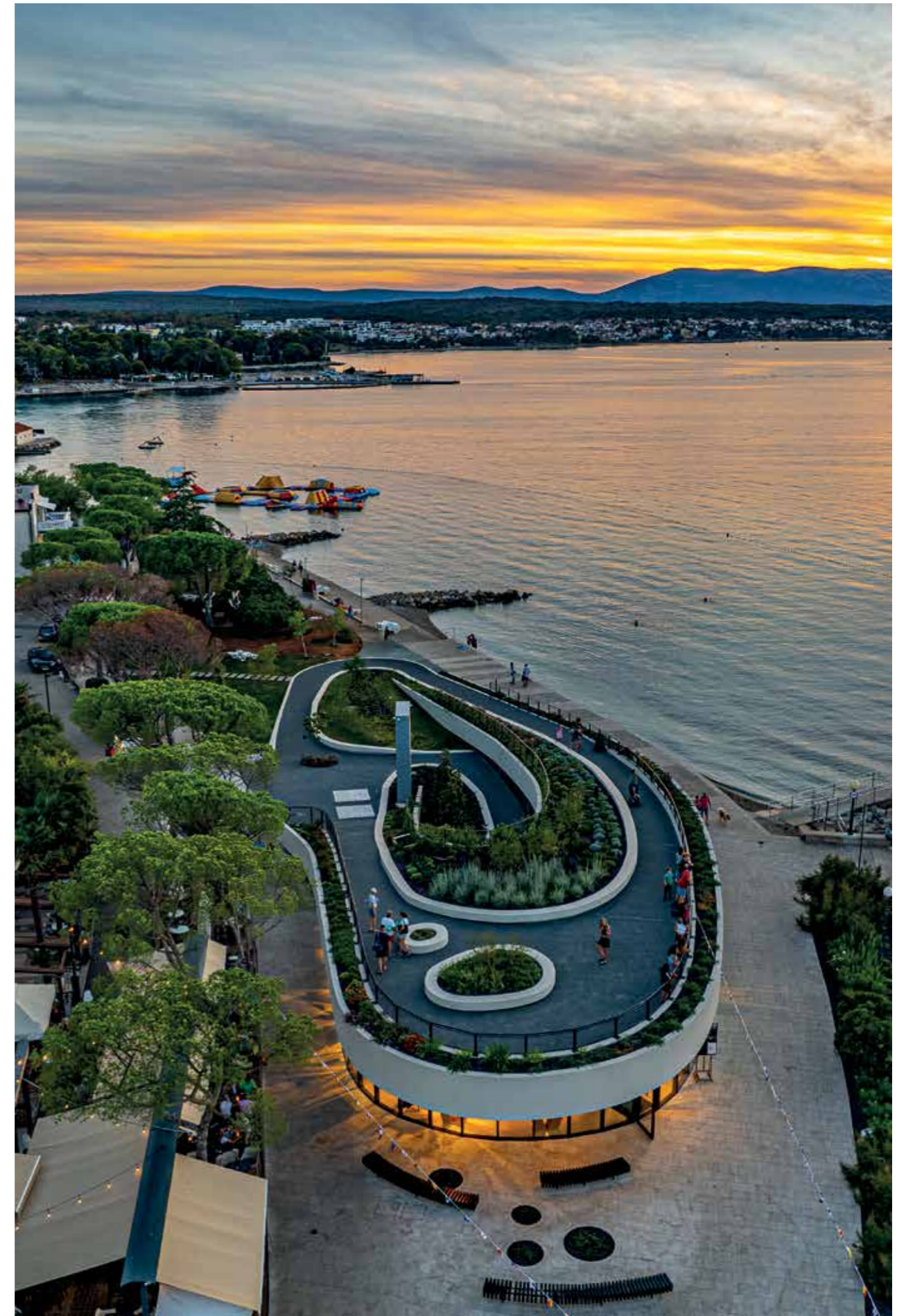


Photo: Zoran Bakić

3

DIVERSITY IN FOOD AND HERITAGE

1 GASTRONOMY, 3 CUISINES, 8 SUBREGIONS

The ecologically clean Kvarner region with three climates and combination of islands, littoral, and highlands, is the base for the rich and diverse Kvarner gastronomy, which consists of three terroir cuisines.

They are:

1. LITTORAL CUISINE
2. ISLAND CUISINE
3. HIGHLAND CUISINE

These three cuisines reflect the gastronomic richness to be found in the diversity of the eight Kvarner subregions.

They are:

1. THE OPATIJA RIVIERA
2. RIJEKA AND THE SURROUNDINGS
3. CRIKVENICA-VINODOL RIVIERA
4. ISLAND OF KRK
5. ISLAND OF CRES
6. ISLAND OF LOŠINJ
7. ISLAND OF RAB
8. GORSKI KOTAR



MAP OF FLAVORS OF THE PRIMORJE-GORSKI KOTAR COUNTY



Photo: Frank Heuer

FOOD AND HERITAGE IN THE LITTORAL CUISINE

The Littoral (*Primorje* in Croatian) includes the Opatija Riviera, the Crikvenica and Vinodol Riviera and Rijeka with the surroundings. Looking from the seaside, it stretches about 10 km into the inlands. The littoral cuisine is thus a combination of the island and highland elements: depending on the exact position of a certain village or town, and its distance from the sea or highlands, the influence of one or the other is stronger. The fundamental ingredients in the littoral cuisine are langoustine and white fish, blue fish, tuna, pork meat (fresh and dried), *broskva* (cabbage), *maruni* (chestnuts), figs, cherries, wine. Dairy products come mostly from cow's milk.

Here are some specific ingredients, dishes, cooking techniques and landscape elements characteristic for the littoral cuisine.

A VIEW FROM THE TOP OF UČKA.

Mount Učka is called the “guardian of Kvarner”. From its summit (1,390 m), the view stretches over the islands of Kvarner, and all over the Croatian Littoral. Gastronomically speaking, **the view from the top of Učka sums up the vertical of the Croatian Littoral cuisine:** along the coast you can find **olive groves and vineyards** as well as **fruit such as chestnuts, cherries, figs**. Then come the **vegetables, with *broskva* as the queen of every garden, and everyone’s favourite *kapuz* (cabbage)**. A bit higher above them are the **pastures for sheep and grazing land for wild horses** in the hinterland of Novi Vinodolski. The whole coastal area is covered in **herbs – thyme, sage, forests of laurel, rosemary, heather, wormwood, wild garlic sprouts, and wild asparagus**. Mountain torrents bring leaves and organic material, which deposits in the sea as the “blue mud”. It provides **an excellent habitat for the Kvarner and the Velebit Channel langoustines**. The best langoustines are caught with *vrša* fish traps, with fishing equipment made from brushwood or wire net with one or two holes through which fish can enter the trap.

MANEŠTRA. KOTLIĆ.

***Maneštra* is a dish “mixed in a pot”. It’s not so much a recipe but the method of preparing and the way of eating, because it reflects the philosophy of the old cuisine:** take a pot, put in some greens, whatever you have in the garden, add some legumes, something salty and fatty (prosciutto rind or bone, salty cheese rind), and put over fire. *Maneštra* would be put over fire to cook before going out in the field, so it embodies the warmth and nutritiousness of seasonal produce. In the omnipresent trend of adorning food, *maneštra* belongs to basic, everyday dishes that have fed families for generations, using seasonal and accessible ingredients. **As a warm and filling, hearty and economical dish, *maneštra* measures up to the modesty and sustainability of old-time cuisine. In Gorski Kotar, *maneštra* is prepared with barley, leek and homemade sausages. In the island version, it is made with fennel and fava beans; on the island of Rab they use lentil with olive oil; and one of the Croatian Littoral versions of *maneštra* is *batuda* from Crikvenica.**

BROSKVA.

A cultivar of winter cabbage typical for the Croatian Littoral, also known as the “high cabbage”, related to kale and common cabbage. *Broskva* spans two years: it is planted at the end of a calendar year and ripens by spring the following year. It is best when “touched by frost”, brought

by *tramuntana* northern wind. Due to the importance of *broskva* in this region’s diet, the people of Liburnia are nicknamed *broskvari*, and **one of the favourite Croatian Littoral dishes is *broskva na padelu* (*broskva* in a pan): boiled *broskva* with some potatoes, sautéed in a frying pan with olive oil or lard. *Broskva* goes well with beans, polenta, potato, salted fish, and it is also added to winter *maneštra*-style thick soups. On the island of Lošinj *broskva* is prepared with squids, in a native dish called *verze na pofrig*.**



Photo: Peter Kuerschner Jr.

FOOD OF OPATIJA RIVIERA:

From the Liburnians to high gastronomy

Liburnija is another name for the Opatija Riviera, and it comes from the historic Illyrian tribe of the Liburnians. The Opatija Riviera spans the coastal part of the Kvarner Bay from Brseč to Preluka, while in the hinterland it goes up to Učka and Ćićarija mountains. Life developed between citadel-like settlements on the plateaus of Mount Učka and the passage to the sea. **On high pasture grounds, people raised sheep, and in fertile valleys, they grew the ubiquitous broskva, cabbage, and garlic, and farmed pigs. Chestnut forests, orchards, and olive groves stretched lower, towards the sea. In the shaded, deep waters of the Riviera lives the famous Kvarner langoustine.** In such an environment, under the influence of bourgeois and aristocratic cuisine, as well as gastronomic culture brought to villas and summer houses, and later also to luxurious hotels, by chefs and restaurant staff from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the exquisitely elegant high gastronomy of the Opatija Riviera was born.



Photo: Maja Danica Pečanić, HTZ

LANGOUSTINES. THE BLUE MUD.

Along with the Gulf of Trieste, the Kvarner Bay, where the coastal strip of the Opatija Riviera is located, is a part of the Mediterranean that's most deeply embedded into the European mainland. Torrent waters that plunge through the karst landscape under Učka rush toward the Kvarner Bay, washing off leaves and carrying organic material that forms sediment in the sea – the so-called “**blue mud**”, an excellent habitat for Kvarner langoustines. Langoustine is a decapod shellfish related to lobster, which loves cold waters and grows slowly, so it doesn't reach the weight of 200 grams before the age of ten. **Kvarner langoustines are typically soft pink, and the old-fashioned method of catching them with fish traps does not damage the seabed or the langoustine's body. They are taken out of the sea completely alive, with undamaged shells, and fishermen deliver them to restaurants along the Riviera alive.** Due to their firm

meat and delicate yet deep and characteristically sweet flavor, **the largest Kvarner langoustines are eaten only briefly grilled, the middle-sized ones are delicious in a buzara-style stew or raw; the small ones are used in sauces, pasta and risotto dishes, or as cold starters in which they are mostly served raw.**

MRKAT.

In the late 19th century, at the time of Opatija's tourist boom, suddenly there was a high demand for the supply of fresh produce. The construction of villas and hotels was followed by the development of necessary infrastructure. **In 1895, the tradition of trading food from houses and in the street was officially banned, so in 1898 a market hall in the very center of Opatija was built – Mrkat.** In 1907 a fish market was added, and today at Opatija's Mrkat you can buy **fruit and vegetables from the hinterland of the Opatija Riviera,**

honey, cheese, and other homemade products, as well as fresh Adriatic fish, Kvarner langoustines, clams, and other seafood. Opatija's market hall has become a favorite meeting spot for the locals and a prominent landmark of the modern city.

FOOD OF RIJEKA AND THE SURROUNDINGS:

Places of diversity

The area of today's Rijeka has been inhabited since the Paleolithic, and a port was created as early as the age of the Liburnians. Rijeka's economic growth began in the 16th century, and in the era of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, **Rijeka became the largest import-export harbor due to its ideal geographical position and the depth of the sea. Cocoa, paddy rice, sugar cane, exotic fruit, and an abundance of overseas goods and raw materials began arriving in Rijeka, so the food processing industry started to develop.** The Rijeka ring encompasses the old town of Kastav and the surroundings, the pastures, and highlands of the Grobnik area, and on the coast, it reaches the Bay of Bakar with its vineyards and tuna fishing structures called tunolovke – resembling tall wooden ladders leaning over the sea. In the past, the Rijeka ring was the “pantry” of the city because it supplied it daily with vegetables, milk, and dairy products, as well as with meat and fish from the surroundings. **Today, Rijeka is the administrative center of the region,**

and its historical multiculturalism is reflected in the acceptance of gastronomic diversity.

THE CITY.

