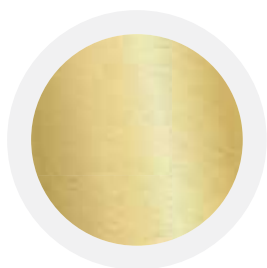


Wines of Macedonia





**UNTAMED...
UNTOLD...
UNCHANGED**

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01.

Our story



Cradle Of Culture, Land Of Nature

The Republic of North Macedonia remains one of Europe's last undiscovered wine countries: a natural paradise of vineyards, mountains, lakes and rivers. Here life moves to a different rhythm, amidst the sprawling grandeur of rich historical ruins and idyllic villages that have remained almost unchanged for generations.

...



...

Throughout the centuries, the geographic region that encompasses today's North Macedonia has been contested by various kingdoms and empires. Macedonia lies at the crossroads of several civilizations which have shaped the country's culture, making it a synthesis of ancient Byzantine, Slavic and Turkish influences.

North Macedonia has been described as the "Pearl of the Balkans" and its diverse terrain matches the country's rich history. Its national parks showcase the true beauty of the landscape.

In the central part of the country, the roadsides almost overflow with dense vineyards and numerous wineries.

These tell the many-centuries-long story of wine, which is inextricably connected to these areas. Wine is embedded in the nation's culture and folklore, and is mentioned in many folk songs, stories, legends and traditions. All the chroniclers of Macedonian folk tales from the 19th and early 20th centuries have recorded that wine was an indispensable part of customs and rituals.

An old proverb says: "If you want to get to know a nation well, sit at their table and drink their wine!!!"



About North Macedonia

Population

2
million

Area

25.7
thousand km²

- ▼ Landlocked country in the heart of the Balkans
- ▼ Border countries: Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Bulgaria & Greece
- ▼ Official language: Macedonian (South Slavic group)



CEFTA member

(regional free wine trade)

Candidate status

for EU

Free trade with EU under EU Agri-Food regulations

Wine Law in MK is fully harmonized with the EU Quality Policy related to wine

- ▼ Currency: Macedonian denar (MKD)
- ▼ Time zone: GMT+1
- ▼ Country code: MK / MKD
- ▼ Internet TLD: .mk
- ▼ Dial code: + 389

- 01** The ancient kingdom of Macedon (sometimes called Macedonia) dates back to 808 BC and was ruled mostly by the founding dynasty of the Argeads, though modern-day North Macedonia is most closely aligned with the ancient kingdom of Paeonia, which lay in the northern part of the kingdom of Macedon. Skopje, the capital, is said to be seven thousand years old.



- 02** The Geographical region of Macedonia is also known as a biblical country as it is mentioned by name in the New Testament more than 15 times. It is also widely believed that some parts of the True Cross, on which Jesus died, can be found in the foundations of the several Macedonian monasteries – St. Jovan Bigorski and St. Georgij Pobedonosec in Debar, as well as St. Bogorodica Prechista in Kichevo.

- 03** There are nearly 1,000 churches and monasteries around the country, while the city of Ohrid was once notable for having 365 churches, one for each day of the year. As a result, it has been nicknamed the Jerusalem of the Balkans.

This region has a long and complex history – the geographical region of Macedonia has been divided between North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania, though North Macedonia sees itself as the spiritual descendant of the historic kingdom, as it covers almost 40% of the region of Macedonia.

- 04** Ohrid is the country's only UNESCO World Heritage site. The city and its lake (Lake Ohrid) are listed for both culture and nature, one of only 28 sites around the world to be recognized for both. Lake Ohrid is not only the oldest but also one of the deepest lakes in Europe - 288 metres deep at its lowest point. Lake Ohrid is estimated to be around 4 million years old and the lake itself and its surrounds are home to more than 200 endemic species.

- 06** Mother Teresa of Calcutta, recently made a saint by Pope Francis, was born in Skopje in 1910, though she was Albanian by ethnicity at the time of her birth. Today, there is both a statue of her and a museum dedicated to her life in the city.

- 08** The rare mineral lorandite was first discovered in 1894 in the Allchar deposit on the Kozuf mountain in Macedonia's Tikveš wine district. The mineral is found here in its purest and most abundant form. It is being used in experiments to detect solar neutrinos and should help scientists understand solar neutrino flux over the last 4.3 million years.

- 10** North Macedonia took a historic step early in the era of the internet, when it became the first country in the world to have a full access to a wireless broadband connection, in 2005!

