Guide to Slovenian Wine Regions and Slovenian Wines

sloveniafood.com
The tradition of producing and drinking wine in Slovenia has been a long one. Wine enthusiasts have been growing wine grapes of numerous varieties in Slovenian lands for over 2000 years. Today, the most renowned Slovenian wine producers are known internationally and their wines are sold throughout Europe, USA, China and many other parts of the world.

Even though a small country with a population of only 2 million, Slovenia produces over 80 million litres of wine every year, which places it among the top wine-producing countries per capita in the world.

Slovenia boasts three major wine-growing regions: Podravje region in the east, Posavje region in south-east Slovenia and Primorska region in the west. But fine wine lovers as we are, quality wines are made throughout the country in dozens of places, so connoisseurs further divide this three major wine-growing regions into various districts, each one with its unique wine traditions and characteristics.

This short guide will take you through all these wonderful wine-growing places and their most known flavours. As customary in most wine-producing countries of the world, Slovenian wines usually carry names of the grape variety when varietal; when blended, they carry local names or names of the areas where they are produced.

One last thing before you immerse yourself into the world of Slovenian wines: remember, for Slovenian wine enthusiasts, a glass of wine is always half full!

**White wine is more popular in Slovenia than red wine: white wines represent almost two thirds of Slovenian total wine production and red wines only slightly more than one quarter. The rest? Sparkling wines and rosé wines.**
Primorska Wine-Growing Region

Primorska is a region in the southwest of Slovenia, bordering on Italy to the west and the Adriatic Sea to the south-west. Boasting the warmest climate in Slovenia (sub-Mediterranean climate), special kinds of soil and unique combination of Alpine climate influences, Primorska is an ideal location for wine growing.

Over 20 wine grape varieties are grown in Primorska - red varieties, such as Barbera, Merlot, Refošk (Refosco) and Cabernet Sauvignon, are predominant in the districts of Kras (Karst) and Slovenska Istra (Slovenian Istria), while white varieties, such as Zelen, Rebula (Ribolla) and Sauvignon, are more common in Goriška Brda and Vipavska Dolina (Vipava Valley).

Winerys from Primorska region are well-known all over Europe and have also been conquering the exquisite tastes of North American wine markets in the past decades - some of them have even been ranked among top 100 wineries in the world multiple times by the prestigious Wine & Spirits magazine.
Goriška Brda

Goriška Brda, a hilly region in the westernmost part of Slovenia, offer amazing natural beauty and a pleasant microclimate, so it is no wonder that the wine grapes grown in this area can be turned into fantastic wines. Although Goriška Brda offer a wide variety of fine wines, both varietal and blended, their best known products are certainly varietal Rebula and Sauvignonasse.

**Rebula (Ribolla)**

Although originating from Greece, Rebula is considered a local variety since it has been cultivated on Slovenian soil ever since the 13th century. Rebula wines are cherished for their full-bodied flavour and aroma, and are produced by almost all well-known wineries of the area.

**Sauvignonasse (Sauvignon vert, Tokaj, Tocai Friulano)**

Once known as Tokaj, Sauvignonasse is a relatively new (only a decade old) name among Slovenian wines. But its centuries old tradition in Goriška Brda is clearly shown in its proven almond and flowers infused taste which is well on its way towards a better recognition outside Slovenian borders, too.
Kras is one of the smallest of the 9 wine-growing districts of Slovenia with only 700 hectares of vineyards, but what it lacks in size it easily makes up in special natural conditions which guarantee an unforgettable experience, regardless of whether we are talking about this region’s landscape or the taste of its wines. Dry climate, strong winds and special red soil known as *terra rosa* serve as the base for renowned wine varieties such as autochthonous Teran (Terrano) and Vitovska Grganja.

**Teran (Terrano)**
Produced from the Refošk grape, this traditional red wine is the pride of the Kras region. Its intensive ruby-red colour, forest-fruits taste and lactic-acid richness make it a definite number one choice of the region and one of the best known wines in the country.

**Vitovska Grganja**
Almost forgotten until recently and now re-established as one of Slovenia’s natural treasures, this autochthonous grape variety grows only in this particular region of the world - on only about 60 hectares of vineyards. Vitovska Grganja from the Kras region is a dry varietal white wine which offers the pristine taste of Slovenia.
The sea, almost constant presence of the warm sun and the relaxed lifestyle of its population is what makes Slovenska Istra a truly special part of Slovenia. Although its wineries are also renowned for producing international varietal wines such as Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, there is no doubt that the true taste of Slovenska Istra can be found in the red Refošk and the white Malvazija (Malvasia) wines.

