

## Slovenian wines with fingerprints

### Ferruginous earth gives strong fruit flavour to the grapes of the Karst region

The Čotar family has literally left their mark on Slovenian wine production. **Branko Čotar** and his son, **Vasja**, cultivate 7,5 hectares on the Karst plateau in south-western Slovenia – only five kilometres from the Mediterranean and a few minutes' drive from the border of Italy.

Branko's and Vasja's thumbprint adorn the labels on the family's red and white wines, and more and more wine connoisseur thumbs up, when they have tasted the Čotar wines. Čotar senior and junior are men of few words. – Our wines speak for themselves, they say.



**Malvazija** and **Vitovska** are dry white wines with 12,5% alcohol content. Malvazija is almost sunny yellow and has an elegant intense fruit flavour that lends itself well to seafood, stews of lamb and kid and cheeses. Vitovska has a deep golden colour and a soft and fresh taste. Suitable for appetizers and fatty cheeses.

**Terra Rossa** is a dry red wine with 12,5% alcohol content. Ruby color with gentle and deep shades of purple. The intense fruity bouquet develops from plums, blackcurrant and blueberries to spicy notes, with a whiff of herbs and at the end traces of coffee. In the mouth it is warm and soft with a full structure mixed with ripe tannins and a pleasant freshness which preserves a long aftertaste. Terra Rossa goes well with game, savory

saucers, strong-flavored meat dishes, roast beef, ripe and full fat cheese.

**Merlot Red** is a dry red wine with 13% alcohol content. A rich ruby color with faint shades of pomegranate. The intense ripe fruity bouquet is complex and deep, with traces of blueberry and raspberry, and a faint herbaceous note, and spicy coffee taste at the end. The warm, soft, mineral body is nicely rounded with ripe tannins and a pleasant aftertaste. Terra Rossa goes well with beef, game, roast duck, grilled steak and flavourful ripe cheeses.



**Črna Penina** is a bone-dry, red bubbly with 12% alcohol content of Teran grapes. The sparkling wine has no additives and is naturally fermented.

### Old traditions

The Čotar vineyard is located in the Slovenian Karst region, which has given its name to similar limestone landscapes worldwide. Branko Čotar harvested the first grapes in 1974 for use at the family restaurant, but since 1990 most of the production was sold – mostly for export to 12 countries – some of them also to Finland.

– Čotar wines are exceptional – something unique. I really admire their way of making wines, says head sommelier **Edmund Liew** from Restaurant Sinne in Helsinki. He won earlier this year “Best Young Sommelier of the year in Finland 2016” title and will represent Finland in the International Jeunes Sommelier Competition at Vaduz, Liechtenstein this coming end of August. Čotar wines are available for taste in Restaurant Sinne where they are sold also by glass.

Branko Čotar emphasizes that the wines are not added sulphite, and that only local wild yeast is used in the vineyard's exclusively organic production – that is the way he has worked for more than 40 years.

– There are no secrets in our production. We let the shells lie long on the must in the first fermentation process, seven to ten days for white wines and ten to twenty days for the reds. Finally the wines mature in oak sherry casks for up to six years and are bottled unfiltered into bottles, as our ancestors did, says Branko Čotar.

### **Wine country in progress**

Father and son are convinced that they have some of the best growing conditions. Karst is characterized by acid rain degradation of the soft stone, but the remaining land is very fertile. The sun is generous to the winegrowers of Karst. The Čotar family village, Komen, has 100 houses, 70 of them has their own vineyard and wine.

Slovenia has long traditions in wine production and the wine producing and wine culture are stronger than ever. The country has 376 wineries spread over 14 districts, and wine-loving tourists can follow no fewer than 89 wine routes to see the beautiful landscapes and taste the wines.

