

It is this attachment that is depicted in the many products displayed and sold at the FESTIVAL OF THE OLD VINE.

In addition to the singing and dancing at the FESTIVAL, the sights and smells of Slovenian cuisine fill Glavni Trg.



Hanging cauldrons filled with traditional Slovenian soups, stews and sausages are sampled by visitor along with a variety of wines from the Stajerska region of Slovenia. The cooking highlight during the Festival is the European journalists championship in cooking game goulash. Goulash is a type of stew which contains nature's plants and "game animal meat."

If one knew nothing about Slovenian cuisine, the FESTIVAL OF THE OLD VINE features the traditional favorites of Slovenia: ričet (barley gruel), struklji (dumplings), jota (vegetable soup) and rich deserts such as gibanica. Gibanica is a layered dessert of lemon, walnuts, apples, poppy seeds along with two layers of creme cheese. This dessert is a natural treasure of the Prekmurje region which is located in the far eastern corner of Slovenia bordering Hungary.



The FESTIVAL OF THE OLD VINE truly reflects the rich culture of Slovenia and shares this culture with its neighboring countries of Hungary, Italy, Austria and Croatia. The nine day program includes International Organic Farm Day, Wine and Food Routes of neighboring countries, The Old Vine for children, Gala day on the river Drava and Raftsman's Baptism, along with concerts and popular music events.

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FESTIVAL STARE TRTE Or OLD VINE FESTIVAL

A Celebration of the Slovenian Culture



The Slovenian culture is steeped in a rich tradition of festivals, celebrations, and holidays. This rich tradition reflects, not only the cycle of seasons, but the diversity of its people and their surroundings. The FESTIVAL OF THE OLD VINE is one of the most important festivals in Slovenia and is directly linked to native traditions of wine making, cuisine, organic farming, song, dance, and beekeeping.

The festival traces its roots back centuries ago when in 1335 the wine trade in the then Hapsburg Empire was concentrated in Maribor in present day Slovenia. Festivals and Fairs have been popular for many centuries in the Slovenian culture. The Festival is held in Maribor the last two weeks of September when it honors this 400 year old grape vine. (oldest living grape vine in the world)

The most important event of the festival is the grape gathering ceremony which occurs on



the final day of the Festival. The mayor of Maribor, considered the “ceremonial” master of the old vine, determines that the grapes are ripe and he orders the grape harvest to begin. Grape gatherers from “Sampetra” near Maribor collect, weigh, measure the sugar content, grind, press, pour into containers and hand over to the care of the Meranovo Estate.

By the Old Vine at the end of the grape harvest, the last wooden tub of grapes symbolically meets with the first tub of manure, as “we have to return to the Old Vine that which with the grapes we took away.” The youngest grape gatherer puts a grape on a vine shoot so that the vine will drink its own juice.

Grafts of the Old Vine have been given to different dignitaries from around the world. Pope John Paul II was given one of the first grafts and it is bearing fruit in Rome.

Other scions have been planted in such places as the



Wine Museum of Paris and in neighboring countries surrounding Slovenia. This year’s

scion is planted in the Bled Castle in Slovenia itself. Receiving a bottle of this noble wine “modra kavcina” were such people as Milan Kucan, first President of Slovenia; Bill Clinton, former president of the United States and Japanese emperor Akihito.

BEE KEEPING

Part of the FESTIVAL OF THE OLD VINE is the celebration of Bee Keeping. Beekeeping goes back to the days when people still had no refined sugar; there was hardly a farm in Slovenia that did not keep bees in addition to other domestic animals. Slovenia is the homeland of the Carniolan grey bee or “Kranjska Sivka”. It is known for being hard



Kranjska Sivka

working, gentle, and having an excellent sense of orientation. This bee race has spent hundreds of years adapting to Slovenia’s climate and forage conditions.

Slovenia is the only EU member state that has protected its indigenous bee race, which means no other bee race is allowed to be bred here.

There is a saying that it is “Slovenian” to be a beekeeper. In fact there are four bee keepers for every thousand Slovenians, which is a world record. Even though there is no direct connection of the honey bee pollinating grapes (grapes tend to be wind pollinated), the Slovenian



culture values beekeeping as a balance in nature. The pollination of wild and cultivated plants is by far the greatest contribution to food production.

There are more than 22,000 different species of organisms living in Slovenia thanks to the pollination by the Carniolan grey bee. From an economic perspective, the value of the pollination amounts to 30x value of honey bee products. During the Festival there are different types of honey, beeswax candles, honey liquor and a variety of products related to apothecary (medical applications of honey bee). The bee products are not medicines but they can serve as an important and beneficial part of medical treatment and as dietary supplements.

Bees in Slovenia were kept in low wooden hives which were stacked



close together in several long rows. These were known as Carniolan hives. A little wooden house was built for them in a protected part of the orchard, where all the bee colonies were kept under the same roof, protected from snow and cold in the winter and scorching heat in the summer.

Today they have become one of Slovenia’s identifying features just like churches on the hilltops and hay racks around the villages. In the mid-18th century a unique folk art emerged in what is now Slovenia - painted beehive fronts. Simple bee houses became true art galleries depicting historical events, Bible stories and everyday village life.

Probably no other nation in the world is as emotionally attached to bees as the Slovenians.