

A Slovenian Star on the Culinary Map of the World Top Chefs and Fresh, Locally Produced Foods

The world-renowned chef Janez Bratovž, who laid down the standards of top-class cuisine in Slovenia, believes that "Slovenia is the next great culinary destination of the world". The main roles in the gourmet story of the land between the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian plains are played by tradition, healthy local ingredients and innovative contemporary cuisine. Therefore, this is all the more reason why you cannot leave Slovenia without getting a taste of it and savouring the sensations you are left with long after you have ventured forth: in top-class restaurants and family-owned inns, tourist farms and at osmice ('eight-day sitdowns'), in wine cellars and wine shops, bistros and cafes, picnics, markets and culinary tours. A well known saying goes that good food is the way to someone's heart. And that is why this love for excellent Slovenian food will be all the more reason for you to come back experience green, healthy and active adventures.

In recent years we have witnessed a great boom in culinary tourism in the country. Today, the best Slovenian chefs running top-notch restaurants are reaching for the stars on the shoulders of tradition and renowned family inns. They find special inspiration in a love of the home environment and traditional local ingredients since they are all keen supporters of the garden-to-table philosophy.

It is quite difficult to choose the most delicious culinary experience in Slovenia. Is it the Open Kitchen event (Odprta kuhna) in Ljubljana which, every Friday from March to September, hosts the best chefs of Slovenian and international cuisine? Or what about menus prepared by top chefs such as the world superstar Ana Roš in the Soča Valley or enjoying culinary heaven in splendid mansions and castles at the foot of the Alps in the Gorenjska region, the vine-growing hills of the Dolenjska region and in the forest-embraced Notranjska region? Is it one of the best wines in the world in Goriška Brda, halfway between the Alps and the Mediterranean or better still the best Sauvignon from Jeruzalem in the east of Slovenia, cherished by the British Queen? Perhaps prosciutto from the bora-windswept Karst and Primorska regions, traditional goulash from the Pomurje region or herdsman's cheese from Velika Planina? One thing is certain, though, when you catch the pleasant smell wafting from Slovenian kitchens even the sated feel hunger again. Slovenia has as many as 24 gastronomic and 14 wine-growing regions, making it gastronomic Europe in miniature. Take a big spoon and taste it, there is no other way to go about it. Let the smell of new culinary adventures waft over you!

For a good appetite: everything is fresh and healthy

The Slovenians foster a special relationship to **healthy, home-grown food**. Almost every Slovenian family grows vegetables and fruit in their own gardens. Markets are packed full of organically grown delicacies from the countryside. In remote villages a few families organise and run a cheese dairy or an olive oil press. What is more, garden beds flourish in the midst of cities. In the oldtown centre Ljubljana indigenous, crispy lettuce has been growing for centuries.

Slovenian restaurants and inns with their original and cosmopolitan menus swear by local ingredients and recipes. In recent years, the regions of Slovenia have systematically delved into traditional tastes and typical local dishes, which are

experiencing a new boom. **Taste Ljubljana (Okusi Ljubljane)** has, for instance, revived Vodnik's salad with lamb's lettuce, cauliflower and boiled egg which was published in the first Slovenian Cookbook from 1799. Enjoy a guided culinary experience hand in hand with Ljubljana Tourism guides and venture on a tour of Ljubljana with a well-known Slovenian blogger.

A treat for the eyes as well as the nose: the most famous Slovenian dishes

Already heard about them? To fully experience the Slovenian tradition, they are as mandatory as stamps in your passport. Try the skewered **kranjska klobasa sausage with horseradish**, the bora wind-cured Karst prosciutto and slightly savoury cheese. Do not forget to spice up fish or meat with a drop of world-renowned olive oil and a pinch of salt flower, the most valuable product of Piran's salt pans.

Among the most traditional dishes you will also find beef and mushroom soups, jota stew, corn polenta buttered with curd, salty curd dumplings, [idrijski žlikrofi](#), (traditional Slovenian dumplings from Idrija), bograč goulash or grilled sausages and black pudding with cabbage or turnips.