- 05** Kokino, to the north of the country, is a Bronze Age archaeological site dating back to the 19th century BC. One of the world's oldest astronomical observatories has been found here, as recognised by NASA. It is on UNESCO's tentative list as a protected world heritage site. The only older known astronomical sites are Abu Simbel, Egypt; Stonehenge, Great Britain; and Angkor Wat, Cambodia.

- 07** North Macedonia is the only country in mainland Europe where naturally-occurring rubies can be found, around the town of Prilep. Rubies feature on the country's coat of arms.

- 09** North Macedonia was the place where the Cyrillic alphabet was created, in the city of Ohrid. This alphabet (that most people associate with Russia) was developed on the territory of Macedonia by brothers St. Cyril and St. Methodius (recognized as shared apostles by Bulgaria and North Macedonia). They founded the Glagolitic alphabet from which their students, the scholars St. Clement and St. Naum, established the Cyrillic alphabet, which has quickly spread and been adopted by numerous Slavic nations.

34

mountains
with more than
2,000m altitude



3

National
Parks



53

Lakes



Mountain terrain

North Macedonia has 3 national parks, more than 50 lakes and 34 mountains higher than 2,000 metres. It has the fifth highest average elevation of any country in Europe at 741m, behind Andorra (the highest), Switzerland, Austria and Turkey.

Agriculture

Agriculture plays an important role in North Macedonia, as it is the third largest sector after services and heavy industry.

- Vineyards cover up to 10% of the total arable land in the country
- Viticulture and wine production contribute around 20% of the country's agricultural GDP



*It has perfect climatic conditions
for HEALTHY grapes with minimal
spraying required.*

02.

Winemaking traditions in Macedonia are many centuries long. Since the time of the Roman Empire, it has been written that Macedonia produces amazingly powerful wines with the scent of the vibrant south and the taste of songs and laughter of the people living in this region.

Countless hardworking and skillful winegrowers from the past and the present have been part of the history and rebirth of the long winemaking tradition in our country.

History



Grapes and leaves,
Heraclea Lyncestis,
North Macedonia
4th-6th century AD.





13th century B.C. Bronze Age

The oldest archeological findings in the country date back to this period and these have proven that an affinity for growing grapes and producing wine is one of the most important features of Macedonian history.

The royal families that ruled Ancient Macedonia from 540 – 168 BC were known for celebrating wine and worshipping Dionysus, the god of wine, through festivities called “bacchanalia” in his honour. Grapes and wine were regarded as cult food products and anyone growing and producing them had to observe special rules. Wine was drunk by the rich and poor alike, and people could even pay their taxes in wine. It is no secret that victories by the famous Macedonian army were celebrated with massive quantities of red wines, though equally wine was consumed as consolation after rare defeats on the battlefield.

Wine production artefacts can still be seen today, in the form of an open-air stone basin used for crushing grapes, which dates from the early Hellenic period (after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC).

The wider geographical region of Macedonia was one of the most important regions for growing grapes in the Roman Empire. A large number of terracotta statues made in honour of Dionysus, originating from the 1st century BC, have been found at the Stobi archaeological site in central part of what is today's North Macedonia.

A large number of amphorae have been discovered throughout all the country's archaeological sites originating from this period. There is proof that these amphorae were used mostly for storage of oil and wine.

The archaeological site of Bargala is a Byzantine fortified town constructed between the 4th and 6th century AD, a period spanning Late Antiquity and Early Byzantine. The oldest winery of the region has been discovered here along with a glass workshop, bakery and grain store. The winery complex in Bargala was strictly organised for receiving grapes, crushing and winemaking and indicates organized, community production; not just local or individual winemaking.

14th century to early 20th century AD (1914) - Ottoman Empire and the Phylloxera Infestation

In some small areas, wine production flourished. Wine produced in the village of Resava, in the Tikveš region, was once rumoured to be so thick and rich that it could be carried in a cloth. The story goes that there were so many good vintages that people did not know what to do with the wine, so they even made bricks for houses from it. The remains of these houses today can still be found around the village of Resava.



6th - 2th century B.C. Ancient period

Findings at the archaeological site of Trebenishta near the city of Ohrid include a wine krater (a bronze vessel 81.5cm high and 44.5cm wide) used for infusing wine with herbs and diluting it by adding water, as well as a golden wine cup dating from 5th to 6th centuries BC.