Refošk (Refosco)
Made out of the autochthonous Refošk grape variety, the Refošk varietal wines are the pride of Slovenska Istra. Ruby-red colour with hints of violet and refreshing flavour of berries have won the hearts of Slovenian wine enthusiasts long ago and made Slovenska Istra an important place on the European wine map.

Malvazija (Malvasia)
When it comes to white wines, there is really only one choice for Slovene Istrians - Malvazija. This golden-yellow, mineral-rich varietal wine with a full aroma is a perfect companion to traditional Istrian foods: fish, crabs, lobsters, shells and other tasty treasures of the deep seas...
Vipavska Dolina / Vipava Valley

Although a valley (“dolina”) by name, Vipavska Dolina boasts numerous plateaus and hills on its edges - ideal spots for wine-growing. Over 2000 hectares of vineyards in Vipavska Dolina are predominantly filled with autochthonous white grape varieties, among which Zelen and Pinela are the most widely spread. It is thus not a surprise that the varietal Zelen and Pinela are also two of the most popular wines from this wine-growing district.

**Zelen**

The greenish hue after which Zelen wines got their name (“zelen” = green), is the foremost unique characteristic of this Vipavska Dolina’s champion. Accompanied by a gentle fruity and flowery aroma and a fresh taste, Zelen usually lights up special occasions of the local population in a dry or a semi-dry style.

**Pinela**

Pinela wines were very popular in the past centuries, but now Pinela wine grape is grown only on about 50 hectares of land in Vipavska Dolina, making the wines of this variety an exclusive treat that is available only to local population - and fine wine connoisseurs across the world, of course...
Posavje Wine-Growing Region

Located in the southeast of Slovenia, Posavje is the smallest of the three wine-growing regions, but its size certainly doesn’t hinder it when it comes to producing fine wines.

In addition to various internationally known wine varieties, such as Modra Frankinja (Blaufraunkisch), Chardonnay, Beli Pinot (Pinot blanc), and exquisite sparkling wines, Posavje also offers special local blended wines which have become a part of the region’s culture: Metliška črnina, Bizeljčan and Cviček, the pride of Dolenjska’s blended wines.

Posavje wine-growing region consists of three major districts: Dolenjska, Bizeljsko - Sremič and Bela Krajina.

Did you know that Slovenian wine producers grow 52 different varieties of wine grapes?
Dolenjska

The biggest wine-growing district by area is also one of the seven official regions of Slovenia. Its diversity of landscape and countless small vineyard cottages, known as “zidanice” in Slovene, make Dolenjska one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the country, especially for wine lovers. When in Dolenjska, there is really just one answer to the question “Which wine would you recommend?” Cviček!

Cviček
A unique mixture of approximately 65-70% red grape varieties and 30-35% white grape varieties, Cviček is a real local treasure (produced only in this region) and one of the most drinkable wines available anywhere in the world. Its relatively low alcohol content (8-10%) and simple yet highly enjoyable sour taste make it one of the most popular wines in Slovenia.
Bizeljsko - Sremič

Wine growing district of Bizeljsko - Sremič consists of two smaller wine-producing areas, Bizeljsko and Sremič, and lies on the very southeast of Slovenia, bordering on Croatia. Bizeljsko - Sremič wine-growing district has established itself as one of the leading producers of sparkling wines in Slovenia in recent years, and its blended wines, such as Bizeljčan, have been adored among the local population for decades.

Bizeljčan beli / Bizeljčan rdeči
Bizeljčan is so popular among the locals that producers simply have to offer it in two variations: as a dry red blended wine (Bizeljčan rdeči) and a dry white blended wine (Bizeljčan beli) - to please all tastes. And Bizeljčan wines certainly do that by offering a high-quality blend of various exquisite wine varieties that are grown in Bizeljsko.

Sparkling wines
Dozens of wine-growers in Bizeljsko - Sremič know how to produce an exquisite sparkling wine, but many Slovenian and foreign sparkling wine connoisseurs consider Istenič the best of them. Istenič’s winery has received numerous international awards in the last two decades and uses innovative high-technology to produce the best sparkling wines - white, rosé and red.
Bela Krajina

Bela Krajina is a picturesque karst region, bordering on the Kolpa River, the Kočevje Forest and the sunny Gorjanci Hills, which enable the local population to successfully grow various sorts of wine grapes. Wine producers use these natural gifts to produce amazing blended wines, which are popular well beyond the borders of this small wine-growing district. Among them, the best known are the red Metliška črnina and the white Belokranjec.

Metliška črnina
Metliška črnina is the champion among red wines in Bela Krajina - it is produced from practically all red grape varieties that grow in the area, offering a deep scarlet-red colour with violet hues and a pristine taste of the region: dry, gently bitter and full of flavour.