Treat yourself to pancakes with cottage cheese and tarragon or sweet **Kobarid strudels**, filled with walnuts, breadcrumbs and raisins. Sweeten your day with Slovenian honey, eat a **cream cake** in Bled and enjoy your ice-cream with some pumpkinseed oil. Do not forget to try [prekmurska gibanica](#) (layered cake) with almost too many layers of walnuts, poppy seeds, curd and apples for you to count and the most famous Slovenian dessert, namely **potica made of dough, wrapped around 80 different fillings, with walnut and hazelnut fillings being the two most common**. Make a stop at a typical Slovenian inn. The best ones which pay homage to the secrets of traditional Slovenian cuisine bear the "Gostilna Slovenija" brand. Among the culinary specialities in this land locked between the Alps, the Mediterranean, the Karst and the Pannonian plains you will also find the cheese of love called **trnič** from Velika Planina above Kamnik which is shaped like a woman's breasts.

Soul-warming: Top chefs

The best chefs from Slovenia wield their wooden spoons like wands making them true magicians of flavour. They follow a simple philosophy: to maintain the fullness of flavour of the original ingredient, while enriching it with other harmonious flavours. You are guaranteed to enjoy refined cuisine in the JB restaurant of **Janez Bratovž in Ljubljana**, which was ranked among the 100 best restaurants in the world on the San Pellegrino scale. **Ana Roš from the Soča Valley**, who was proclaimed the greatest talent of the year 2015 by the association Jeunes Restaurateurs d'Europe, is now a member of the famous chef collective Gelinaz! Shuffle. Her plates are real gardens of flavour! **Tomaž Kavčič**, winner of the prestigious Italian Golden Chef Award, cooks in a baroque manor house in the **Vipava valley**. Igor Jagodic (Strelec Restaurant).

The prestigious association **Jeunes Restaurateurs d'Europe** includes the following 11 Slovenian restaurants:

Hiša Franko of Ana Roš and Valter Kramar (Kobarid), **Gostilna pri Lojzetu** of **Tomaž Kavčič** (Vipava), **Dam food & wine** and **Restaurant Pikol** (Nova Gorica), **Gostilna Mahorčič** (Rodnik), **Restaurant Ošterija Debeluh** (Brežice), **Pavus Restaurant – Castle Tabor** (Laško), **Gostilna pri Danilu** (Škofja Loka), **Gostilna Rajh** (Murska Sobota), **Gostilna Rakar** (Trebnje) and **Rizibizi** (Portorož).

The best Slovenian restaurants selected by good demanding eaters open their doors even wider in spring and autumn bringing their offer closer to the wider circle of connoisseurs during **Restaurant Week (Teden restavracij)** with menus offering foods and dishes **at uniform and affordable prices**.

For a feeling of nostalgia: wood ranges on tourist farms For all of you who like to bring back childhood memories of your grandmothers who whirled around their kitchens and conjured up their favourite dishes at any time of the day, we would recommend a visit to Slovenian tourist and excursion farms. These genuine and personal experiences are difficult to forget. The way of life far from the maddening hustle and bustle of the city clears the mind and sharpens the senses. Home-grown and lovingly prepared delicacies will move your heart. Slovenia boasts almost 400 tourist farms which also offer accommodation and **300 excursion farms** with an excellent culinary offer. You can often join the cook behind the range which burns wood and this is the reason why nostalgia wafts through the air. **Osmice ('eight-day sitdowns')** and **wine shops** also offer a special experience where the masters of the homesteads treat their guests to some house wine and snacks at their table. Osmice are special farms which had already, in the times of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, been given the chance to open their doors to travellers for eight days a year and treat them to the surplus of their homemade meat products, cheese and wine.