One of the characteristics of ancient Macedonian burial customs, continued to this day in the region, was the interment of items of personal property with the deceased and this often included vessels for drinking wine. Very few ancient Macedonian tombs of men (especially military ones) found so far by archaeologists are missing such wine-drinking vessels. The most significant artefact is a huge wine bronze vessel called a “krater” in which wine was blended with spices - a common practice in ancient times.



1st century BC to 13th century AD – The Roman Empire, the Rise of Christianity and the Byzantine period

The significance of the wine continued with the rise of Christianity as wine was part of almost all Orthodox Church ceremonies.

The oldest stone wine presses discovered are at the site of “Gorno Pole,” near the village of Star Karaorman. They have been dated to between the eighth and the sixth century AD. Several wine presses carved into the bedrock are known from the region of Pelagonia, as well as two constructed from masonry - one dated to the Roman Period and one from the Late Antiquity period. Two wine presses were found at the Stobi site too, which therefore belong to the Povardarie region (or Vardar River Valley).

Viticulture and winemaking as significant industries continued to develop through the Middle Ages. This is confirmed by several important miniatures dating from the early 10th century found in the village of Vatasha which show work in vineyards and grape harvesting. These miniatures are now kept in the Vatican Library.

These were difficult times for Macedonian viticulture and wine production. In this period, under Muslim influence, most vineyards were uprooted and replanted or grafted to table grape varieties destined for consumption as fresh grapes, or for drying grapes into raisins and to be used in traditional Ottoman sweets. Wine production was concentrated in small pockets and mostly survived under the protection of the Christian church which took on the role of main producer of sacred wine.

Between the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the region of South-eastern Europe was in a whirl of immense political, social and economic change. Some of these changes awakened the entrepreneurial spirit of individuals and eminent families in the Tikveš wine region. They spotted the area's potential for development and commerce, and they began to establish wineries producing quality wines that were bottled clearly labelled with the geographic origin of the wine. This was the start of a century-long tradition – the first time a wine was named with Tikveš as the region of origin. Indeed this was also the first time the region of Tikveš was mentioned in a written document. To be exact, this was in 1885, now recognized as the year when organised winemaking and selling of wine first started in Macedonia.

As the yoke of the Ottoman Empire loosened, one of the most devastating infestations ever known for the grapevine was emerging. The Phylloxera louse had its worst impact here between 1908-1914. Macedonian viticulture was already weakened and, at first, there was no solution to combat the insect pest and the destruction it brought, so all vintners could do was hope for better days to come. And they did, as grafting onto American rootstocks proved to be a solution and vineyards continued to be re-established until 1920. Unfortunately, several Balkan wars as well WWI and WWII did not allow Macedonian viticulture a straightforward recovery.

★ 20th century - Yugoslavia

At the beginning of the 20th century there were number of noble families that were producing grapes and wine. Around that time, after being advised by his experts that land near the legendary gorge 'Demir Kapija' was the most fertile and ideal for grape growing and wine production in the whole Balkan region, King Aleksandar Karadjordjevic decided in 1927 to build his royal property there. His ambition was to create a wine in a special place, with extraordinary quality, exclusively for the Royal Family. The king named the property 'Queen Maria' after his wife, Maria Karadjordjevic.

From 1952 to 1969, the Tikveš State Company went through numerous re-organisations and integration processes. The agricultural-complex (or agro-combinat) of Tikveš was created by merging several smaller agricultural holdings, while the associated wine cellar had become the biggest winery in South-Eastern Europe. Due to increased grape production in the Tikveš region, in 1956 another agro-combinat for grape production was created – which is today's Venec Winery. Then in 1963, a new state-owned winery with a capacity of 30 million litres was established under the name of Povardarie, which was also the name of the wider wine region (Povardarie or Vardar River Valley wine region).

During this period, Macedonian wines were mainly exported to fellow Yugoslavian countries, but also in huge quantities to Germany and USSR.

While part of former Yugoslavia, Macedonia was a major producer of wine, accounting for 2/3 of Yugoslavia's production, gaining an image as an area for bulk wine production (which it became stuck with, so today it is the industry's challenge to move away from this reputation). In fact, large grape crops were encouraged by the Yugoslav government in the form of rewards to the winegrowers with the highest yield of grapes per hectare – the exact opposite of today's approach. Between 1980 and 1990, the strategy of all wineries was directed towards "breaking records" in all production sectors. It is especially worth mentioning the year 1984, when, due to its decision to purchase the whole grape harvest from the Tikveš region, the state winery Tikveš had to use the town's swimming pool in Kavadarci to store the grapes temporarily.