Throughout history, the city of Rijeka has been inhabited by English, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Austrian, Czech, and Italian industrialists and merchants, engineers, and craftsmen, who brought their eating habits with them. Business hotels and restaurants sprang up in the city. In 1880, the Rijeka fish market was opened in an Art Nouveau pavilion right next to the waterfront in the city center, and two more pavilions of the city market were built not long after. The cityscape developed under the influence of the imposing Central European architecture, and the multiculturalism of the ethnic groups that have inhabited the city over the centuries is weaved into its urban gastronomy.

SAILOR'S BREAD.

Baškot (sailor's bread) is ring-shaped double-baked bread brought to Bakar by fishermen from Chioggia. **Sailors used to take it on board instead of bread, where they hung it on a rope, protecting it from rodents.** Due to its dryness, it could last up to six months and was eaten soaked in wine, tea, or water. A *baškot* that would break into several pieces when dropped was considered to be of better quality. **Baškot is town of Bakar's trademark, and it is still produced by hand according to an**

old recipe in a local bakery.

MILKMAIDS.

Women from the Grobnik area (Rijeka surroundings) used to come to city every day to sell milk. By the end of the 20th century, this tradition had disappeared. **They would get up in the pitch dark, milk the cows, and then, carrying 30 to 40 liters of milk, set off on their journey (about 15 km in one direction).** In the afternoon, they would return home to take care of their children, livestock, and their gardens, while the men worked in the port, factories, and shipyards. The road they took is called the **Milkmaid's Way**, in memory of the milkmaids who became a symbol of the city's connection with its rural hinterland.

POLENTA. GROBNIK CHEESE.

Polenta cooked in the water where potatoes were first boiled is called palenta kompirica, and it is eaten with coffee with milk, salted fish, or sausages, and also as a substitute for bread. It was combined with the **Grobnik (salted) cheese. It is a traditional Croatian sheep milk cheese from the Grobnik pastures at 400 to 1000 meters above sea level. It is yellowish in color, full-fat, with a strong taste and a pleasant smell, densely permeated with smaller and larger holes.** Today, traditional Grobnik cheese is produced by only a few producers in family dairies of the Grobnik Field. **Young Grobnik cheese is cut, while the more mature cheese is grated.**



Photo: Arsen Miletić

FOOD OF THE CRIKVENICA- VINODOL RIVIERA:

A step from the sea, a step from the valley, and two steps from the mountains

The gastronomy of the Crikvenica-Vinodol Riviera reflects its three main geographical areas. Those are the sea, rich in oily fish; vineyards and orchards in the Vinodol valley; and the hinterland reaching up to 800 meters above sea level, adorned with hillsides where wild horses roam and game animals thrive, alongside mountain pastures abundant in wild herbs and forest fruits. **The two main gastronomic styles – the aristocratic cuisine of the noble Frankopan family and the everyday cooking of common people, fishermen, and peasants** – are where the customs, dishes, techniques, and influences interconnect. Thanks to great geographical and natural diversity, the **Crikvenica-Vinodol Riviera**

has developed a cuisine based on oily fish and langoustines, *prisanac*, pasta and grains, wild game goulash, sheep dairy products, and lots of fruit.

FLAVORS OF THE FRANKOPANS. NOBILITY ON THE TABLE.

Using forts in the Vinodol hinterland, the Frankopan dukes established connections and trade with the European mainland, reaching as far as Hungarian castles. **In the 17th century, court scribes wrote that “the fish revenues from the Crikvenica-Vinodol coastal lands were larger than revenues from salt, oil, wood, various grains, fur, and crafts”.** During the entire Middle Ages, Crikvenica was the most important port for the Frankopans’ Grižane castle, in Selce there was a warehouse for drying and salting fish, and the dukes were the owners of a number of tuna fishing posts in this area.

BRIBIR PRISNAC. ŠULJKI.

Bribir prisanac belongs to those dishes that can be either sweet or savory, depending on the place where they are made. **Bribir prisanac used to be made only for Easter, using smoked ham, striped bacon, and škripavac cheese.** The dough is made from flour, lard, eggs, and yeast, and the name comes from the adjective prijesan, meaning unleavened dough, which shows that the first Bribir prisanac cakes used to be made without yeast.

Traditionally, a Bribir-style meal included *rakija trsovica* (pomace brandy), prosciutto, smoked *škripavac* cheese, *šuljki*, and wild boar goulash. *Šuljki* is homemade pasta that is nowadays served as a warm starter, baked with *škripavac* cheese and butter, or as a side served with meat dishes and wild game sauce. A seasonal salad of boiled wild asparagus and eggs was also served for Easter.

SMALL OILY FISH.

Among Crikvenica’s favorite dishes based on oily fish, a special place is reserved for *rupice* made with sprat. For *rupice*, scale and gut the sprats, add finely chopped garlic and parsley, season with salt and pepper, mix well with hands, and leave for at least an hour. Take out 5-8 sprats, put them in one hand, sprinkle with cornmeal, squeeze, sprinkle or coat in cornmeal again, and then shape the mixture into balls. Deep fry them for 2-4 minutes on each side, depending on the size. ***Rupice* can also be eaten cold. Apart from fresh fish, a lot of salted fish was eaten as well, used as seasoning for pasta or potatoes, similar to pork cracklings in continental Croatia.**



Photo: Luka Tabako

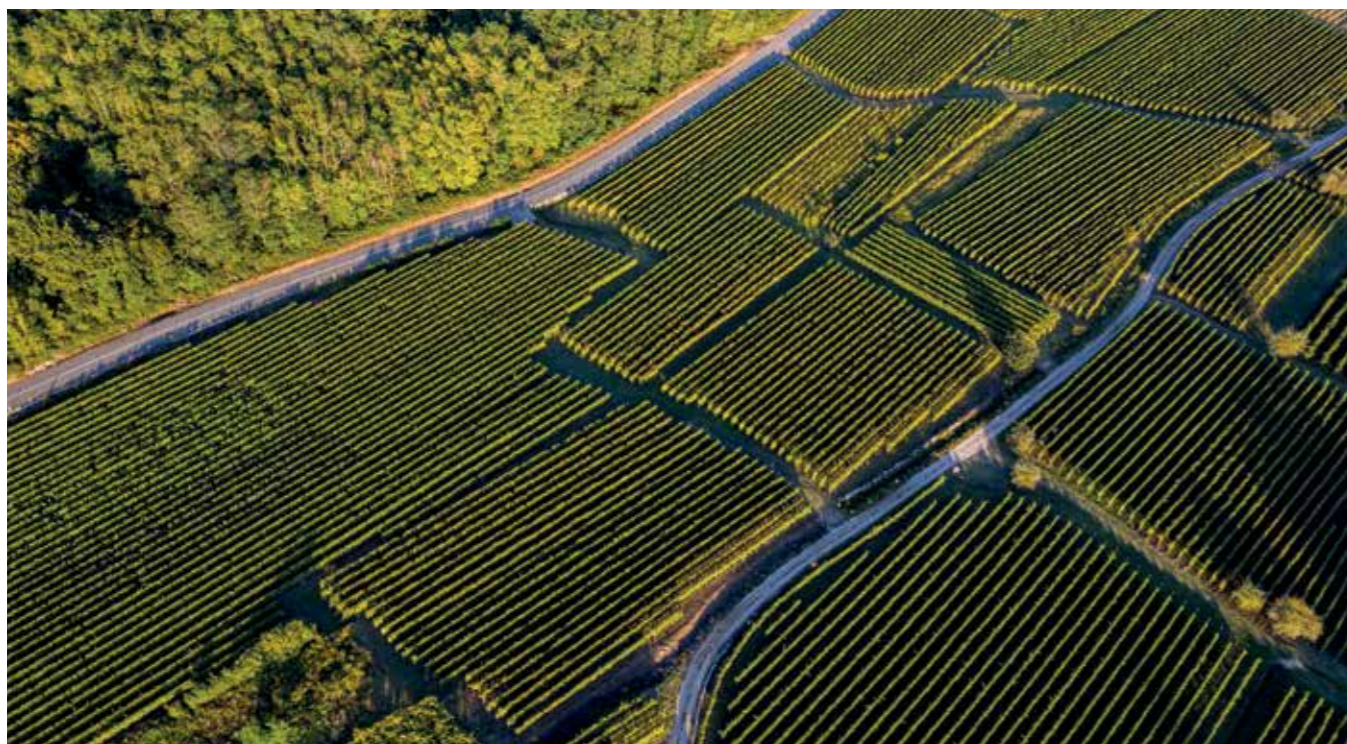


Photo: Luka Tabako

ISLAND CUISINE:

food and heritage in
the island cuisine

Island cuisine refers to the **dishes and ingredients of four islands: Krk, Cres, Lošinj and Rab with their archipelago.** Fundamental for island cuisine are olives (olive oil), sheep (meat fresh and dried, dairy produce, lamb), Mediterranean aromatical herbs and spices and **everything that comes from the sea: white fish, small blue fish, big pelagic fish, crabs, shells, langoustines, mollusks.** Island of Krk was and still is famous for its **indigenous white wine – Žlahtina**, produced from the indigenous vine variety, while Susak is famed for **another indigenous wine – red Sansigot.**

The following are some specific ingredients, dishes, cooking techniques and landscape elements characteristic for the island cuisine.

BORA.

Dry and cold winter wind from the mainland, a symbol of the harsh insular landscape. Occasionally it can reach the gale force speed of 150 km/h, eroding fertile land and turning it into rocky ground, so to protect them, people wall off small plots for olives, grapevine, and vegetable gardens. The sea goes wild from the bora, fish hide in deep waters, and salt haze rises and falls on the island grass, leaving sheep thirsty after grazing. Meat is dried in the bora wind – pork and mutton – to preserve it. **Only on the Adriatic, of all the places in the Mediterranean, is fish also dried in the bora wind: tuna, forkbeard, shark, greater amberjack, European conger, ray, picarel, hake, and octopus.** Dried fish is excellent for making *brudet* fish stew. In the areas protected from the bora, Mediterranean forests thrive in their lushness: they are the mighty green sea on the blue sea's horizon.

DRY STONE WALL. STONE.

On the islands, people used to separate rock from soil by hand for generations. That's how a ***gromača*, or dry stone wall, was made – the symbol of strenuous clearing of the terrain in order to save a**

piece of arable land and to build a cover from the fierce bora wind. *Gromača* was built when people assessed that they could get a nice plot of land for farming if they removed the rocks. *Gromača* is stones stacked one on top of another, while dry stone walls are stones shaped into proper walls that separate plots. **Stones were used to build shelters for lambs and sheep (*mošuna* on the island of Cres, *mrgar* on the island of Krk) and huts for people.** All the stones used in a *toš* weigh more than a ton, and without stone, there can be no *gumno*. On the islands, streets and piers are paved with stone. Oil is stored in a stone container (*kamenica*), and *šterna* (water tank) is lined with stone both on the inside and the outside.

SALTED FISH.

On the islands, people salt whole sardines, together with the head and the guts. This is done in May and October, although May is better. You need a 5-kg tin or wooden bucket and a round wooden lid that fits the bucket, with a handle on top. First, some salt is put in the bucket, just enough to cover the bottom. Fish is piled up densely, one next to another. Half a handful of salt is added to each layer, mostly into the gaps between the fish. Each layer is arranged crosswise on top of the previous one, and sprinkled with salt when finished. When the container is full of piled and salted fish, everything is salted one more time until the fish is covered with salt.

The wooden lid is fixed inside the bucket and a weight is put on top of it – a washed and dried stone. The bucket is then covered with a clean cotton cloth and tightened with a strong rubber band. The whole container is put on a sun-exposed terrace, and after a few days, it is moved to be stored in a dark place such as a basement. **Due to its intense aroma, salted fish is almost like spice, so along with a piece of bread or polenta, some *broskva*, beans, or wild salad, it turns an ordinary meal into a delicious feast.** The spectrum of salty flavors that serve as spice in the island cuisine includes dried and salted pork or mutton, and salty island cheese.

FOOD OF THE ISLAND OF KRK:

An island that both is and isn't one.

The northernmost island of the Adriatic, which was in ancient times called the Golden Island, is connected to the mainland by a 1,430 m long bridge while ferries to the islands of Cres, Lošinj, and Rab operate from the island's ferry dock. **In the island's center, there is a fertile plain with vineyards protected from the north winds.** The political, ecclesiastical, and cultural history of the Croatian people and language intertwine on Krk – it is the home of the Glagolitic script and the distinguished family of the Frankopan dukes of Krk; it is also the seat of the Krk Diocese. These intersections make up the **foundation of Krk's gastronomy: the recipes were recorded by the Glagolitic monks who cooked, the Franciscans, and the Benedictines; how the food was served and how the kitchens were run we learn from the medieval Frankopan court cookbooks, which also provide lists of ingredients.**

FRIAR KARLO COOKBOOK.

