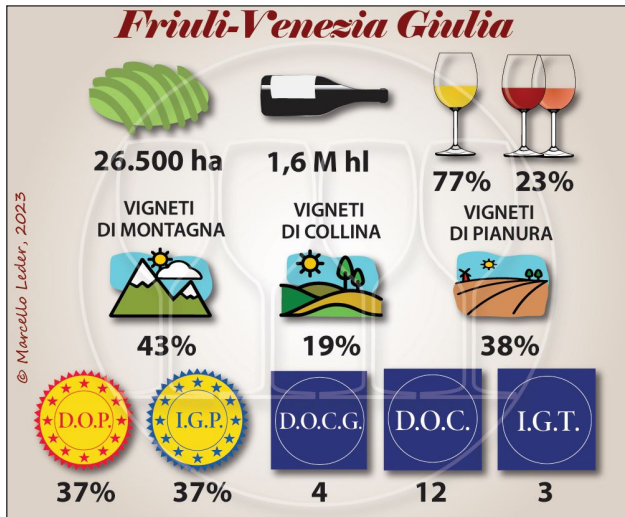
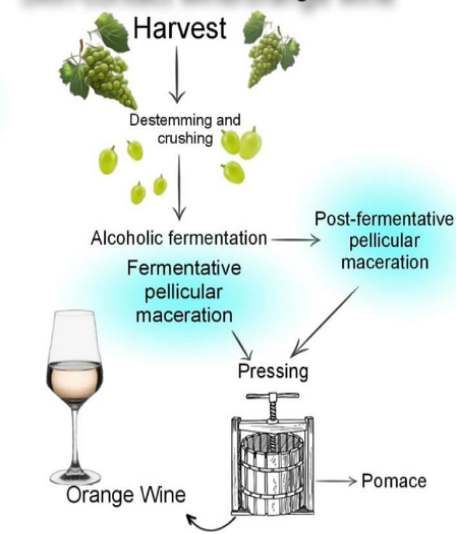


FRIULI & SLOVENIA



Skin-contact wine/orange wine



SLOVENIAN WINE SECTOR (census 2022–2024)

Vineyard area: 14,736 ha (100% on slopes)
Production: 70% White / 30% Red

Primorska (West - Coastal)

Area: 6,332 ha (approx. 43%)
Av. estate size: 0.54 ha
Vine age: 28% > 30 y.o.
Climate: Mediterranean

Sub-Regions

- Goriška Brda (1,992 ha)
- Vipava Valley (3,005 ha)
- Karst / Kras (753 ha)
- Slovenian Istria (2,331 ha)



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Zürich, May 7th

LES DÉGUSTATIONS WINE ROSE

ITALO - SLOVENIAN BOUNDARIES: THE RENAISSANCE (2000s - 2020s)

INTRO: The Border That Never Was

The wine glass before us holds more than just grapes; it holds a 20th century of geopolitical fracture, ideological divergence, and eventual reconnection. To taste the wines of the Friuli-Slovenia border is to drink the history of the region itself—a landscape where the border line, drawn in ink and blood, has often felt more like a myth than a reality.

From Shared Roots to Divided Paths

For centuries, the soil of the two regions was a single entity. Under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which held the Slovenian lands since the 14th century and Friuli since the 16th, the community was sharing the same cultural and agrarian life. Vineyards were integrated into a polycultural model, interwoven with cattle breeding and pasture. They worked on field blends (several different grape varieties planted together), a reflection of a landscape where culture and language flowed freely across what are now hard borders.

The fracture began with the First World War. The Isonzo front devastated the region, turning the hills of Gorizia and Kobarid into a charnel house. The subsequent Treaty of Rapallo (1920) and the rise of Fascism in Italy shattered the unity of the region. With over 300,000 Slovenians suddenly living within the Italian state, a brutal policy of assimilation followed. Language was banned, names were Italianized, and the cultural fabric was forcibly homogenized. This trauma was deepened by the Second World War and the subsequent Treaty of Paris (1947), which physically severed properties and vineyards. The Iron Curtain descended, not just as a political barrier, but as a viticultural divider that would last for decades.

The Great Divergence: 1947-1991

The post-war era created two distinct viticultural identities, born of opposing political systems.