Belokranjec
Named after its homeland, Belokranjec offers the best of practically all white wine grapes grown in the area: Beli Pinot, Kraljevina, Chardonnay, Sauvignon, Renski Rizling (Rhine Riesling), Zeleni Silvanec (Grüner Silvaner), Sivi Pinot (Pinot gris) and others, all blended into a quality dry white wine with a harmony of varietal tastes.
Podravje Wine-Growing Region

Podravje is a large region in north-eastern Slovenia, with famous Drava River, which flows through Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary, and eventually joins the majestic flow of the Danube River.

Its typical Pannonian relief with frequent slopes is ideal for wine-growing, so it is no surprise that Podravje wine-growing region boasts the biggest total vineyard area in Slovenia - almost 10,000 hectares, divided among two main wine-growing districts (which are both also official regions of Slovenia): Štajerska and Prekmurje.

Although two separate wine-growing districts, Štajerska and Prekmurje offer similar wine grape varieties - mostly white, such as Laški Rizling (Italian Riesling), Renski Rizling, Šipon (Furmint), Chardonny and Traminec (Traminer), although also wines made from red grape varieties have earned acclaim from the international wine community on many occasions.

There are over 20,000 hectares of vineyards in Slovenia (about 1% of total surface area) and around 28,000 registered producers of wine grapes. Not bad for a small country, huh?
The wine-growing district of Štajerska is much bigger in terms of vineyards area: it boasts around 8000 hectares, while Prekmurje only has around 1000 hectares. Relatively big cities and towns (for Slovenian standards), such as Maribor, Ptuj, Gornja Radgona, Ljutomer and Ormož, offer Štajerska wine-growing district a lot of opportunities for bigger production of wine, and numerous hills of the area are considered to be among the best in the world for vineyards. The city of Maribor is also the home of the oldest vine in the world, cunningly named the Old Vine, which has been bearing grapes for over 400 years and is used in various popular Slovenian blended wines.

Although Prekmurje wine-growing district is much smaller that its western neighbour Štajerska, it has been offering many high-quality wines over the past few decades and put its name firmly on the map of important wine-growers in Slovenia. Located between Austria, Hungary and Croatia, it offers an international taste that has produced many exquisite wines from well-known grape varieties such as Laški Rizling, Chardonnay, Modra Frankinja in Modri Pinot (Pinot noir).
Laški Rizling (Welschriesling, Italian Riesling)
Laški Rizling is the most common grape in Podravje, so it is not surprising that it is also the base for the most popular wine in this region. Expressing a full taste of various fruits, fresh and well-balanced, Laški Rizling is a quality Slovenian white wine that can be served for any occasion.

Renski Rizling (Rhine Riesling, Riesling)
Mineral-rich and often with a typical peachy nose, Renski Rizling is an elegant, classical choice, known for its longevity. It can be preserved in a bottle for years, so it is a popular choice for both collectors and occasional wine drinkers.

Šipon (Furmint)
Šipon wine variety has a long tradition in Slovenian lands; according to the legend, it got its Slovenian name from Napoleon’s soldiers who passed our little country and commended the wine with the words “si bon” (so good). With its great aging potential, Šipon is a white wine that can be enjoyed for a long time!

Modra Frankinja (Blaufränkisch)
One of the most popular red wine varieties in central Europe has a strong presence also in Štajerska and Prekmurje. Strong, rich and fruity, Slovenian Modra Frankinja wines are a sophisticated choice, believed to bring not only a refreshing pleasure, but also several health benefits.
**Traminec (Traminer)**
Rich, fragrant Traminec is one of the most recognizable wines in Slovenia and a special pride of the Štajerska wine-growing district. A favourite for special occasions, Štajerska’s Traminec most often comes as a semi-sweet or sweet delight and is a high quality wine that goes extremely well with desserts.

**Sparkling wines**
Wine producers from Štajerska are also very adept when it comes to sparkling wines - rosé and white sparkling wines of various dry and sweet styles are the treasure of the region. Popular across Slovenia and outside of its borders as a special-occasion refreshment, sparkling wines from Štajerska are produced from various internationally known wine varieties such as Chardonnay, Beli Pinot, Modri Pinot and Sauvignon.
This e-book was created by and is available for download at SloveniaFood.com.

SloveniaFood.com is a brand created by a young Slovenian company on a mission to promote well-known Slovenian foods and drinks throughout Europe and other continents of the world. By offering both traditional Slovenian culinary delights and the 20th-century nostalgia from the shelves of Slovenian stores, SloveniaFood.com is here to impress with real Slovenian taste.

Whether we are talking about exquisite wines from all wine-growing regions of Slovenia, other popular alcoholic beverages and soft drinks, delicious meat products, tasty condiments, natural honey, hand-produced sea salt or high-quality oils of various sorts - SloveniaFood.com has it all!


Thank you for eating and drinking Slovenian!