



The breathtaking Ljutomer-Ormož region of Slovenia

Something new from the Old World.

p&f wineries is taking on the challenge of bringing the best of Slovenia to the world.

Running a family winery is a challenge at the best of times – but when your land is taken away by communists, it's a downright nightmare.

This happened to many land-owning families across Eastern Europe during communist times. Most people simply grieved for their loss and moved on. But Martin Puklavec not only rolled with the punches, he worked with the winery to improve all its vineyards – and then, years later, his son, Vladimir Puklavec, bought back not only the lost vineyard, but all the shares of the cooperative cellar of Jeruzalem Ormož.

HISTORICAL REBIRTH

"My dad was approached by a school friend in 2008 and this friend told him that the shares for the co-op were for sale," explains Tatjana Puklavec. "He was just retiring and said 'no', but then he thought 'I can just take a look'."

Vladimir walked the vineyards, to get a feel of whether the grapes would be good

enough to make the quality of wine that he wanted. Once he was certain, he asked two friends to invest in the adventure, and they agreed.

The Puklavec family had historically owned a vineyard, which the communists seized and made part of the cooperative. But Martin Puklavec happened to be an oenologist who had been secretary of the cooperative since 1934, and regardless of his own feelings about the loss of his family land, he made it his mission to improve the overall quality of the nationalised vineyards, and the wine made from their grapes.

"My grand-dad was a very visionary man," says Tatjana. "He looked at the 40 different wine cellars in the vineyards, and said 'why don't we just build one big wine cellar, to be more efficient so we can also sell to the export markets?' He built a seven-storey, gravity-fed wine cellar in a mountain."

Vladimir ultimately moved to Germany after his studies, and then raised his family. Before deciding to buy the shares of the

ABOUT SLOVENIAN WINES

Slovenia, a fresh and unspoiled country boasting spectacular forests and mountains, lies in Central Europe, and is bordered by Austria, Italy, Croatia, Hungary and the Adriatic Sea. Wine has deep roots in the country, having been produced continuously for 2,400 years.

Winemaking has taken place in the northeastern part of the country – the Ljutomer-Ormož region – since pre-Roman times. Legend has it that the village of Jeruzalem was so named by crusaders who stopped on their way to the Holy Land. Hospitable locals gave them wine – which convinced them to stay. Jeruzalem remains a strikingly beautiful place, with spectacular views over the dramatic terraced vineyards.

AT A GLANCE:

- Winemaking has been a part of the Puklavac family tradition since 1934
- p&f wineries is a caretaker of 1,100 ha of vines, in both Slovenia and Macedonia
- More than half of the vines are grown on steep, terraced slopes
- The hills are between 250 m and 350 m high
- All p&f wineries' grapes are harvested by hand, with an average yield of 2 kg per vine
- The wines are regular medal winners at the world's most prestigious wine competitions, including the Decanter World Wine Awards, the International Wine & Spirits Competition, the China Wine & Spirits Award, and Mundus Vini, among many others

cooperative cellar in early 2009, he paid his daughter a visit. Tatjana had worked in international marketing and sales for a decade, and when her father outlined his plans to buy back the vineyards, she quit her job on the spot. "My husband jumped in and we started at the kitchen table."

After the shares of the cooperative cellar of Jeruzalem Ormož were purchased in May 2009 and the company was renamed p&f wineries (for Puklavac and Friends), Vladimir and his daughters Tatjana and Kristina got to work. With her strong international background, Tatjana has been able to bring a professionalism to the sales and marketing. "We are very active on the markets where we are going. We analyse markets and have a very strong launch plan. We talk to the press and the buyers, and make them interested in our product."

One major supermarket buyer has already told her that p&f wineries is a valued supplier precisely because their approach is so proactive and professional – and, of course, because they supply such excellent wines.



The Puklavac family believes in sharing good things with others.

And the strategy has paid off, with exports soaring to 70% of production in less than six years of operation.

AT A GLANCE

Situated in the Ljutomer-Ormož region, in the northeastern part of Slovenia, p&f wineries has 650 ha of vineyards of their own to draw on, plus relationships with grape growers across another 450 ha. The land is terraced, making machine harvesting virtually impossible, ensuring that all grapes are hand picked. The soil is rich in minerals, combining chalk, calcium carbonate and marl with calcium-rich sandstone, providing the perfect subsoil for vines.

Oenologist Mitja Herga makes wines from the wide variety of grapes grown in the region: Sauvignon Blanc, Traminer, Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay and Furmint, among others. Astonishingly for such a young winery, the wines have already picked up medals at some of the world's most prestigious competitions, including the Decanter World Wine Awards, the International Wine & Spirits Competition, the China Wine & Spirits Award, and Mundus Vini, among many others.

"The good thing – and the challenging thing! – about Slovenia is the diversity of grapes and styles," says Tatjana. "We don't have just one grape to represent the country."

What they do have is fresh wines with excellent minerality, because of the cool climate and steep slopes. Slovenia remains unspoiled, with 70% of the landmass covered in forests. "It's really green and hilly," says

Tatjana. "And beautiful. Within a three hour drive you can experience every landscape, from the ocean to the mountains."

After they began exporting their white wines, they began fielding increasing requests for red wines, on top of the small amounts of Pinot Noir and Blaufränkisch they produce in Slovenia. So instead of trying to extract red wines from a cool-climate area perfect for delicate reds and mineral whites, they bought 80 ha of vineyards in Macedonia. Today, they have a winery there that produces Vranec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

The family's motto is: "The best things in life should be shared with others." Part of their mission is to put Slovenian wines on the map, and boost Slovenian winemaking. They have already created 150 sustainable jobs for local people.

Although Slovenia is still largely unknown, the rarity of its wines has proved a selling point, as buyers enjoy having special, high-quality wines to offer their customers which can't be found in their rivals' portfolios.

"Many people say the same thing to us," says Tatjana. "Finally! Something new from the Old World."



p&f wineries

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