

Wine Tour de Slavonia

By: Mirena Bagur and Winfried Burke



All photos by *Croatian Premium Wine Imports, Inc.*: from the Golden Valley to the most Eastern vineyard in Ilok, we were enjoying Slavonian hills while tasting wine and food, and loving interaction with people. “Nice to See You Slavonia” – we will be back!

With Graševina representing one out every four vines in Croatia and being the most produced wine in Croatia, it felt appropriate to celebrate it by introducing influencing guests from US to the Graševina Festival in Osijek where several Croatian organizations hosted the conference to discuss the past, present and future of the variety.

Hence, we decided to “Head on East,” the cleverly designed marketing campaign by [Slavonian Tourist Board](#) to truly enjoy and explore all gourmet experiences Slavonia has to offer. With three counties, several appellations, and indefinite wine labels later, we can say we were in for a real treat. Most importantly, the people of Slavonia are to be applauded for not only incredibly warm and welcoming hospitality, but also for their expertise in differentiating this experience from the rest of Croatia, so more visitors would come here. We will be back, what about you?

This is a short overview with just a few photos from the inaugural “Croatia Full of Flavors” trip to Slavonia. We hope many other writers will want to visit to get the historical and flavors’ profile of the region and visit Slavonia’s wine roads. We will be writing about each county separately. And, as you can imagine, we are in discussions with various wineries about how to add more Slavonian wines to our portfolio at www.CroatianPremiumWine.com, an online store shipping 70+ Croatian wines to most US states.

Three Counties, Many Appellations, and a Unified Slavonian Hospitality

When thinking of Eastern Croatia, most foreign visitors don't realize there are three distinct regions in Eastern Croatia – Slavonia, Srijem and Baranja. All are blessed with fertile land for many crops, but in addition to “flatlands” there are so many rolling hills where vineyards thrive that is hard to imagine without visiting. The focus of our trip was eno- and gastro-offering of the region, but with the assistance from the Tourism Offices that work together from Požega, Srijem and Osijek-Baranja, we were able to get a rounded cultural experience.

We were so full of impressions of indefinite number of wineries and underground cellars – both very old and ultra-modern ones with vertical archives, with the plethora of traditional and gourmet food offerings, and interactions with people of all walks of life, from tourism to winemaking, that it seemed the trip lasted several weeks.



Photo: Vlado Krauthaker and his team introduced us to more than 30 wines. We were grateful we had a driver!

Graševina is an incredibly versatile grape variety and the top- quality of the wines produced in Slavonia today is obviously prevalent. While a lot of table wine is still produced in Slavonia, we have not visited one winery that did not have great top-quality wine. This is a result of the wine making renaissance in Croatia lead by many experts in the academia as well as result of hard work in the wineries where the young generation of winemakers is carrying the torch started by the legends like Vlado Krauthaker and others.

We tasted a lot of Graševina in various forms - from sparkling to fresh or aged, and ultimately ice wine. Our verdict – join the people in the know who are “Heading on East” to get that full experience. It is hard to describe without sharing ratings of various wines and experiences.

Kutjevo – The Golden Valley

Our first stop was Kutjevo where we visited three large wineries -- [Kutjevo Winery](#), [Krauthaker](#), and [Galić Winery](#).

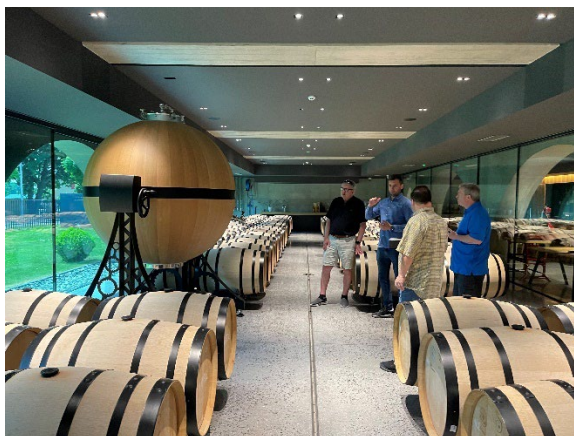
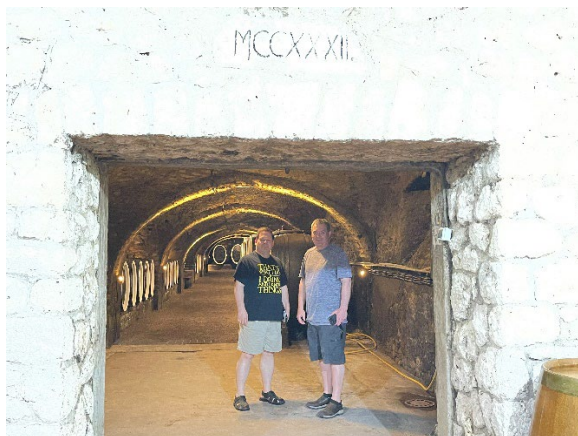