For eternity: world-renowned Slovenian wines

In cuisine, you will not find a better blend than food and excellent wine that calms or additionally spices up the flavours of the dishes. The vine has not been a symbol of life and eternity for millennia for nothing. Did you know that Slovenia is a true Europe in miniature with **14 wine-growing regions** and vine-growing hills with some of the best quality locations on the planet? The vine was brought to the territory of Slovenia by the ancient Romans. The proverbially **oldest vine in the world**, that still bears grapes even after 400 years, grows in **Maribor**, the second largest city in the country. Some of the best known Slovenian winemakers come from Brda, a romantic land of intoxicating moments halfway between the Alps and the Mediterranean. The wine cellars of Movia and Kabaj are ranked among the top 100 according to a selection made by the American magazine Wine & Spirits, while the Simčič dessert wine from dried Rebula is one of the top 5 wines in the world according to Decanter magazine's wine expert. Every wine-growing region is interspersed by **wine routes**, where you can get an up close experience of the viticultural tradition. The **wine cellars** offer tastings of superior quality wine and sparkling wine. In Slovenia, we have excellent red and white wines, some of which have a protected designation of origin. Let us make a toast with indigenous wine, such as Pinela, Zelen and Teran. The latter is produced only in the Karst region from the Refosco sort with an indication of Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSP) where special conditions create a worldwide unique "terroir". Some Slovenian winemakers are so innovative that they even ferment wine below sea level. Thus, the sparkling wine Dulcis & Mare gets its refined nobility in the middle of the Gulf of Piran.

Double the pleasure: culinary adventures in nature

Staying in vineyard cottages amidst endlessly sprawling vineyards in the Dolenjska region where the Cviček wine reigns, called diet wine by many due to its low alcohol content, is a special adventure. They used to store tools and barrels in these abodes but now they have turned them into accommodation. Become a temporary master of the vineyard and wine barrels. In fact, the owner will, besides giving you the key to the accommodation quarters, also entrust you with the key to the vineyard's wine cellar. You can learn about the Slovenian cheese-making tradition on the mountain pastures nestled on high overlooking the Soča valley in the west of Slovenia, on Velika Planina under the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, where herdsmen still make the cheese of love, **trnič**, or in the heart of the Julian Alps in Bohinj where the **Cheese Route** connects cheese makers on the mountain pastures and in the valley. It is a delicious experience where you keep losing calories during recreational hiking. The best time

to experience the route is throughout the week in spring and summer because cheese makers also live there and make cheese in the traditional way. You can also taste and buy curd, sour cream, butter and other dairy delights. Lastly, the countryside in the vicinity of Ljubljana is also home to the Jezeršek Academy, the first Slovenian cooking academy, where you can learn to prepare some traditional Slovenian dishes.

A keepsake to take home: flavours of Slovenia

If you want to taste Slovenia at home, do not forget to pack something healthy and delicious in your suitcase. You will find most things at local markets. However, you can even find some traditional delights such as excellent homemade jams and juices of the brand Delicacies of the Dolenjska Region (Dobrote Dolenjske) at all petrol stations across the country. Do ask for LePotička (petite beauty) in pastry shops, a cute mini version of the all-Slovenian dessert potica.

Idea for a culinary weekend outing:

Do not miss the richness of flavours and culinary events across Slovenia! Hospitable locals, who are proud of the gifts of nature and fresh local products, will grow on you together with the land. Welcome to family inns, village osmice, city restaurants and culinary events. The Tastes of Slovenia are calling you! It does not matter whether you are enjoying a long vacation in Slovenia or just a weekend trip. Check out which places are the best to eat in and make a toast with superior quality Slovenian wines that create a perfect harmony of flavours.

1. Delicious flavours of Central Slovenia and the Gorenjska region:

Start your culinary experience in the capital of **Ljubljana**, which is the **Green Capital of Europe 2016**. Many of Ljubljana's restaurants bear the brand Taste Ljubljana (Okusi Ljubljane) and welcome you to taste the dishes of Ljubljana. Try the famous Vodnik's lamb's lettuce salad which is named after the author of the first cookbook in Slovenia. Aficionados of all sorts of food love sweet fried pancakes, stuffed with curd and tarragon and made *au gratin* with an egg sauce topping. You can experience the diversity of the culinary offer at **Open Kitchen** events on Fridays from March to October. A unique outdoor market of flavours offers a special experience where top chefs serve local and international dishes at customer-friendly prices. One of the most interesting delicacies of Central Slovenia is the **cheese of love, trnič**, that comes from the Velika Planina plateau near Kamnik and was once given by herdsman to their beloved. Venture west of Ljubljana and visit the home of the Taste Gorenjska (Okusi Gorenjske) brand. The extolled area of **Bled** is home to an iconic culinary treat, the **cream cake** (kremšnita). Bled island in the midst of the Alpine lake is home to the **Potičnica** cake bakery with the story of the all-Slovenian dessert **potica**. Its wrapped dough can be filled with as many as 80 different fillings which testifies to the creativity of Slovenian housewives. Gourmets like to visit nearby Radovljica with an attractive medieval town centre where in spring and autumn they organise **Taste Radol'ca (Okusi Radol'ce)**. We recommend that here you try another typical dish that has many variations – dumplings. The inns of the Gorenjska town which is only a good half an hour away from Ljubljana are famous for their authentic homemade food and local ingredients from nearby gardens and fields.