The Gastronomy of the Sinful Friar Karlo from Dubašnica is **more than an ordinary cookbook because, through its 18 recipes, it reveals the customs, thinking, worldview, and way of life of the 17th and 18th centuries.** It was written by a monastery cook for a younger cook, his student, describing "how food is to be prepared," and teaching him to be grateful for God's gifts but also to enjoy them. At the end of almost every recipe, Friar Karlo recommends "drinking a cup of wine." Among the dishes are the ***Glagolitic cod*, fish soup, everyday bean stew, dishes made for Lent and Christmas, a recipe for a marinade for brothers "both healthy and sick," and shepherd potatoes.**

WHEAT. ŠURLICE.

Thanks to the fertile fields in the central part of the island, **Krk was once the granary of the Kvarner Bay**, and the wheat flour obtained by grinding wheat on household millstones, which used to be ubiquitous,

was used to **make *šurlice*, a type of pasta made using a knitting needle to create a thin hole in the middle.** *Šurlice* are made from flour, lukewarm water, and some fat (lard or olive oil, depending on whether the location of the household is in the central part of the island or on the coast).

90 DAYS OF KRK BORA + SALT + PEPPER.

The frequency and distribution of dry and cold winter winds have always been used by the inhabitants of Krk to dry meat. The availability of sea salt is another factor that logically complements the tradition of meat preservation by drying and salting. Records dating to 1874 say that "...the islanders eat fresh, salted and dried pork..." and that "macaroons are poured with soup containing pieces of prosciutto." **Today on Krk they produce prosciutto with a protected designation of origin, following traditional methods: the skin and the subcutaneous fatty tissue are left on the**

thigh and the dry brine contains pepper as well as salt. In the salting phase, bay leaf and rosemary may also be used. The first salting stage lasts for seven days, and the second at least ten days. Smoking the meat is strictly prohibited. Drying in the bora wind takes at least 90 days, and the whole process takes about 12 months, so the prosciutto has a pronounced aroma of mature pork.

GREEN GOLD.

In the island's dry stone wall landscape, peasants created *kazete* or *škatule* (i.e. cassettes or boxes) in which the olive trees adapted to the island's climate. **Krk's extra virgin olive oil is a product with both the Protected Designation of Origin and the Protected Geographical Indication** (European Union designations that indicate a product's connection to a specific geographic area and the traditional methods used to produce it).



Photo: Lili Bašić



Photo: Petar Lupić

FOOD OF THE ISLAND OF CRES:

Sheep-based gastronomy

The islands of Cres and Lošinj form a natural unit – they are separated by the Osor Channel, built in Roman times. **Only a tenth of Cres can be farmed, one-third is covered with forests of holm oak, and the rest belongs to karst land with scarce pasture grounds.** In this rocky landscape, out in the open, live the **native Cres sheep.** The inhabitants of the island of Cres are closely connected with nature: **sheep, olives, and medicinal herbs.** Their respect for food and animals forms a circular flow. Sheep graze in the olive grove, eating everything except the bitter sage, from which bees produce honey, olives give olive oil. **Sheep provide milk, lamb, wool. In old days sheepskin was used for storing wine and crafting musical instruments, as well as skin for parchment.** Because they live outside in the open, they preserve and nourish the soil. The cuisine of Cres reflects the same principle of sustainability and modesty.

GIFTS FROM SHEEP.

The **Cres sheep is an old breed of smaller size sheep, developed by breeding local coarse wool sheep such as Pramenka with Italian, French, and Spanish Merino sheep, under significant environmental influence.** They are farmed for meat, milk, and wool, thus we can justly number 5 gifts of a sheep.

Lamb is the first gift. **It contains very little fat because the lambs are constantly moving. Lamb used to be for sale, and mutton was eaten at home, including the lamb tripe.** Second gift is *skuta* or curd cheese. It made by boiling and draining the whey left after separating young cheese. The remains of fat and dry matter that coagulate in the whey during boiling are drained through cheesecloth. ***Skuta* is high in protein and low in fat. It is served with the usual island dishes and ingredients: polenta, salted fish, olive oil, bread.** The third gift is hard cheese, being the oldest way of preserving sheep's milk. **Curds of the Cres sheep's cheese are shaped into a ball and wrapped in "cheese grass".**



Photo: Frank Heuer

Pressed with a stone, it gets flattened into the recognizable cheese wheel weighing from ¼ to 1 ¼ kg. One more gift coming from a sheep is a sheep prosciutto called **udić**, which is hard to find these days. It can be **made by dry salting or wet bringing the meat, which is then dried in the bora wind and seasoned with rosemary and pepper.** Due to its high saltiness and characteristic smell, **udić** is used more as a spice than an ingredient – **small quantities are added to scrambled egg dishes, vegetable soups, or polenta.** Last, the fifth gift of a sheep is a sheep dessert called *olita*: **a rehydrated rumen (the first stomach) is stuffed with a mixture of flour, sugar, dried figs, raisins, lemon peel, milk, mutton tallow, a bit of salt and oil.** This dish was usually made during the Carnival season. It can also be found in restaurants today, in a version more suitable for modern times.

EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL.

The first written mention of olive oil on the island of Cres can be found in the Statute from 1441. During the Venetian rule, Cres paid part of its tribute in olive oil. **Today, Cres extra olive oil has a protected designation of origin – the highest EU mark of quality for a food product. It is produced from native varieties Slivnjača and Plominka, from trees older than 60 years.**

FOOD OF THE ISLAND OF LOŠINJ: Sea is love at first sight.

The island of Lošinj, separated from the island of Cres by the narrow Osor Channel built in Roman times, **is among the sunniest European islands with up to 2,580 hours of sunshine a year.** Since the 17th century, the main economic activities have been fishing and seamanship, and in 1754 Lošinj had an impressive fleet of 105 merchant ships. **In 1898, the municipal fish market was built,** becoming the hub of social life and Mediterranean-style leisure in Mali Lošinj. Lošinj captains sailed all the way to North America, bringing exotic plants with them, which accounts for many gardens built at the time. Comfortable and spacious houses appeared along the shore. In them, housewives made brittle, because sugar was expensive and affordable usually only to sea captains. **In 1892, Lošinj was officially declared a climatic health resort, which marks the beginning of organized tourism.** The Lošinj archipelago comprises 36 islands, islets and rocks, the most important ones being Susak, Unije and Ilovik.

FRAGRANT ISLAND GARDEN.

The area of 3,551 square meters, not far from the center of Mali Lošinj, is home to **more than 100,000 seedlings, including 250 species of fragrant wild plants.** Olive, fig and grapevine are planted in the old-fashioned way, following a classic crop rotation, so they form lush garden segments. On the other hand, fragrant wild vegetation grows on the island's rocky ground.

STORIES FROM A TIN CAN.

A Kvarner fish processing factory operated on Lošinj from 1921 to 1976. Since fishing ships caught plenty of big and small pelagic fish in the deep-sea waters of Lošinj, it made sense to start processing it on the island. Daily activities involved fishing near the coast, where there is **squid, cuttlefish, octopus, spider crab, limpet and periwinkle,** which should be prepared for consummation immediately after being caught. On the other hand, deep blue sea provides **small oily fish, as well as big bonito, leerfish, turbot, and tuna,** which

can also be preserved in oil to last throughout winter.

VERZE NA POFRIG.

Squid can be prepared ***u šporko* (cooked without cleaning,** so only the translucent internal shell is removed), grilled on ***gradele grid* or fried,** and one of **traditional, native Lošinj dishes is squid and broskva stew called *verze na pofrig*** by the islanders. It's a creative combination of what is available in the garden, ***broskva,*** and what is abundant in the sea, squid. The winter version is the best because it's the best season for both ***broskva*** and squid, while in summer this tasty thick stew is made with kale. It's definitely a must-try!

KROKANT.

Lošinj Almond Brittle, known as *Lošinjski krokant,* is a traditional delicacy of Lošinj

sea captains, prepared for special occasions such as weddings, baptisms, and significant anniversaries. **Made from the once precious ingredients of sugar and almonds, it has always symbolized wealth and prosperity.** The recipe is quite simple and based on caramelized sugar and nuts, most commonly almonds, either raw or blanched. In a time when sugar derived from sugarcane was a precious commodity, this confection of sugar and almonds was prepared in affluent Lošinj families.



Photo: Lili Bašić

FOOD OF THE ISLAND OF RAB: Felix Arba

To the **Romans**, the word *felix* designated glory, rise, and prosperity, and they called **Rab Felix Arba**. In the Middle Ages, Rab was an independent municipality, with its own statutes, administration, and trade agreements. In the late Middle Ages, the island was the marine intersection of European trade routes between Venice, the Kingdom of Naples, and Hungary. The island's economy was based on livestock farming, olive growing, farming, viticulture, and fishing, **and its gastronomic identity revolves around several recognizable points: lamb, lentils, Rab cake, legumes**

and cereals, dried octopus (*štokalj*), and olive oil. Due to its gentle Mediterranean climate, **in 1889, Rab was declared a seaside resort and spa**, marking the onset of tourism development.

RABSKA FJERA.

The most famed Rab festivity, a three-day medieval festival called Rabska fjera, was founded on the basis of the 1364 decision of the Rab City Council, by which King Louis the Great (Louis I of Hungary) was honored for freeing the island from the Venetian rule. The Rab Fjera is held every year between July 25 and 27 and shows the shine and glory of the island's heritage, culture and gastronomy.

SOČIVO.

Before leaving the house to work in the field, women used to put **corn, chickpeas,**

beans, barley, and a little smoked prosciutto skin in the pot on low heat and leave it all to cook. By the time they would return from work, the stew called sočivo was done. This dish has a delicate soupy texture and goes well with **Rab extra virgin olive oil.**

ŠTOKALJ.

Štokalj, octopus dried in the winter bora wind, is a traditional food item of the island of Rab. It weighs at least two kilograms and the rule is – the bigger, the better! After cleaning it, its arms are spread out using reed sticks and then it is **left in the bora for two to three days. It is cooked with eggs or in a stew.** The flavor of dried octopus is rustic, concentrated, deep, and dark, with a pronounced sea salt richness.

RAB CAKE. MUŠTAČONI.

The Rab cake is made from an almond mixture wrapped in short crust pastry made with eggs and sugar, and it is usually shaped like a snail. Decorating this cake requires a filigree-level skill of pinching the dough to make it resemble lace. The dessert, which had been neglected for a long time, was made to order by the Benedictine nuns. The Monastery of St. Andrew keeps the original recipe written in beautiful penmanship and without measurements as they vary depending on the season: in summer, smaller eggs are used, and in winter, more eggs are added because the almonds change their structure in the cold. This expensive cake was made for weddings, christenings, confirmations, and similar festive occasions, poorer folk swapped pine nuts for almonds. Legend has it that the Rab cake was prepared for the first time in 1177 when Pope Alexander III sought refuge on Rab before a storm. To show respect, honor, and gratitude to the Pope, the nuns prepared this cake for him on the host (a thin, round piece of unleavened bread used in Christian religious ceremonies, particularly in the Eucharist or Holy Communion).

Muštačon is actually a mustachioed biscuit! It is a crunchy dessert shaped like a mustache, **made from almonds, sugar, chocolate, eggs, cinnamon, cloves, and olive oil**, and is kept in a box containing bay leaves. Along with the Rab cake, *muštačon* is a trademark of the island of Rab.



Photo: Berislava Picek



Photo: Maja Danica Pečanić, HTZ

HIGHLAND CUISINE: food and heritage

The highland cuisine which we find in Gorski Kotar subregion is totally different from the island and littoral cuisine. Although Gorski Kotar is not far from the sea (a 20-minute drive), winters are cold and snowy, and food is adjusted to such conditions. **Pork meat (fresh, dried, or preserved in fat), cabbage (fresh and sour), potatoes, polenta, mushrooms, wild berries, and wild game are key ingredients.** Cuisine is affected by Austrian-Hungarian influences and the cuisine of pre-Alpine lands.

Here are some specific ingredients, dishes, cooking techniques and landscape elements characteristic for the highland cuisine.

WINTER FOOD.

Shelf-stable foods that can nurture the body during the snowy winter period are vital for the Gorski Kotar region and are part of its culinary identity. To make it last longer, **food is pickled (fermented), dried, salted, sugared, or preserved in lard.**

People from Gorski Kotar use all of these methods: they **ferment cabbage, turnip, and milk**; they **salt, smoke, and dry pork**, and **preserve fruit with sugar to get juices, jams, and liqueurs.** Gorski Kotar winter food stores also include **beans, cornmeal (for polenta), and potatoes**, and dishes are cooked over the open fire on the hearth, the center of the house. **People eat from soup plates, with a spoon, and use pots for cooking.** These **one-pot dishes** are made following this principle: **take what you've got (sauerkraut, potato, beans), add lard and a piece of dried meat (sausage can do, too) and simmer slowly.** Most important source of meat is pig. It is treated with no-waste philosophy. Apart from those special occasions when eaten fresh, throughout the rest of the year, people would only eat meat that's dried, salted, and preserved in fat. The only exception is fresh wild game meat and poultry.

