

GASTRONOMIC SPECIALITIES OF SLOVENIA

A sumptuous celebration of good food and wine

Twenty-four gastronomic regions join forces with the wines of three wine regions

Slovenia is an extraordinary geographical crossroads: it has the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, the Pannonian Plain and the Karst. It has extensive forests and thousands of hill vineyards. It has rivers and lakes with indigenous animal species. As well as this natural diversity, it is a European cultural crossroads where the Slavonic, Germanic, Romance and Finno-Ugric worlds all meet. Special natural characteristics and historical contact with other nations can also be tasted in its cuisine. Slovenia has created its own culinary specialities by preserving its own cuisine and giving a distinctly Slovenian twist to much that it has imported from elsewhere.

Just as visitors to Slovenia are surprised to find utterly different views within short distances of each other, so they are surprised by local gastronomic specialities. In an attempt to create order from this abundance, experts have divided Slovenia into 24 gastronomic regions with their own distinct specialities. For the time being they have credited them with **176 different dishes created using locally typical methods** and, for the most part, locally produced ingredients.

TYPICALLY SLOVENIAN? YES, BUT ALWAYS LOCALLY SPECIAL.

With such a wealth of flavours, it is difficult to talk about dishes being typical of the whole of Slovenia. But they do exist! Many people connect Slovenia with **potica** – a kind of rolled cake which, however, has different locally characteristic fillings in different parts of the country: from walnut to herbs, from poppy seeds to cracklings. Another typical dish is **štruklji** – but there are over 100 variants! Salads are popular all over Slovenia, but whereas in the east of the country they are dressed with excellent **pumpkin-seed oil**, in the west, on the Adriatic coast, the dressing of choice is **extra virgin olive oil**. Many parts of the country have their own typical **cured meat products**: In the Karst these include Karst ham, *panceta* and *zašink*; in the Savinja Valley and the surrounding area there is *Savinjski želodec*; and in the east of the country there is Prekmurje ham and meat from the *tünka* or lard barrel. In central Slovenia you simply have to try **Carniolan sausage** – a characteristic semi-perishable product traditionally served with sauerkraut. In many places you will be surprised by **dishes made with wild ingredients**: asparagus in Istria, forest fruits in the Pohorje hills, and mushrooms all over Slovenia, prepared in a variety of ways.

FOOD WITH A CERTIFIED ORIGIN

When it comes to food, Slovenes trust their own local products perhaps more than the majority of other EU citizens do – even in the case of industrially produced food. Particular attention is paid to traditional food products and products with a certified origin. Foodstuffs with **protected designation of origin** (the PDO symbol in the European DOOR database) include, besides extra virgin olive oil from Slovenian Istria, a range of typical Slovenian cheeses (Nanos, Tolminc, Bovec, spicy Mohant from Bohinj) and honey (Kočevje honey, Karst honey), Prekmurje ham and salt from the Sečovelje saltworks. **Protected geographical indication** (PGI) status has been granted to *Prleška tünka* (meat from the lard barrel), pumpkin-seed oil from Štajerska and Prekmurje, Carniolan sausage, Karst ham, *Kraški zašink* (cured neck meat) and *Kraška panceta* (cured pork belly). **Traditional speciality guaranteed** (TSG) status is held by *Idrijski žlikrofi* (a kind of ravioli), *Prekmurska gibanica* (a characteristically rich layer cake) and various flatbreads.

Superior quality is also guaranteed by other symbols such as the Golden Grain symbol for top-quality veal, the Golden Hive symbol for high-quality honey and a number of other symbols that can be obtained by foodstuffs that meet the required quality criteria.

WINES FROM THE HOME OF THE OLDEST VINE IN THE WORLD

Noble wines have been carefully cultivated in Slovenia for centuries. This also explains the survival of the world's oldest vine: **a Modra Kavčina vine over 400 years old that grows in the centre of Maribor** – Slovenia's second-largest city. Ancient traditions are also demonstrated by many notable wine cellars, among them one of the longest tunnel-type cellars in this part of Europe, also located in Maribor. Slovenia is divided into three wine regions consisting of a total of 14 wine districts. Their attractiveness is further increased by 20 wine routes.

In the east of the country is the **Podravje** wine region, famous for its white wines and, in particular, a number of special *Prädikat* wines classified as *Spätlese* ("late harvest"), *Beerenauslese* ("select berry harvest"), *Eiswein* ("ice wine") and *Trockenbeerenauslese* ("select dry berry harvest").

The **Posavje** wine region extends along the southern edge of Slovenia. Its best-known wine is Cviček – a wine with recognised traditional denomination status which has a low alcohol content and a characteristic acidulous flavour. This region also offers other pleasantly light red and white wines with characteristic acidity and a delicate bouquet.

The west of Slovenia falls into the **Primorska** wine region, famous for its excellent reds, such as Refosco, Merlot and Cabernet. Characteristic old white varieties such as the autochthonous Ribolla (Rebula), Zelen and Pinela are also increasingly establishing themselves.

THE PLEASURE IS IN THE RIGHT COMBINATIONS – IN GOOD TRADITIONAL *GOSTILNE*

The most genuine flavours of Slovenia are provided by choice dishes accompanied by the right drinks. As well as wine, Slovenia offers an abundance of natural mineral waters. The best known are Radenska and Donat – the former with a high natural CO₂ content and the latter with an exceptionally high magnesium content. The appetite can be stimulated or the digestion facilitated by Slovenia's excellent spirits and liqueurs, including *sadjevec* (fruit brandy) from Dolenjska, *tepkovec* (pear brandy) from Gorenjska, *slivovec* (plum brandy) from Brkini, *brinjevec* (juniper brandy) from the Karst and rakia from Kostel.

Traditional *gostilne* – temples of genuine Slovenian hospitality – as well as select restaurants and numerous farm tourism establishments serve up the perfect combinations of food and drink for guaranteed gastronomic pleasure.

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