2. Let us make a toast in the wine-growing regions of Slovenia or with a mug of beer:

Slovenia is a wine-growing Europe in miniature. Numerous top quality international as well as some indigenous sorts, which make Slovenians especially proud, thrive in the fourteen wine-growing regions. Let us list them: zelen, vitovska, rebula, pinela

and teran from the wine-growing region of Primorska, žametovka and ranfol from the wine-growing region of Podravje and rumeni plavec, kraljevina and šentlovranka from the wine-growing region of Posavje. A curiosity among wines within the European Union is the protected *cviček*, which is a mix of red and white grape sorts. In the Dolenjska region we pay homage to it with the traditional **Cviček Week (Teden cvička)**. During many a Saturday throughout the year, the centre of Ljubljana is given a stamp by Slovenian wine-growers, winemakers and wine. Welcome to the **Ljubljana Wine Route (Ljubljanska vinska pot)**, which strengthens the reputation of Slovenia as a culinary and wine-growing country. Proof of this is also the oldest vine in the world, which grows in Maribor. The festive grape harvesting of the Old Vine is the culmination of the **Old Vine Festival (Festival Stare trte)** that, as the most important wine event in Slovenia, symbolises and embodies a rich wine culture. One of the Slovenian wine tradition's highlights is marked by the **Lendava Grape Harvest (Lendavska trgatév)**. Accompanied by the playful song of wind-operated rattles awaken memories of folk customs of surrounding settlements and vineyards. This is soon followed by **St. Martin's celebrations** in autumn when must turns into young wine. In all of the wine-growing regions of Slovenia this marks a special festive time, which can also be felt in the cities. Connoisseurs and tasters of wine and autumn treats gather at one of the biggest celebrations that takes place between the picturesque hills of Brda in the west of Slovenia. A speciality of Slovenia is also a love story between Teran wine and prosciutto, which unfolds not far away, in the Karst region. Meet the romantic interplay of flavours at the **Festival of Teran Wine and Prosciutto (Praznik terana in pršuta)**.

The world famous Slovenian meat speciality with a protected origin, which has visited space together with a female astronaut of Slovenian roots, is *kranjska klobasa* sausage. According to tradition, you can savour it when cooked with sauerkraut (roasted) or sour turnip, or cold with a bagel or bun, mustard, grated horseradish and a mug of beer. Bite into the juicy skewered sausage at the **Kranjska Klobasa Sausage Festival** in the Gorenjska region at the end of August. In July you can make a toast at the **Beer and Flowers Festival (Festival pivo in cvetje)** in Laško, the town with the longest brewing tradition, where they have been organising a summer event for over 50 years consisting of merrymaking accompanied with beer and lively music that is attended by fun-loving people from Slovenia and neighbouring countries. In the Prekmurje region in the far northeast of Slovenia, the Slovenian culinary tradition is intertwined with that of the Hungarians. In August, **Bogračfest**, a local culinary festival, offers goulash made with three types of meat that is typical of these parts as well as other original culinary specialities from Prekmurje.