Fireplaces were later replaced with round wood-fired ovens, so people don't eat around the hearth anymore but sit at a massive wooden table. Preserving cabbage and turnip is a natural chemical process where microorganisms carry out fermentation, resulting in distinct aromas and flavors. In late fall, cabbage is grated on large graters in the basement and then stored in big wooden barrels together with whole heads of cabbage. Fall cabbage is used for fermenting. **Sauerkraut is served with sausages, polenta, beans, and used in one-pot stews.** Region is rich in **apples and pears**, which are saved by drying.

FOREST GIFTS.

Forest is to the people of Gorski Kotar what the sea is to the islanders. It is the habitat of **wild game** and an area of vibrant trees, **wild mushrooms, and berries.** It is the home of **honeydew honey (medljikovac, medun or medna rosa), which isn't made from floral nectar but comes from honeydew in deep layers of trees, especially coniferous forests of fir, spruce, pine, and larch.** The word *medun* originates from the Old Slavic language and means *louse*: plant lice damage the leaves, needles, or young twigs, causing the plant to ooze sweet juices. Bees carry the juice to the hive, where forest honey is made. **Medun from Gorski Kotar received the Protected Designation of Origin in 2023.**

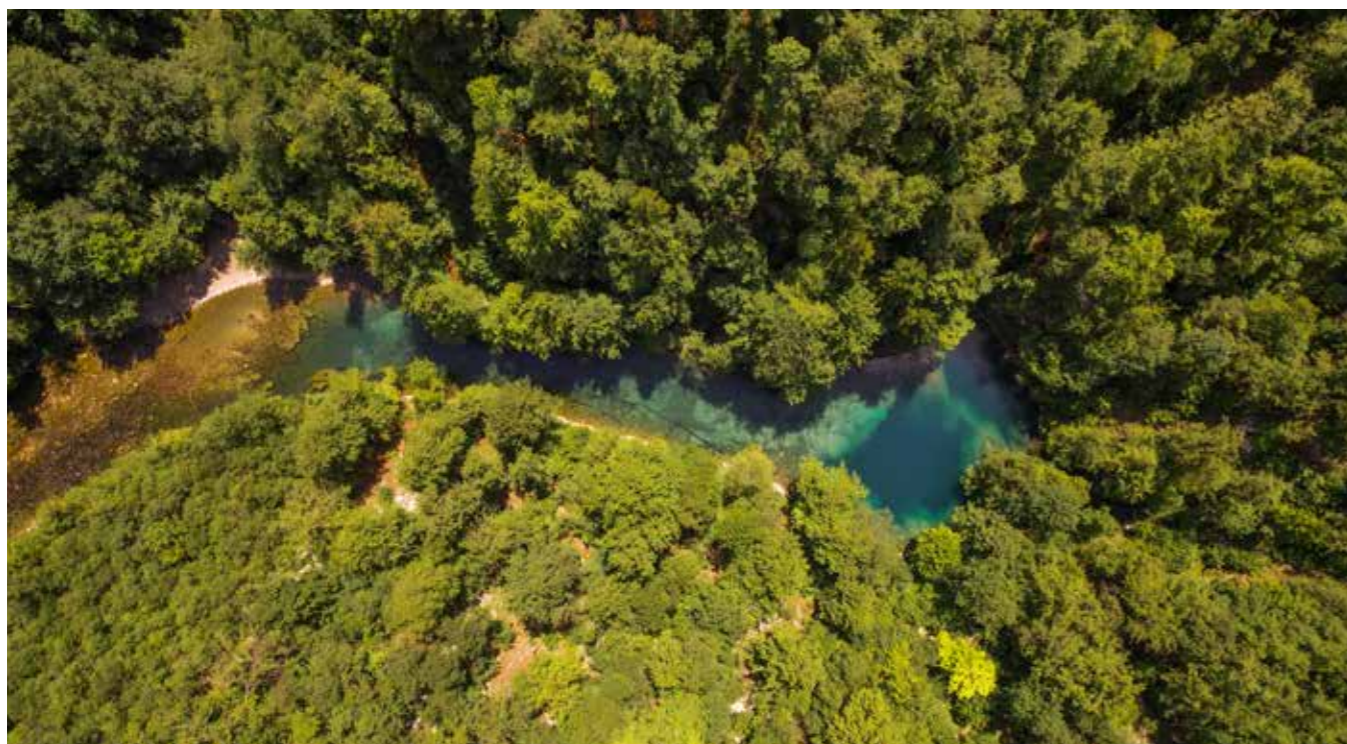


Photo: Hrvoje Jurić

FOOD OF GORSKI KOTAR: Unlike anything else

The cuisine of Gorski Kotar features **wild game meat, trout, forest mushrooms, berries, wild, medicinal, and nectar-producing herbs, but also vegetables that tolerate the mountain climate well.** As an administration unit, Gorski Kotar was founded by the Croatian-Hungarian Queen and Austrian Archduchess Maria Theresa on November 7, 1778, to facilitate traffic and judicial service between the coastal and continental regions of Croatia. She called it *Processus Montanus* (i.e. the Mountain District). As it was very hard to pass through and it had enchanting forests, the region was nicknamed the Devil's Garden. With the construction of roads, it became the center and the crossroads of trade routes. Along the Karolina and Jozephina roads, as well as the Louisiana road later, travel stations with inns and lodgings were built for travelers, drivers, and animals to rest. Although modern highways have changed our habits and overshadowed the pleasure of slow travel through the countryside, **the inns along the picturesque old road and rural households remain the central places of Gorski Kotar's cuisine.**



Photo: Lili Bašić

MUSHROOMS. WILD GAME. FOREST BERRIES.

In the shadowy and damp beech forests as well as in the higher coniferous areas, grow **porcini mushrooms, morels, parasol mushrooms, chanterelles, and saffron milk caps.** The most prized of the forest fruits are **forest blueberries, used by the locals to make strudel and jam or add to wild game dishes.** **Rosehip** is used for teas and jams and **from spruce tips, people make syrups and teas.** Honey-sweetened and chilled, **Gorski Kotar's herbal teas make a delicious and refreshing local drink.**

CABBAGE. POTATO. TURNIP.

Sour cabbage (i.e. sauerkraut) and turnips are staples of Gorski Kotar's winter menu. They are **cooked as a type of vegetable stew, eaten with polenta or roast potato slices, or they are served as sides to meat dishes.** Firm, slightly flattened heads of cabbage, slightly creased, with wide, thin

leaves are used for souring. In Gorski Kotar, wooden souring tubs were up to three meters in height and two meters in diameter. Winters are long here, and cabbage, turnips, potatoes, and dried meat guarantee that you won't go hungry. **When making sauerkraut, adding lard and, if available, goose fat is a must.**

WATER TREASURES.

The Roman author Apicius wrote about snails in his *De re coquinaria* ("On the Art of Cooking"), and the forests and meadows of Gorski Kotar are their habitat. Frogs are now a protected species, but in the past, they were hunted at night, with the help of torches or carabiner lamps. **The people of Lokve are the most famous frog catchers of Gorski Kotar. Even today, snails are gathered in the meadows and along the edges of the forest and they are separated from their shells by cooking them in a large cauldron. Along the Kupa River and**

its tributaries, there are several native brown trout farms. Trout is mainly grilled or fried coated in cornmeal.

CARNIOLAN HONEY-BEE. HONEYDEW HONEY.

We can thank an **indigenous breed of honeybee adapted to colder regions for medun, honeydew honey, a product of Gorski Kotar bearing the protected designation of origin.** This type of honey is made from honeydew that the Carniolan honeybee brings into the hive, where it adds its own specific substances, extracts water, and stores it in the honeycomb cells until it matures. **Compared to regular honey, honeydew honey contains significantly more mineral substances, is darker in color, has a deep, strong to medium flavor, and is relatively less sweet.**

OUR CANDIDATURE

According to the **Tourism Strategy of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County** for this decade, **gastronomy is proclaimed a special and important segment of the region's development.**

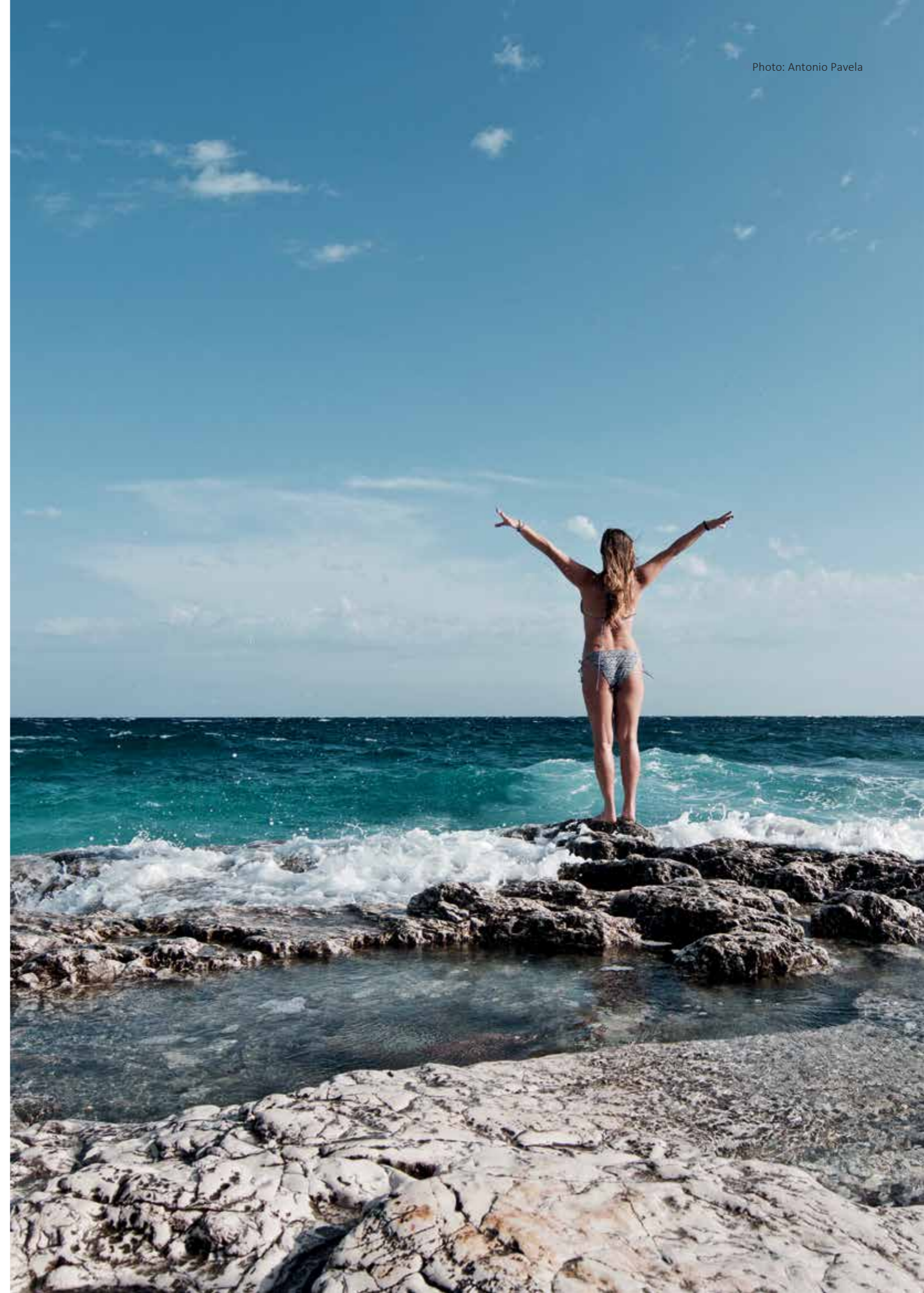
Studies and analyses have showed that sustainability is an imperative. By saying "sustainability", we mean:

- 1** **Optimal usage of resources** and keeping the **balance between the economic development, heritage and biodiversity**
- 2** **Respect for cultural authenticity** of each destination / subregion, which is to say, **preservation of traditional values; and knowledge** as contribution to **inter-cultural cooperation and tolerance**
- 3** **Ensuring that economic activities are long-term and sustainable**, yet also beneficial for all parties involved

We believe that strategy of our region goes side by side with the European Region of Gastronomy Platform, as a network of coordinators, stakeholders, and experts from the awarded and candidate World Regions of Gastronomy, that aim to support one another through knowledge exchange and building projects that add additional international visibility to the respective regions.