In Friuli, the region was rebuilt under the Marshall Plan, embracing a liberal, capitalist direction. The economic boom of the 1950s and 60s transformed the middle class and the wine industry simultaneously. Pioneers like Mario Schiopetto introduced temperature-controlled stainless steel fermentation. This "Cold Revolution" produced the modern Italian white: clean, crisp, and aromatic. Pinot Grigio became a global blockbuster, and the region codified its excellence through the DOC system, focusing on precision, clarity, and technical « perfection ».

In Slovenia, the narrative was one of collectivization. Under Tito's socialist regime, smallholders were restricted to tiny plots (often under 2 hectares) and forced to deliver their harvest to state cooperatives (kleti). The focus was on volume and standardization at the expense of quality. The result was a fragmented landscape of small vineyards (< 2ha per owning), disconnected from the global market and isolated from the technological advancements happening just a few kilometers away in the West.

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The Spark: 1991 and the Return to Origins

The turning point arrived with the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and Slovenia's declaration of independence in 1991. The "Ten-Day War" was brief, but the political shift was seismic. The privatization of land allowed Slovenian winegrowers to reclaim their vineyards and their destiny.

Simultaneously, on the Italian side, a counter-revolution was brewing. In Oslavia, Joško Gravner began experimenting with Georgian amphorae since he got back from his exploration of the region in 1989. Rejecting the steel and temperature control that had defined the region, Gravner returned to the "womb of the earth," fermenting native grapes like Ribolla Gialla in clay jars with prolonged skin maceration. This was not merely a technical choice; it was a philosophical return to the roots of winemaking, a rejection of industrialization in favor of terroir and tradition.

This movement, born in the shadow of the border, ignited a transnational fire. The "orange wine" revolution spread from Gravner's cellar in Collio (the Italian side) to Brda (the Slovenian side), and then to Kras (the Karst). Born from the same soil, it became a shared language.

Terroir: Bora, Ponka

The region is defined by a harsh environment: the Bora, a violent, cold wind that sweeps down from the Julian Alps. In the past, vines were bush-trained to survive this wind; today, they are often trained on wires, but the Bora remains a crucial factor. It strips humidity from the air, ensuring the grapes remain perfectly healthy and concentrated—a necessity for the skin maceration that defines these wines.

The soil is the region's second great character. Stretching from the Colli Orientali del Friuli to central Slovenia, the land is a mosaic of sedimentary rocks: clay, limestone, and sandstone. Most distinct is the Ponka (or Opoka in Slovenian), a stratified marl and sandstone that gives the wines their signature salinity and « minerality ». In the Karst, the soil shifts to pure limestone and terra rossa, the home of the balsamic Vitovska and the powerful Teran.

Enjoy the reading !

OUR PROGRAM

Welcome - Collio Friulano 2020 - Il Carpino

Lemon hue

The nose plays with pear flower and rind, some bruised citrus and a lively, tangy freshness. In the mouth it shows linear: the glycerol coats the present acidity melting with a nice fruit intensity, definition and persistence. The finish is defined with no signs of decline from bottle aging.

Wine n.1 - Carso Malvasia Selezione 2015 - Marko Fon

Golden, slightly hazy hue.

The bouquet is slightly funky, with hints of bruised apple and cider, oxidation and volatile acidity in a chaotic and simple interplay. Interesting balsamic - herbal notes that I recall from my youth.

The mouth is more interesting, composed and kept together by a sappy - noble stemmy frame. The viscosity and persistence convey a defined dynamic. The finish is saline, harmonious and consistent.

Wine n.2 - COF Malvasia 2015 - Miani by Enzo Pontoni

Golden hue.

The nose recalls a pastry shop with vanilla - pear and some tropical fruits.

Still restrained and balsamic with barrel aging still present and buttery - dairy notes.

The mouth is quite warm, coating and spheric. The oily texture merges with some oak tannins, noble bitters and sophisticated balsamic elements. A certain fruit sweetness underlines the concentration and clinic maturity of the fruit at harvest time.

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Wine n.3 - COF « Broy » 2010 - Eugenio Collavini

Golden hue

Strawberry, honey and vanilla elements merging with some ripe - evolved tropical fruit, still holding on together.

The mouth seems more fluid, lacking concentration in terms of dry extract.

An elaborate wine making technique meant to please the crowds.

Wine n.4 - COF « Sacrisassi bianco » 1997 - Le Due Terre

Brown amber

The nose is « melted », fully tertiary but still with some life in it.