3. Sweet and fruity pampering:

Little secrets of the best chefs are often hidden in spices. It is difficult to imagine life without salt. The **Salt pans Feast (Solinarski praznik)** brings back memories of a bygone era when many families from Piran moved for half a year to the salt pans in April to their stonebuilt houses by the water pools to harvest salt. Thus, medieval Piran literally blossomed and developed thanks to the earnings made from salt, and the salt pan workers nowadays still produce salt by hand according to the traditional procedures from seven centuries ago. Today's heirs of the salt pan tradition contrive ingenious products and souvenirs. Among them also belongs saltflower chocolate that you will be able to try in September at the international festival of desserts called **Sweet Istria (Sladka Istra)** in Koper, where many local and international stalls welcome you to try sweet delicacies. The sweetest event in the Gorenjska region is the **Chocolate Festival (Festival čokolade)** that takes place in April in the medieval town of Radovljica. They spice up the chocolate experience with honey since they are

famous for their long tradition of bee-keeping and breeding of the Carniolan honey bee or “grey bee”. The **Jam Festival (Festival Marmelade)** in the Dolenjska region is increasingly growing in popularity and welcomes you to taste more than 100 types of this sweet product made from Slovenian fruit.

One of the sweetest and most colourful culinary events in Slovenia is the **Cherry Festival (Praznik češenj)** which takes place in Brda where they grow more than 50 different types of this fruit. Big crunchy cherries have been given interesting domestic names, such as črnica (black cherry), prvačn'ca (early cherry) or trcinka (from the town of Tarcento). They sparkle amidst the picturesque hills where as many as nine hiking trails wind along the Cherry Blossom Trail. In the past the local inhabitants used to export their cherries to larger European cities, and nowadays they are known around the world as top winemakers since some of the most famous wine cellars in the country are concealed in Brda. In autumn, the hills of western Slovenia are laden with grapes and kakis. Visit the traditional **Persimmon Festival (Praznik kakijev)** which takes place in November in Strunjan offering a wide selection of fresh kaki fruits and other culinary delicacies. Have you ever tried kaki ice-cream, chips, pie or jam? The warm orange colour of the late autumn blends perfectly with the evergreen Mediterranean nuances of the fragrant plants painting a picturesque landscape. Izola calls you with another Mediterranean fruit – the olive. Let loose at the springtime **Wine, Fish and Olive Oil Festival (Praznik rib, oljk in vina)** and pamper your taste buds. Taste the full-bodied flavour of Slovenian olive oils. Stroll along the colourful stalls full of Istrian flavours and experience the medieval town centre of Izola, giving a home to the ancient fishing tradition.

OVERVIEW OF CULINARY EVENTS IN AUTUMN 2016:

August

Bogračfest, Lendava, August

Kranjska klobasa Sausage Festival, Sora pri Medvodah, August

Festival of Teran and Prosciutto (Prznik terana in pršuta), Dutovlje, August

The Saltpans Feast (Solinarski festival), Piran, August (2nd part of the Saltpans Feast)

Peach Festival (Praznik breskev), Prvačina, August

Days of Honey (Dnevi medu), Polhov Gradec, August

Fisherman's Festival (Ribiški praznik), Izola, August

Potato Night (Čomparska noč), Bovec, August

Jam Festival (Festival Marmelada), Šentrupert, August–September

September

Old Vine Festival (Festival Stare trte), Maribor, September

Lendava Grape Harvest (Lendavska trgatev), Lendava, September

Sweet Istria (Sladka Istra), Koper, September

The Idrijski žlikrofi Festival (Praznik idrijskih žlikrofov), Idrija, September

Pumpkin Festival (Praznik buč), Bodonci, September

Day of Pristava Festive Breads (Dan pristavskih pogač), Ljutomer, September

Cabbage Festival (Zeljada), Ljubljana, September

Wine and Cheese Festival before the Cow's Ball (Praznik sira in vina pred Kravjim balom), Bohinj, September

October

Festival, Food & Art Festival, Kobarid, October

Chestnut Sunday (Kostanjeva nedelja), Ljubljana, October

Kozjansko Apple Festival (Praznik kozjanskega jabolka), Podsreda, October

Traditional Chestnut Festival in the Lig Village (Tradicionalni praznik kostanja na Ligu), Kanal ob Soči, October

International Wine Fair, Ljubljana, October

November

St Martin's Day Celebrations (Martinovanja), throughout Slovenia, November

Persimmon Festival (Praznik kakijev), Strunjan, November

Wine Sanctuaries of the Vipava Valley (Vinski hrami Vipavske doline), Vipava, November

Most Party (Mostna gavda), Prevalje, November

December

Christmas & New Year's Markets with Culinary Offer, Slovenia, December

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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