Thus, we commit ourselves to take part in the Platform and invite the Platform to our beautiful Kvarner, to learn from our uniqueness in 2026 if we are awarded. Over the years the Platform has developed many joint projects mentioned throughout the bid book and we hope to enrich our community by connecting them to these international projects that will shine a light on our food and cultural uniqueness.

With the greatest pleasure, we expect the jury visit scheduled for May 13-17, 2024.



OUR PRINCIPLES

To have a goal is to know where you want to come. To be able to come means to pave the path. Therefore, we have laid out the **principles of Kvarner gastronomy**. These 12 principles are formed into **12 statements**. In other words, this is what we strive for as we are setting our candidature for the title of the European Region of Gastronomy:

1

Affirmation of the identity of Kvarner gastronomy through the beautiful diversity of its three cuisines, their specific customs and food cultures.



Photo: Lili Bašić

2

Raising awareness of the regional Kvarner gastronomy among general public, especially children, supporting and bringing back dishes from the local traditional cuisine to everyday life.

3

Stressing and communicating the importance of seasonal cooking all year round (4 seasons and 12 months), both in restaurants and through promotional activities.

4

Connection and cooperation between stakeholders from the fields of agriculture, hospitality, entrepreneurship, politics, education and science, local community, and initiatives for Kvarner gastronomic projects.



Photo: Luka Tabako

5

Encouraging the cultivation of Kvarner native and local varieties of fruits and vegetables, indigenous and local breeds of domestic animals and the establishment of a seed bank for Kvarner varieties.



Photo: Petar Lupić

6

Encouraging conscientiousness in the entire gastronomic chain, from farming and hunting to preparation, the offer and presentation of local dishes, with the aim of increasing the value of Kvarner services and products.

7

Research of Kvarner heritage foods and dishes, preparation methods and seasoning techniques, with the aim of preserving and understanding the authentic flavors of Kvarner as part of the local identity.

9

Encouraging the use and production of traditional Kvarner products made from local vegetables, fruit, fish, meat and milk.



Photo: Lili Bašić

8

Creating a catalogue of traditional dishes and basic recipes for their preparation, with the aim of preserving the heritage of the area, creating a knowledge database about Kvarner gastronomy, to serve as inspiration for young chefs and their creative and modern approach.



Photo: Rino Gropuzzo



Photo: Maja Danica Pečanić

10

Encouraging the use of littoral, island and highland dishes crosswise and between the subregions, supporting their inclusion in the menus, with the aim of creating greater cohesion in the Kvarner area, building a precise and clear concept of the unique Kvarner gastronomy.

11

Innovation and creative use of modern gastronomy techniques in the presentation of Kvarner's traditional dishes, but with respect and care for the authentic flavors.

12

Supporting the association of producers and chefs from Kvarner in order to strengthen competence, exchange knowledge, acquire new skills and create quality standards in day-to-day operations and presentations.

OUR GOALS

In today's globalized world, **food is one of the most prominent points of cultural difference between regions and communities, and an important cornerstone of a destination's cultural identity.** Also, in today's world, where information and knowledge is easily shared and consumed, the **importance of education and true understanding has a significant value.**

Together with the founding stakeholders – Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management and Kvarner Wines association of winemakers, and associate partners – we have met on various occasions, aiming to understand our common goals.

Below is the list of the most important meetings:

- Forum on sustainable gastronomy
- Workshop with a presentation on the heritage gastronomy as a fresh approach to gastronomy tourism
- Workshops dedicated to the analysis of food trends, the region's potential for development and potential actions in gastronomy strategy
- Round table debate with restaurant owners, hotel managers, chefs and sommeliers
- Series of coordination meetings with Primorje-Gorski Kotar County
- Series of coordination meetings with the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Series of coordination meetings with the Kvarner Wines association
- Series of coordination meetings with local tourist offices
- Series of coordination meetings with local producers



Photo: Petar Trinajstić

As a result of these meetings, **there are 3 fundamental goals we commit ourselves to.** We strongly believe that the European Region of Gastronomy Award would help us show, build up and promote our identity reflected in the richness of the local culinary heritage, as described in the opening chapters.

We also believe that the Award would raise awareness among public institutions, organizations, producers, the HoReCa sector and educational institutions, enhancing their cooperation based on the shared objective, which leads to the region's economic development and recognition.

Here are our goals:

A

EXCELLENCE AND STRIVING FOR QUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- Education of food producers, chefs, waiters and sommeliers about the traditional gastronomy of Kvarner, especially the authenticity of three Kvarner cuisines: the island, littoral and highland cuisine
- Innovations in the wine and food offer and promotion of food and culture routes
- Establishment of interpretation centers
- Striving for higher operational level in the HoReCa sector, including small producers
- Promotion of professions in the HoReCa sector

B

SUSTAINABILITY AND INTEGRATION OF THE COMMUNITY INTO FOOD CULTURE AND IDENTITY PROJECTS

- Promotion of traditional gastronomy in the community, from kindergarten to the 'third age' population
- Encouraging cross-sectoral cooperation between the stakeholders in the gastronomic offer
- Encouraging associations of producers
- Integration of gastronomy into all tourist products
- Development of events that promote traditional, local and terroir dishes and drinks

C

RECOGNITION, MARKET VISIBILITY AND INTERNATIONAL POSITIONING

- Creation of the manifesto of regional gastronomy
- Promotion of the destination on international markets
- Cooperation with international organizations, associations and platforms
- Increasing the number of Kvarner restaurants in recognized international gastronomic guides

OUR INITIATIVES

Our initiatives stem from the pillars of our candidature and the network of partners and allies.

One of the pillars stands for **education in every segment: from young people in hotel and restaurant management schools and colleges, cooks in the HoReCa sector, sommeliers, and waiters, to ordinary citizens and children in kindergartens, including the civil society institutions that gather their members, communicate with them, and educate them.**

We will strongly encourage the processes that build new programmes in culinary history, heritage cooking and heritage gastronomy. Also, we want to grow strong connections between the cultural and arts sector and gastronomy, through heritage and gastronomy storytelling, and invention of the special projects bonding food producers with artists.

Our capital, town of Rijeka was the Capital of Culture in 2020 and this powerful affiliation of our people towards culture will be nourished in our work as well.

Another pillar and an absolute must for our region is to **connect agriculture, culture and tourism as relevant categories to understand, comprehend and experience the terroir of Kvarner.** We strongly believe that food can be seen as a direct expression of the society.

We aim to increase the number of consumers and tourists who are ready to pay more for quality, freshness, craftsmanship, and authenticity – the essence of terroir. Thus, we take the agriculture as a foundation in partnering up, approaching fishing association, farming associations, economic promotion departments, chamber of commerce and food producers.



Photo: Ivan Vranjić



Photo: Borko Vukosav

Last but not least, through our initiatives we will be closely connected to the health sector, very well developed, strong and successful segment on Kvarner. Partnering up with these institutions will emphasize our aim to promote sustainable and healthy food, and knowledge about the seasonal and micro-local ingredients as part of the Kvarner lifestyle.

An important role will be given to the NGO sector, in particular voluntary groups and institutions with the socially responsible programmes. Their involvement is to strengthen the legacy of activities scheduled until 2016.

FEEDING THE PLANET

The development and creation of food festivals and events dedicated to traditional food and dishes is the glue that brings people together, educates the youth about traditional meals, and presents local flavors, preserving them from oblivion. Such festivals are our method of work, joining producers, chefs, and food lovers, sharing knowledge, and supporting the economy.

Returning to tradition in gastronomy, restoring the recollections of the tastes of childhood, conjuring them up, creating the

experience through authentic local dishes and traditional recipes adapted to modern tastes – this is what we strive towards. The interest for seasonal, local, fresh and organic products has especially increased during the recent pandemic. Tourists are looking for local fresh food that reflects the authenticity of the destination. There is also a growing interest in the transparency of origin, information on the method of production, and nutritional information on food value.

Our initiatives:

- Promotion of **bee, honey and honeydew projects** with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of the bee population. Given the fact that “goranski medun” has PDO label, the most valuable quality mark in EU, proving the authenticity of and uniqueness of the product, **goranski medun will be submitted as a candidate for Golden Bee Award**
- Development of **digital solutions to disseminate information about Kvarner food customs**, gastronomic heritage and local recipes from 8 sub-regions
- Program collaboration on **projects related to the development of rural areas**, county’s local products, agriculture and the environment
- Initiating, supporting and promoting **regional and local food festivals** and exhibitions dedicated to traditional cuisine
- Supporting the **education of professionals** in this sector **in less developed areas** of the region, such as Gorski Kotar



Photo: Romeo Mance



Photo: Luka Tabako

INNOVATION, CREATIVITY AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Creativity and innovation have become key elements of gastronomic experience. In their search for authentic experiences, both local people and visitors want to explore, feel and learn. Therefore, we strive to create a holistic experience of gastronomic tourism and integrate it with the landscape, culture, and history. At the same time, we also realize that innovative and creative producers, caterers or associations require support.

Working within a network of stakeholders and partners, we will commit ourselves to seasonal, ecological, local produce, with special attention paid to innovative technologies and digitalization, which enable exports, sales and the dissemination of information, generating job opportunities.

Our initiatives:

- Creation of a **digital database of farmers and small producers**
- A mobile application: a **digital guide to the best Kvarner restaurants, wineries, and producers**
- Encouragement of producers to **apply for EU schemes related to geographical indications (GI)** and traditional specialties known as PDO, PGI, and TSG
- Promotion of **innovative small producers who adhere to the philosophy of sustainable and biodynamic agriculture**
- Designing **innovative promotional materials** such as heritage brochures, flavor maps and video materials, with a strong focus on storytelling and the interpretation of the culinary heritage
- Eventually, **establishing a heritage gastronomy association which would bring together chefs, sommeliers and food producers**, operating as a non-profit organization with professionals employed to run day-to-day operations.
- Supporting **lifelong learning programs** at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management
- To send our **candidate for the Local Food Gift Challenge competition**. Candidate will be selected from the local artisanal network build up on gastronomic diversity of Kvarner sub-regions.



Photo: Frank Heuer

BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

For us, sustainability means a reduction in soil and water pollution; waste recycling; food production and preparation with the least possible negative effects on the environment, short supply chains and 'zero-kilometer' philosophy, as well as the creation of unique and innovative stories based on experience.

With a new tourism law set to take effect in Croatia in January 2024, sustainable tourism becomes the primary objective: a scientific and expert council will be established with the task of proposing specific measures and activities aimed at the development of sustainable tourism. To ensure the development of tourism in the direction of sustainability, the Ministry of Tourism will introduce a tourism development index and a system of sustainability indicators.

Our initiatives:

- Stimulating the **development of gastronomic experiences and content in visitor centers** and interpretation centers
- Creating and promoting **cultural and enogastronomy routes**
- Creating and promoting **special interest tours of wine growers, farmers and artisanal producers**, enabling visitors to understand local food and customs, and learn about terroir ingredients
- Providing support to **projects initiated by civil society associations** dedicated to the **preservation and promotion of, and education about traditional food, wines and other beverages**
- Creating **gastronomy and wine awareness events**
- Promoting the **Sustainable Tourism Development Study Program** at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Within the project we will develop the special website dedicated to the local, sustainable and top quality food bearing a unique mark of Kvarner territory and its identity

WELL-BEING, VITALITY AND HEALTHIER LIVING

Food can improve health! It is no longer a myth but a statement. We are witnessing an increasing interest in food and dishes that can improve physical and mental well-being. We are witnessing a growing interest in functional food, a desire to use a variety of herbs, reduced meat consumption, and special dietary regimes.

In the Kvarner area we have integrated health, food, and travel interests into valuable products and services, supporting local customs and creating sustainable events, while at the same time encouraging practices and traditional cures and remedies based on local plants and skills.

Our initiatives:

- Supporting the **cooperation between the Health Tourism Cluster and HoReCa** in the design and **implementation of special projects dedicated to nutrition and special dietary regimes**, including addressing the issue of obesity
- Supporting **conferences, workshops, congresses and forums on the Mediterranean diet, nutrition, and general health issues**
- Producing and disseminating **materials promoting healthy food from the Kvarner region**
- Promoting the **Kvarner Effect**: natural aromatherapy in the open air combined with physical activity and breathing techniques.
- Promoting the **Health Tourism Study Program** at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Development of **IGCAT sustainable events**, with the partners network.