Chestnut, mushroom, forest honey and underbrush, earth and humous.

The Ribolla seems having the better at this stage.

High acidity, fine texture, juicy - limestone finish for an overall respectable evolution at 30 y.o.

Wine n.5 - Carso Vitovska « Kamen » 2021 - B. Zidarich

Bright gold

Honey, beeswax, crushed limestone, some oak aging complexifying the bouquet that remains pretty pure and poised.

The mouth reveals an interesting texture, refined « white tannins » and a remarkable viscosity. The finish is minty and balsamic on medicinal - mediterranean « maquis ». Fine wine bridging local aesthetics and international understanding.

Wine n.6 - Carso Vitovska « Solo MM17 » 2017 - P. Vodopivec

Brilliant amber hue

On the nose a mature old fruit underpinned by ritual incense and pine resins, sandal wood. The mouth is integer, meaty, sappy and poised...filled with deep energy and a restrained power that shows more in depth than in volume.

Great concentration, balance and a vibrant limestone salinity.

Wine n.7 - Vipavska Dolina Sauvignonasse 2009 - Mlecnik

Amber hue

The nose is wild and expressive, with a high volatile acidity, stemmy / smoked vegetal notes, the typical pyrazine that conveys further freshness and lift.

The mouth evokes the tea tannins, lapsang souchong and a crunchy apricot, still present despite the age. Finish on calcareous - sapid elements.

Wine n.8 - Collio Ribolla Gialla 2016 - Il Carpino

Pale gold in the glass

Autumn scents of underbrush, dried leaves, makeup powder, metallic elements to it. The mouth displays a thick tannic distribution, that remain nonetheless relaxed and ripe at the 10th birthday. Acidity is hidden in the backstage and the saline fish is the main drive.

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Wine n.9 - Vipavska Dolina Ribolla Gialla Selezcia 2009 - Ed. Svetlik

Dark orange hue

The nose sparks with aromas from other realms...cognac aromatics (stewed quince, caramel, vanilla, precious wood), chestnut bark and forest floor.

The mouth is medium bodied but solid, chewy, extracted. Alcohol and acidity are melted with the mellow flesh. The finish tends to be still slightly firm and calls for food.

Wine n.10 - COF Picolit 2013 - Ermacora

Amber - orange visual.

The bouquet ranges from forest honey to maple sirup, sandal wood and cold ash on a roasted apricot and pastry - viennoiserie.

The texture in mouth is unctuous due to the very high sugar content. Acidity is hidden behind the sweet density of the fruit. The finish is still young in its baby fat and generous with its aromatic intensity.

Overall the balance is appreciable, the aromatics distinctive...happy to have tasted a rare specimen on Picolit !

Wine n.11 - Carso Malvasia 2003 - J. Rencel

The hue is brownish to orange, deep and viscous.

Nose is full power, with plenty of youth and intensity.

The wine almost didn't move from my last tasting in 2014.

Smoke, green tea infusion, rose hips jam, dried papaya, the whole supported by a high volatile acidity.

The mouth is intense, defined and vertical, with the sugar content (200g+) totally balanced by the VA and charred bitters.

Amazing wine with an eternal life ahead.

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CONCLUSIONS

We have been tasting wines spanning the 1990s to the 2010s, tracing the journey from the initial sparks of experimentation with maceration techniques to today's mature styles.

Recalling these wines in their youth, after a 10 years rest many displayed a certain poise and relaxation, where edgy contours and rustic tannins were gradually tamed by time. They evolved into wise, accessible wines, enjoyable even without food. Evolution also worked on the aromatics, which developed positively to offer a complex array of tertiary notes. This demonstrates that orange wines can offer a fascinating tasting window and remarkable shelf life. Styles varied significantly depending on grape variety, maceration time and aging vessels. Nowadays, maceration is practiced by producers worldwide, and it is truly splendid to see the sheer variety of expressions that can be achieved. What is required is cleanliness, observation, and confidence in both vineyard work and time. Is it compatible with modern standards (at this price range) ?

The potential results are immense. A white wine at 12.5% ABV that remains completely stable in the bottle, with no overwhelming volatile acidity (no nail polish or acetic notes), and a potential for further aging of 20+ years is a positioning that very few other wines can boast.

Stay with us for the next episode, and above all, remain curious!

Warm regards, and see you for the next deep dive into wine history!

Michele



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