Photo: From the 1232 wine cellar to the ultra-modern winery, the American wine writers, Todd Godbout of [WineCompass](#), and Richard Auffrey, [Passionate Foodie Blog](#) and Sampan, got the front-row seats in exploring Slavonia's wine routes

Vukovarsko-Srijemska Županija

We proceeded to Srijem, where everything seems to be historical and big – from [Iločki Podrumi](#) and its long history as well as recent ingenuity in saving the archived wines, to [TRS Winery](#) with a modern winery built on top of old cellars, to the size of the biggest wooden barrels at [Erdutski Vinogradi](#).

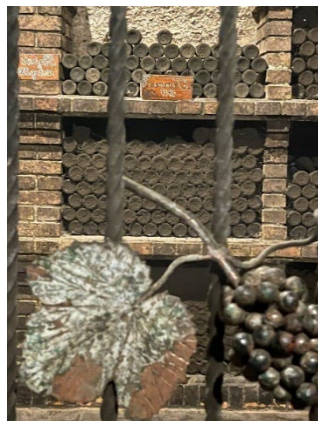


Photo: Iločki Podrumi vertical cellar, Principovac, and Erdutski Vinogradi

We had the chance juxtapose the might of the big wineries with the smaller ones – the most eastern winery in Ilok, [Papak Winery](#), the young lions at the Čobanković and the Buhač wineries who are starting to win many awards, and the charm of the boutique [Antunović Winery](#) in the embrace of the Danube, vines and the wisdom of woman winemaker -- the only winemaker with a Decanter Platinum for Graševina. Yes, platinum!



Photo: Ice wine from Papak Winery and tasting at Antunovic Winery

Baranja

Lastly, we visited Baranja in its mystical glory. From Feričanci and [Enosophia Winery](#) to “Tvrđa” in Osijek, the [Belje Winery](#), both old and new, and finally rural Zmajevac, and the [Josic Winery](#). The allure of this most northeastern part of Croatia is in the combination of their traditional customs with the new twists, and the might of 630 hectares of continuous vineyards.



2 Days in Slavonia Equals 2 Kilos Gained

In addition to wine, we tasted everything from the very traditional “kulen” to the modern representations of the modern food. Regardless of the lighter touches of the gourmet cuisine, we were told by the charming lady at the even more charming [Maksimilian Hotel in Osijek](#), “if visitors didn’t gain at least two kilos over one weekend, Slavonians didn’t do their hosting well.” In retrospect, it appears

we didn't want to offend them – don't want to reveal any numbers, but we both gained at least that much. Mission accomplished Slavonia!



Photo: From old-fashioned, but deliciously spicy “fiš paprikas” at Josić Winery and Restaurant to presentation of a traditionally-inspired dessert with a reduction of Josić Grand Cuvee.

Our trip to Slavonia ended with a well-visited Wine & Art Festival in Osijek with artists expressing their talents and wineries sharing their high-quality wines with the public. It seemed the whole Slavonia came to celebrate. As it should. We hope this will make more Croatians and foreign visitors make their plans to visit and taste all the wines and food. Živjeli!



Authors: Mirena Bagur and Win Burke are co-founders of [Croatian Premium Wine Imports, Inc.](#), a company that distributes, retails online, and educates about Croatian wines in the US, and ships 70+ Croatian wine labels to most US states. The initial team of American wine writers included Todd Godbout of [WineCompass](#), a directory for winery, brewery, and distillery locators, and [BevFluence](#), an organization created *by* beverage content creators, *for* content creators, and Richard Auffrey of [Sampan](#), the New England English-Chinese newspaper, and [Passionate Foodie Blog](#), where he wrote dozens of articles about Croatia and its wine scene before even heading to this trip.

We wanted to thank all organizations and people who helped us put this tour together – from the [Croatian National Tourist Board](#) in the US, and local organizations as well as with [Vina Croatia.hr](#), a segment of Croatian Chamber of Economy, and [Graševina Croatica](#), association of wineries in Slavonia and Danube region.



Authors in front of Principovac Summer Residence