Photo: Maja Danica Pečanić

EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE

In our strategy of gastronomy development, agriculture, heritage, tourism, and education work together. Education is essential to professionals but also to the general public and visitors to the region. Special emphasis is placed on lifelong

learning and educating the youth, local groups' activities, community groups and associations which enhance the knowledge of their members but also empower their followers and fans.

Our initiatives:

- Supporting the **projects of the Regional Centre of Competence (RCK)** dedicated to secondary and adult education as well as lifelong learning
- Promoting educational programs and **workshops for farmers and other interested groups, organized by Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (CPRR)**
- Participating in **conferences, forums, and round table discussions organized by the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management**
- Organizing **study trips for wine producers, olive oil producers, restaurant owners**
- Organizing **masterclasses and hands-on workshops for cooks and chefs**
- Organizing and supporting **masterclasses for sommeliers**
- Organizing **workshops and presentations of native grape varieties** open to the general public, visitors and media
- Organizing **storytelling training** and education on gastronomy as intangible heritage
- Encouraging **hospitality and services training**, especially for family households offering food and wine tastings
- Organizing **training for private accommodation owners** on gastronomy and wine
- Promoting **study programs at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management**
- Supporting projects at tourism and hospitality secondary schools which present gastronomy heritage to the general public
- The Museum of Food and Flavors, Činka-Pal, Maškarani gušti
- **Hosting the European Young Chef Award in 2026**
- Creating of the **video about young chef**, focusing the **terroir, territory, honest, local food and young producers**



Photo: Kvarner Region Tourist Board archive

LINKING THE URBAN AND THE RURAL

The diversity of our region lies in the differences between urban and countryside environments. Together, they mutually benefit from each other: the revitalizing of traditional food, rural customs, the sale of artisanal products and the promotion of healthy food by small producers goes hand in hand with the development of sustainable tourist practices bringing locals and

tourist to the countryside, where they can taste authentic food and experience the atmosphere of honest living with nature.

We are very proud that our video about identity food, food culture and producers "It is all about the taste" received 2023 award at the Food Film Menu competition.

Our initiatives:

- Organizing and supporting **festivals of traditional food and rural products** in the county
- Supporting and promoting **sales points for rural and artisanal products**
- Supporting and initiating the development of **certification of themed food roads**
- Organizing **product tastings, olive oil and wine tastings**
- Encouraging the usage of **rural, countryside products in cultural, sports and arts events** taking place in towns
- Encouraging and promoting the use of local and **rural products in institutional caterings, fairs and trade events**
- Submitting **short videos highlighting Kvarner landscapes, food and young producers** to the Food Film Menu competition



Photo: Rino Gropuzzo

ORGANIZATION

In addition to the close cooperation of the founding stakeholders (the Kvarner Region Tourist Board, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management and the Kvarner Wines association), it is necessary to establish **an extensive network of partners**. We will select them **from the sectors of education, civil society, public institutions, hotels and the tourism industry**.

These partnerships will concentrate on:

- networking and establishing connections between sectors
- implementing a holistic approach combining culture, heritage, and food in terms of the restaurant offer, small producers, and food interpretation
- managing public affairs and communication

To create quality and value, we will **initiate a series of activities with preferred partners and prospective associates** to discuss and brainstorm initiatives and activities, creating **a strong and dedicated network of cooperating partners**, who will share the responsibilities and the benefits of the platform.

The network will appoint an executive manager and their team, who will be responsible for the day-to-day operations and coordination of the stakeholders, their allies, and associate partners. **The leading stakeholder, the Kvarner Region Tourist Board, was established in 1994 in Opatija with the task of managing technical and administrative operations.** It is led by the Director and includes the following bodies: President, General Assembly, and Tourist Council. The members of the Kvarner Region Tourist Board include the local tourist boards from Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, i.e. the Kvarner Region.

The activities of the Kvarner Region Tourist Board primarily focus on improving the general conditions for tourists in the region, promoting the tourist product of the Kvarner Region, raising awareness of the significance of the economic, social and other impact of tourism as well as of the need and importance of preserving and enhancing all elements of the tourist offer, with emphasis on environmental protection. The Kvarner Region Tourist Board participates in activities and implements programs of the Croatian National Tourist Board that are of common interest to all tourist entities. The Board also aims to raise the overall quality of tourism resources in Croatia.



Photo: Makol marketing

BUDGET

As stated in the Protocol Agreement between the regional Stakeholder Committee of the region of Kvarner, a candidate for 2026 and IG-CAT, the Kvarner Region Tourist Board delivers the project and bears the corresponding financial costs.

Taking into account that the Kvarner region corresponds with the territory of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, which is relatively small, with only about 300,000 inhabitants, the budget cannot be compared to other regions with much stronger economies and multi-million populations.

However, every effort will be made to ensure the adequate and smooth delivery of the European Region of Gastronomy project, with due attention paid to the marketing, evaluation, and monitoring aspects of the project.

Financial framework: 2023 – 2026



TOTAL: 4,500,000.00 EUR

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Our region has a long and extensive experience in international cooperation on joint and EU projects. Since 2015, we have actively participated in dozens of **programs in the field of cultural tourism, health and sustainable development, and green and digital transformation**, and all of them included local and traditional gastronomy in their scope of activities.

These projects created material and non-material value for the region by protecting and showing appreciation for our rich and diverse cultural heritage and gastronomy while also adding extra value to the local community.



Photo: Alpha

The most significant results achieved through EU projects are:

- 1 ————— more than 100 markings placed to highlight maritime heritage sites throughout the Kvarner region
- 2 ————— the development of more than 50 tourist itineraries focused on the theme of maritime heritage, archaeology, and green tourism
- 3 ————— the restoration of 16 traditional Kvarner boats
- 4 ————— organizing more than 20 interpretation events
- 5 ————— the establishment of 20 interpretation and promotion centers
- 6 ————— project presentations held at fairs and workshops
- 7 ————— organizing study trips for journalists, bloggers, and agents
- 8 ————— the establishment of the Academy of Traditional Maritime Skills
- 9 ————— launching the Virtual Museum of Maritime Heritage
- 10 ————— creating an IT platform which connects providers of cultural services with users
- 11 ————— creating printed (brochures, fliers, photo monographs) and digital promotional materials (video clips, mobile applications, computer games)
- 12 ————— preparing the strategic documents for the Kvarner region
- 13 ————— collaborations brought by Rijeka European Capital of Culture 2020 named "Rijeka: Port of Diversity", and in particular the legacy of it developed through the food project "Rijeka: Gastronomic Port of Diversity"

Since we joined the IGCAT platform, we have committed ourselves to a close collaboration with its members and other regions within the platform. Starting from 2019, we have participated in the IGCAT platform meetings, had an active role in a dozen online meetings, presentations, and workshops. Our representative has joined the IGCAT Advisory Board and is actively contributing to the common goals.

Continuing this path, in the upcoming years we will participate in:

- European Young Chef Award
 - Top Websites for Foodie Travelers
 - World Food Gift Challenge
 - Food Film Menu
- ... and other inspiring competitions and activities

Some of the ideas we are considering are:

- 1** ————— building a network with chefs from other regions and organizing themed cooking camps to share experiences between countries
- 2** ————— hosting the International Congress on Gastronomy Heritage Interpretation
- 3** ————— facilitating experience exchange through study trips for our chefs and producers to visit and meet chefs and producers from other gastronomic regions



Photo: Luka Tabako

We are especially keen on joining the **World Bee Day to present the richness and diversity of Kvarner region honey and honeydew products**. Also, we also look forward to sharing the knowledge and experiences of our beekeepers with the international community. During the bidding process, we expect to establish numerous contacts and create an international network.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS — FOR US, IT IS ALL ABOUT THE SEASON

Our region has a long and extensive experience in international cooperation on joint and EU projects. Since 2015, we have actively participated in dozens of **programs in the field of cultural tourism, health and sustainable development, and green and digital transformation**, and all of them included local and traditional gastronomy in their scope of activities. Therefore, our **calendar of events is organized around the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter**, supporting sustainable tourism based on a year-round concept.



Photo: Petar Trinajstić



Photo: Kvarner Region Tourist Board archive



Photo: Sanjin Kaštelan, JRE Croatia



Photo: Ivo Pervan

SPRING

- Days of Wild Asparagus
- Days of Cres Lamb and Olive Oil
- Lošinj Cuisine Festival
- Black Sheep Festival
- Senza – Cheese Days
- WineRi Festival
- Strawberry Festival
- Frog Night

SUMMER

- Cherry Days
- Frankopan Days
- Porto Etno – World Music and Gastronomy Festival
- Festival of Polenta and Cheese
- “Rabska fjera”
- “Tira, tira”
- “Feral ki j’ pušćal sinjal” – an event dedicated to the Rijeka milkmaids
- Vrbnik Wine Days
- Days of Kvarner Bay Langoustine
- The Wine Rose of Vinodol
- Big OM, a big game fishing festival
- Krk Fair - Lovrečeva
- Cres Fair
- Forest Berries Festival
- Days of Aromatic Herbs
- Blueberry Day
- Days of Bribir Presnac
- Ice Cream Festival
- Raspberry Festival
- Lopar Night
- Fishermen Week

AUTUMN

- Oily Fish Month
- “Bela nedeja” festivity
- Pears Day
- Honeydew Festival
- “Marunada” – the Lovran chestnut festival
- Pumpkin Festival
- “Brgud po starinski” fair
- “Arbunada” - world championship in underwater fishing
- Apples Days
- Mushrooms Festival
- Olive Days
- Days of Dubašnica Gastronomy
- Kanata Fair
- Fig Days
- “Bundevijada” – pumpkin festival
- Festival of Mushrooms, Wool and Autumn Fruits
- Učka Fair

WINTER

- Festival of Salami
- St. Martin’s Day
- Days of Cod
- “Matuljicious” festival
- Road of Carnival Food
- Chocolate Festival
- Advent-related festivities

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

When we decided to apply for the European Region of Gastronomy award, we were clear about the **perspectives and paths we want to pursue**. These can be grouped into **5 perspectives which are inseparable from citizen involvement and education**, creating a core of sustainability and leaving a legacy from all the activities, practices, and programs we aim to introduce, establish, and operate in the candidature period.



Photo: Petar Lupić



Photo: Dragutin Barac

5 perspectives of citizen involvement:

1

Enhancing the value and quality of enogastronomic tourism

Quality in all segments of the enogastronomic offer in the Kvarner area is a fundamental requirement. As a region which is a pioneer in Croatian tourism and a leader in gastronomy, we are committed to high quality enogastronomy as we believe it plays a vital and distinct role in shaping the identity and recognition of a destination.

2

Joint projects focusing on local food, customs, and culture

The long-standing traditions of gastronomy, hospitality, and tourism in the Kvarner region are elements that need to be especially valued in the upcoming period, both in domestic and foreign tourist markets. We are determined to tell the story of Kvarner's culinary culture and local food production through new communication channels and international platforms.

3

Preservation of traditions and natural diversity

The diverse landscapes of the Kvarner region, from its coast to its islands and mountains, offer a wealth of traditional food and dishes. Local wines, herbal teas, fruit juices, beers, brandies, and liqueurs are an integral part of the offer. We are dedicated to communicating, interpreting, and creating the stories about the value of these products, believing they will encapsulate the tastes of this region.

4

Year-round enogastronomy

The efforts towards year-round enogastronomic tourism and new gastronomy projects will lay the foundation for the year-round operation of Kvarner destinations. This will allow us to share the values of our food and secure a strong and distinctive position of the Kvarner region on the European gastronomic map.

5

Integration of local food into the local community, especially among youth

We are determined to integrate gastronomy into the local community through a blend of tradition and modernity, through formal and informal promotion and events dedicated to traditional food and dishes, strengthening the recognition and value of Kvarner gastronomy while aligning it with the concept sustainability.

SUPPORT FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE ENTERPRISES

Support to small and medium sized entrepreneurs plays a significant role in the Kvarner region.



Photo: Ivana Čutura



Photo: Lili Bašić



Photo: Makol marketing

It is channeled through the activities of the offices:

- of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, in particular the Administrative Department for Tourism, Entrepreneurship, and Rural Development,
- and the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development.

These bodies are the drivers of numerous activities aiming to improve quality, preserve and strengthen the growth of native varieties, which are the true wealth of Kvarner's gastronomy.

The overarching goal behind **supporting SMEs is the development of products rooted in the fusion of the cultural-historical heritage and innovations, leveraging** the natural advantages of the area and fostering mutual cooperation.

This will ensure the flow of information and knowledge transfer, leading to progress in rural economy development and in strengthening the local community. It will also promote synergy and networking, strengthening both the financial and human capacity for the implementation of rural development projects.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

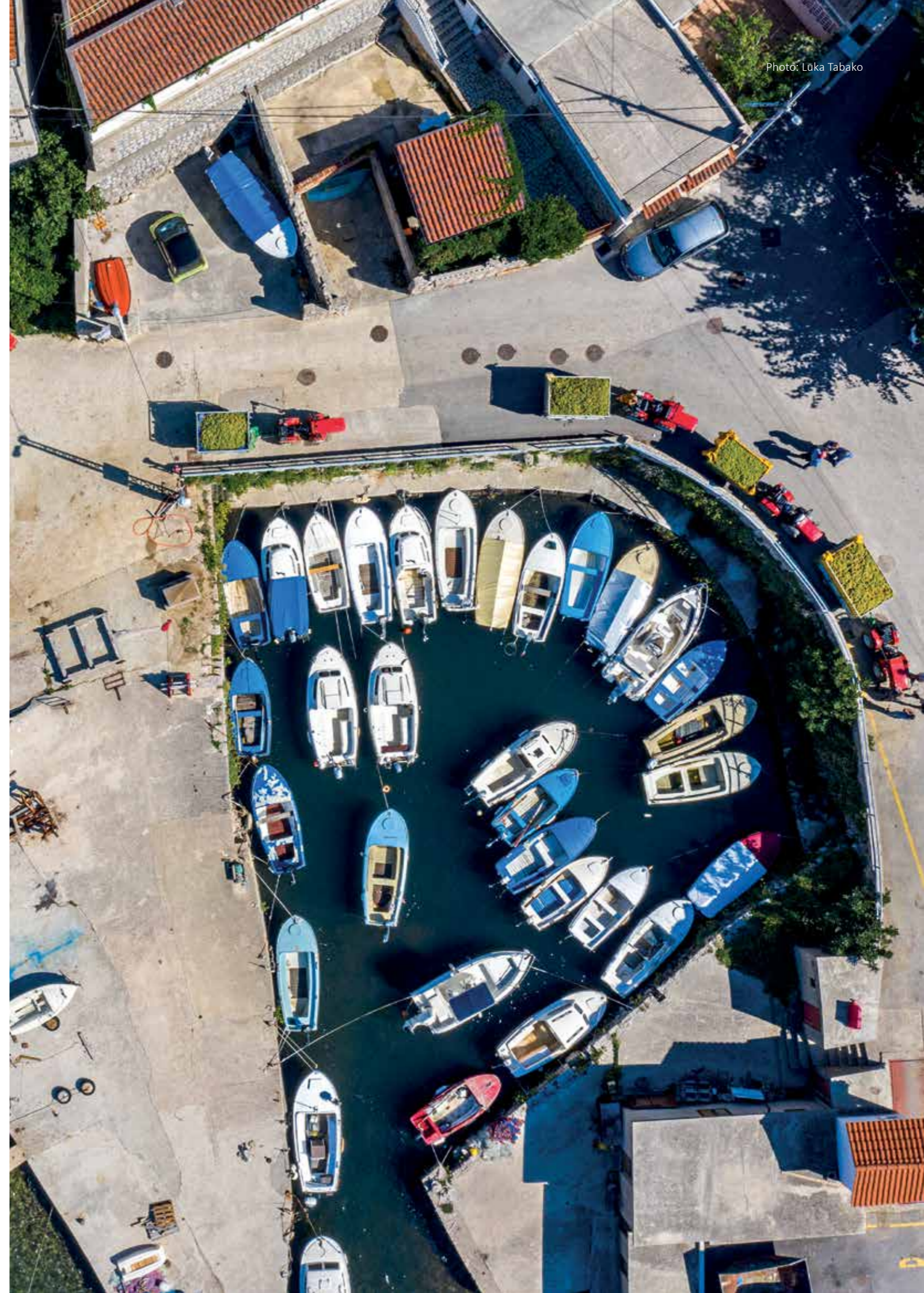
Our communication plan aims to integrate and coordinate the marketing communication mix across several communication channels. This will **increase the visibility of gastronomy topics as a key element of Kvarner's communication strategy, creating a strong and positive image perception** and strengthening the relationship between target groups and building.

It will also stimulate the demand for local wines and gastronomy. The goal of the communication plan is to create a **clear, consistent, and convincing message about traditional dishes and enogastronomic products of Kvarner.**

Key elements of the message include:

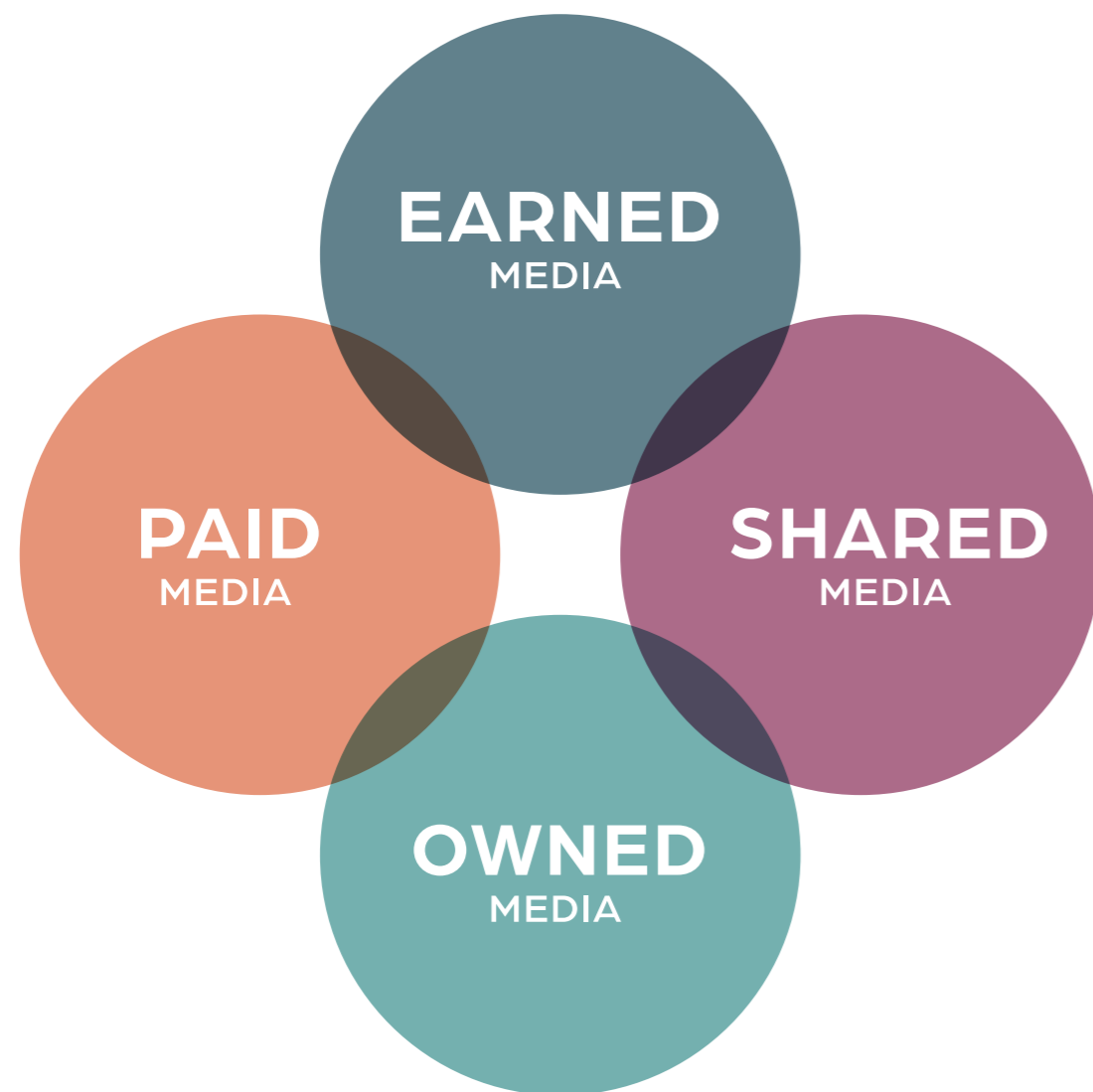
- quality and diversity of local flavors, traditions, and food customs
- sustainability
- integration in the community and knowledge sharing
- recognition and promotion of cultural and food assets

The communication strategy, developed by the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, advocates the use of the **"appeal of love"**, particularly toward tradition but without overlooking the aspect of entertainment. **Therefore, the affective component is encouraged in the design of marketing messages.**



PAID + EARNED + SHARED + OWNED MEDIA

We decided to use the **PESO model (Paid + Earned + Shared + Owned media)** in our development of enogastronomic communication activities as a tool to analyze and understand different types of media and their impact on the public as well as to create day-to-day communications.



PAID MEDIA

Paid media includes paid channels like **advertising, sponsored posts, and others forms of paid promotion in traditional and digital media**. We place particular emphasis on the **paid advertisements and campaigns on social networks**, since food enthusiast users are very active on social networks, especially **Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook**. Sponsored content would be used to reach the local population and

specific age groups. Paid media represents an important communication channel through which we lease space in **daily newspapers, billboards, TV and radio spots tailored** to the local population.

EARNED MEDIA

Earned media includes all **activities resulting from unpaid media** and others forms of coverage of wine and gastronomy products of the Kvarner region. Communication efforts to secure media space include the **presentation of, and information** on the implementation process of the European Region of Gastronomy projects, activities, and the platform itself, but also **events and fairs** linked to gastronomy.

SHARED MEDIA

Shared media refers to content **shared on social or public networks**, in communities and other channels that rely on content sharing. This encourages interaction with existing and potential consumers of food and wine content who are interested in Kvarner, turning them into ambassadors of our communications. Foodie users who are active on social networks and often share photos, reviews, and

recommendations with their followers, will receive additional attention in the creation of continuous and high-quality content.

We will also create appropriate hashtags: **general hashtags** that are very popular and frequent, intended for a wide audience and drawing the attention to the content of communication for those who may not be the primary target audience; **niche**

hashtags that relate to specific enogastronomic topics; and the most important – **branded hashtags** that are created in order to promote and unify all communication efforts related to enogastronomic products. They are especially useful for enhancing the recognizability of all communications and building a community.

OWNED MEDIA

Own media, as a **free information resource aimed at** attracting potential users interested in enogastronomy, includes our **own web site, a gastronomy blog, and a YouTube channel** featuring recipes and content related to traditional dishes, as well as a **podcast and other channels that are fully controlled by the Kvarner Region Tourist Board as the body responsible for communication**.

ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

In modern communication, when information is exchanged quickly, content has become a key value that distinguishes a story from the news. Additionally, storytelling as a technique is important in the process of creating and shaping the message and the appeal of enogastronomic products of the Kvarner region, since it effectively forges a connection between users and the product on an emotional level.

Stories about enogastronomic products can enhance the sense of connection and thus increase the likelihood of initial and repeated enogastronomic purchases. Also, stories provide the foundations for concepts that are developed in events and innovative projects. This way we can differentiate ourselves from other destinations with a strong food and wine identity.

Activities and initiatives in our marketing and communication plan include:

- 1 creating a website dedicated to Kvarner gastronomy
- 2 development of a calendar of thematic events
- 3 presentation of the calendar of events to the media, selecting the outlets based on the desired target audience and communication channel
- 4 running advertising campaigns, employing unique and creative solutions
- 5 distribution of newsletters to national and international markets
- 6 implementing cross-marketing solutions
- 7 merging corporate visits with food presentation
- 8 special editions of thematic gastronomy books or brochures
- 9 creating a special brochure about Kvarner's heritage gastronomy and gastronomic identity
- 10 organizing PR activities related to the European Region of Gastronomy platform and associated projects
- 11 exhibiting and presenting the destination at selected travel, lifestyle, and enogastronomy fairs and events, such as international arts, film or music events
- 12 running co-branding campaigns with prominent and established brands such as the national flight-carrier under the project Flavors of Kvarner
- 13 establishing connections with relevant journalists, bloggers, and selected influencers who would promote Kvarner's gastronomy
- 14 close cooperation with stakeholders on joint PR activities for the European Region of Gastronomy platform and associated projects
- 15 creating inserts on Kvarner gastronomy for inclusion in tourist brochures in foreign languages
- 16 organizing FAM-trips for opinion makers, food and wine writers, gastronomy experts, influencers, and agents
- 17 creation and design of relevant gastronomy content focusing on topics related to the region, its food production, artisanal philosophy, ecology, seasonality, locality, identity, and sustainability

A very special attention is to be given to the flagship events:

- **Jury visit scheduled for May 13-17, 2024.**
- **Opening event**

Legacy events will be developed with the networking partners, honoring the Kvarner gastronomy heritage and culture of the table, affirming the great historical moments and people.

6

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

We commit ourselves to monitoring and evaluating the project, according to the measurable indicators specifically defined for the project's purpose and aligned with the key goals of our candidature.

To fulfill this responsibility, we will set up a dedicated and **independent monitoring committee, a mix of university and project team**, that will be composed prior to the jury visit in May 2024. A monitoring report will be presented to IGCAT and the Platform at least 6 months prior to the start of the title year.

Indicators will include the following:

- community and stakeholder engagement
- the visibility of the title of the European Region of Gastronomy 2026 within the region, locally, nationally, and internationally
- Kvarner culinary coverage in the local, national and international media
- the Food Commitment
- the participation in joint Platform projects
- press relations
- the program for 2026
- amount of school projects related to the food

Photo: Lili Bašić



7 AMBASSADORS



Photo: Lili Bašić

DENI SRDOČ

Michelin-star chef Deni Srdoč earned a Michelin star two times, at two Croatian restaurants: Draga di Lovrana and Nebo. Nebo Restaurant & Lounge by Deni Srdoč is a place where he is the owner and creator of miracles. Recently he has opened a new favorite place in Rijeka - Hidden Wine Bistro. All of this would not have happened if the young man born on the island of Krk had not given up studying electrical engineering and gone to Split to study at Oliva Allegra private culinary arts school. He considers cooking a constant opportunity for learning and exploring so he worked and learned in top restaurants such as Azurmendi in Spain, Atelier in Germany with chef Jan Hartwig, and the French Laundry in San Francisco with famous chef Thomas Keller. Back in 2018, the Croatian edition of the Gault&Millau international restaurant guide awarded him the Young Talent of the Year Trophy. His restaurant Nebo, according to the same guide, is the best restaurant in the Kvarner region, rated with 4 toques and 17/20 points in 2023.

"Cooking makes me happy, and the joy I can give my guests through food is the reason why I am in this business. My constant inspiration is my grandmother's Mediterranean cuisine, which I grew up with", says the chef who combines traditional and modern in his restaurant. Leading a team of young chefs, he relies on quality local ingredients and uses techniques from the Italian and French cuisine.



Photo: Sanjin Kaštelan

STIVEN VUNIĆ

"What the sea gives you" is not only a delicious fish and crab stew prepared at Zijavica tavern in Moščenička Draga, but also the business philosophy of its 36-year-old owner and chef Steven Vunić, who has been patiently and passionately building his culinary empire for 11 years, next to one of the most beautiful beaches in Europe. The son of one of the oldest langoustine fishermen in Kvarner is eternally inspired by indigenous dishes of the Kvarner region, a touch of tradition that gives something unique combined with modern and sophisticated approach to cuisine. His huge dedication to work earned Zijavica membership in the prestigious Jeunes Restaurateurs association. Although both his name and his gastronomic signature are well known in the Croatian culinary world, he wants to reach new heights. He is strict, precise, organized, and technically extremely skilled.

"I believe that the Kvarner region belongs to a group of European regions that think in a very similar way about gastronomy and share a passion for gastronomy. I am dedicated to gastronomy in a much broader sense than just cooking. For me, my wife Tea Vunić, and our family, it is a way of life, our way to respect the tradition and identity of this region."



Photo: archive JRE

DANIELA KRAMARIĆ

A well-known entrepreneur and owner of one of the best Croatian restaurants, with a deep knowledge of the profession and trends in gastronomy, she grew up in a restaurant run very successfully by her father Josip Tariba. She helped him from an early age, lived in a house where they discussed about work very often, so she absorbed the knowledge related to hospitality. Her daily routine is an early visit to the fish market and the green market, where she chooses the best from the local daily offer for her acclaimed restaurant. In 2008 and 2010, the World's 50 Best Restaurants included Plavi podrum on their list of the best restaurants in the world.

A special part of her professional path is marked by her love of wines. The first sommelier in Croatia and one of the best in Europe, she draws up her wine list according to very high criteria. Excellence and high professionalism would be enough reason for Daniela Kramarić to receive, among many notable awards, the Gault&Millau Croatia Trophy for Merits in Promoting Croatian Gastronomy and Oenology, but what makes her the best Croatian wine and gourmet ambassador is her sincere, warm attitude toward every guest.

"Nature has left us an inheritance of exceptional foods, we cherish them with tradition, and today we shape them with knowledge and passion. Being an ambassador for Kvarner Region - European Region of Gastronomy Candidate, is a great honor

and obligation. Sharing the values that we all represent together, sharing knowledge among younger generations and educating visitors, as well as the local population about the importance of indigenous wine varieties, forgotten foods, uniqueness of Kvarner's scampi (langoustines) is a task which I consider my duty and joy."



Photo: Private archive

KRUNOSLAV KAPETANOVIĆ

Entrepreneur, hotelier and restaurateur with many years of experience in all segments of business, primarily in the hotel industry. He is the owner of Opatija's Navis hotel, where he and his team cherish the values of modern gastronomy based on tradition. He is an inspiring guest lecturer at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija, where he shares the experience from his own career, from being a student to the owner and CEO, with students. He is a promoter, motivator and initiator of numerous actions to improve not only the tourist offer of the destination but also the standard of living of the local population, i.e. to enhance sustainability and integration into communities.



Photo: Lili Bašić

NENAD KUKURIN

Will, strength, enthusiasm, and passion are the main driving forces of Nenad Kukurin, the owner of Kukuriku boutique hotel and chef of its gourmet restaurant in Kastav above Opatija, with 25 years of successful work. When someone is the fifth generation in a restaurateur family, following 125 years of tradition, cooking is in his genes. He has gained experience not only at home but also in Italy for six years, and when he took over the family restaurant in 1998, he became one of the pioneers of the "slow food movement" in Croatia. With his culinary creations he won over millions of Italian TV viewers who followed the La Prova del Cuoco cooking show on their national TV network. It comes naturally that his understanding of gastronomy and hospitality business is unquestionable.



Photo: Lili Bašić

ROBERT BENZIA

The owner and chef of Lovran's Ganeum Food and Wine Bar is known for his special concept envisioned as an interaction with restaurant guests. He began building a rich culinary career in Italy. Robert's enthusiasm to communicate and educate people is proved by the title of gastronomy lecturer at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija. As a lover of Mediterranean cuisine, his dishes are based on fresh local ingredients which he gets from producers who are not only his partners but also friends.

"I enjoy my work and I am proud to contribute, and with my support I will continue to contribute to the development of our beautiful Kvarner into a true capital of fantastic food, excellent local wines and educated, young, creative people."



Photo: Foto Kurti

MARINKO KAUZLARIĆ

The former mayor of the Municipality of Fužine with experience in institutional work is an entrepreneur and hotelier in the heart of Gorski Kotar, where in his Bitoraj hotel he proudly presents the essence of the mountainous part of Kvarner. He is tireless in spreading the idea of stronger linking of farmers, herders, and small local producers, as well as the need to establish shorter supply chains with local hospitality establishments. Marinko is especially committed to the preservation and improvement of beekeeping, since the area of Gorski Kotar is the home of honeydew honey, which isn't made from floral nectar but comes from honeydew in deep layers of trees.

"Forest is to the people of Gorski Kotar what the sea is to the islanders. I am working on protecting and promoting the ecologically clean area of Gorski Kotar, the green heart of the whole of Croatia and Kvarner. I firmly believe that this is the source of our survival and progress."



Photo: Lili Bašić

KLAUDIO JURČIĆ

A sommelier by nature, not just by profession, a holder of the WSET Diploma in Wines since 2013, and an alumnus of the Austrian Wine Academy in Rust. He won the national sommelier competition in Croatia four times in a row, setting new standards and confirming that for him wine is much more than just a job, it is a passion and his life's calling. Putting his professional knowledge to test outside of Croatia, he competed in the ASI World Sommelier Championship quarter-finals in Chile, the ASI European Sommelier Championship semi-finals in Strasbourg, the Central European Championship, the Champagne Sommelier Trophée de Grand Jour de Champagne, and the ASI European Sommelier Championship in San Remo. Since 2015, he has been re-establishing his professional path as manager and sommelier at the iconic Bevanda restaurant in Opatija.

"Throughout my career I have been committed to quality, indigenoussness, gastronomy culture, and education for constant progress. I am happy that the region to which I belong, where I was born and raised, is on the path of excellence. The candidacy for the European Region of Gastronomy is certainly a great step forward for Kvarner as a destination of exquisite food and excellent wines."



Photo: Goran Novotny

DAVOR ANDRIĆ

"In the Croatian language, we have a beautiful word, blagovati (to dine). It denotes the hedonistic enjoyment of food with all the senses, in the company of family and close friends – passionate enjoyment but also respect for food, preparation and the moment."

With these words, Davor Andrić, the owner of the hotel and restaurant Vila Barbat from the island of Rab, with of more than 70 years of family tradition, sums up his view on gastronomy and its importance for the individual, family, community, and nation. He is a supporter of preserving authentic, local flavors and believes that traditional dishes are a way of safeguarding identity.

Davor Andrić also demonstrates his love for the land and the sea through olive growing. In olive groves inherited from his family, he produces two kinds of extra virgin olive oil. Cultivating mainly the local variety called *orkula (oblica)*, he sees traditional oil production as a tribute to heritage. For many years he served as the mayor of the Town of Rab. In 1995, in an effort to protect heritage and ensure sustainability, he initiated the establishment of the association of Rab crossbowmen, which maintains the rich tradition of the island of Rab.



Photo: Robert Pichler

DRAŽEN LESICA

Dražen Lesica is the fourth generation of restaurateurs in his family. Their legendary restaurant Rivica, located in Njivice on the island of Krk, was founded in 1934, marking its 90th anniversary in 2024. From the outset, Rivica's cuisine has been rooted in the sea and island ingredients. While Dražen Lesica has introduced modern culinary techniques, he continues to prioritize respect for local and seasonal ingredients of his region. Lesica emphasizes, "For us, quality begins and ends with the ingredient", drawing inspiration from traditional recipes. As an excellent sommelier, he approaches wine and food pairing with equal care, showcasing Krk's native varieties, especially Žlahtina, the island's trademark.

"The project 'Kvarner – The European Region of Gastronomy' signifies, for me as a restaurant owner from this area, the international recognition and elevation of our efforts, love, and perseverance in safeguarding the gastronomic identity of this region. For us veterans in this industry, it serves as a tailwind, propelling us forward on this journey. Being an ambassador for the project is both a personal honor and a responsibility."



Photo: Ivana Čutura

EGLE KATUNAR

Egle Katunar, along with her husband, the prominent Krk winemaker Ivan Katunar, who inherited the family business from his parents, runs the "Kuća vina Ivan Katunar" winery.

Her motto is: *"Wine is not just our business; it is our lifestyle, which is why we aim to create poetry in a glass."* As a lover of tradition and local customs, she conducts wine tastings in the winery and wine cellar, educating guests about winemaking on the island of Krk. Through storytelling, her chosen approach, she fosters warm and emotionally engaged dialogues with guests. Egle Katunar strengthens the position of Kvarner and its native grapes through her membership in the 'Vina Kvarnera' winegrowers' association, alongside her husband.

She is also a member of the active and well-known women's initiative "Žene za otok" (Women for the Island), which connects women entrepreneurs. Her projects have a significant impact on the local community. Egle believes in the power of education and successfully spreads the story of tradition, sustainability and the heritage of the island of Krk and the region.



Photo: Private archive

VLASTA BROZIČEVIĆ

Head doctor Vlasta Brozičević, MD, specialist in physical medicine and rehabilitation, rheumatology and acupuncture, leads the medical department at the Terme Selce Polyclinic. She is the official doctor of the CroSki team, experienced in treating over 50,000 clients of all ages from 88 countries, including 120 top athletes.

During her more than 35-year career, she has initiated and spearheaded numerous new programs and projects in the field of health, impacting many other segments in tourism, all aimed at promoting health across communities. As early as 1993, she launched the project “Mediterranean Nutrition in the Tourist Offer of the Crikvenica Riviera”, which she presented worldwide. Additionally, she designed the Health Promenade projects on the Crikvenica Riviera. She is a member of 14 international professional organizations.

“I am honored to support the Kvarner region’s participation in the European Region of Gastronomy project for several reasons: healthy gastronomy is essential in attracting high-demanding tourists, as well as improving the lifestyle of locals, following the 3H principle: Healthy, Happy, and Hedonistic. Altogether, this presents a challenge for the creativity of everyone involved in the process.”



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