In 1998, the first private, family-owned winery (Bovin Winery) was opened by the Bogeovski family in the city of Negotino in Tikves wine region.

From 2005 onwards, many wineries started to change their product portfolio by launching new series of "terroir" wines produced from their own, strictly-controlled vineyards and identifying the best micro-locations for grape-growing and production of top quality wines according to characteristics of climate and soil.

Currently, there are 28,213 hectares of vineyards, owned and managed by 20,000 grape-growing families and wine producers who make wines from both international varieties and indigenous grapes. Today's commercial wine production in North Macedonia takes place officially in 74 registered wineries with a total capacity of 1.2 million hl. The geographical representation of wineries matches the location of vineyards, so most wine cellars are located in the central region, along the Vardar River Valley, primarily in the Skopje, Veles, Tikveš, Gevgelija-Valandovo, Ovce Pole and Strumica -Radovich wine districts.

After the Second World War, significant efforts were made to develop viticulture because it was economically significant. The first vineyards were planted with the aim of producing grapevine planting material. At first growers boosted their vineyards using traditional methods, but then with modern technology and state control, larger plantations emerged, the beginning of Macedonia's "Belle Epoque".

After the Balkan Wars, the territory of today's North Macedonia fell under the rule of Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941) which was later transformed into Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1992). This was a time when Macedonia was a major producer of wine, accounting for 2/3 of the total Yugoslav production.

In the period from 1946 to 1948 the state of Yugoslavia adopted a Law on Nationalisation of private property. In order to increase the production of grapes, wine and brandy, the state established a company which took over and nationalised properties, vineyards, and wine cellars of all the renowned wine-growing families: Adzilazovi, Velkovi, V'ckovi, Grozdanovi, Danovi and others. This state-owned wine-production company was named Tikveš and it was soon after that when a modern winery was constructed with significantly increased capacity.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the vineyard area in the central region of Vardar River Valley or Povardarie wine region, was estimated to be around 14,000 hectares. While part of Yugoslavia, many new vineyards were planted, reaching a peak in 1981 when 39,000 hectares under vine were registered. After this peak, there was a period of destabilization and the area under vine reduced as a result of societal changes. These changes enabled the private sector to become the main driver of development and modernization of viticulture and winemaking in this region. A further large capacity winery was opened during this period. In 1979, the Skovin Winery (literally Skopje Wine) was opened in the capital city, with a production capacity of 17 million litres.

🌐 1991 - recent developments

After the Republic of Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, the formerly state-owned wineries were privatized and a number of small family-owned flourished all over the country.

In the late 2000s, the Macedonian wine industry entered a decade of intensive developments in grape growing and winemaking. Many new wineries were built, including today's well-known wine brands: Ezimit Winery, Dalvina Winery, Stobi Winery, Chateau Kamnik, Chateau Sopot, Imako Vino, Popov Winery, Popova Kula Winery, and more. Old wineries were also restructured and renovated, and leading producers and winemakers committed themselves to putting Macedonia on the international wine map. This has resulted in devotion to quality and a sincere desire to offer the country's unique wines to the world's consumers, and to continually improve and enhance the image of North Macedonia's wines. Currently, wines from the Republic of North Macedonia are distributed throughout the world (including USA, Russia, China), most of the EU and all countries of the Balkans, making wine Macedonia's second most important export product.

In 2010, the association Wines of Macedonia was established, uniting the main wine producers in the country. This was a result of the wineries recognising that the time has come to build the future of the industry together, and to build awareness and promote Macedonian wines worldwide under a single umbrella brand.

In 2019, the first ever Vranec World Day was held in North Macedonia. The Wines of Macedonia association, which is responsible for communication of the Macedonian wine brand worldwide, set up a celebratory event for the most important grape variety in the wider Balkan region, in order to position Vranec as one of the Macedonia's wine gems. Vranec World Day is a term that is being used as a trademark for several different events that have been initiated in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2019, and in the future the event will expand to the wider region and aims to increase international recognition. The main launch event was held on 5th October 2019 in Skopje and it was attended by a significant number of wine critics, MWs and wine journalists from the region and the rest of Europe.



Krater - a bronze vessel used for diluting wine by adding water.
Height 81.5cm /
width 44.5cm

Archaeological site Trebenishta -Ohrid,
N.Macedonia
VI-V century BC



Roman jug used for storage of wine.

Archaeological site Stobi,
N.Macedonia
I century BC-I century AD



Terracotta amphora with long neck
and pointed bottom of unpainted clay,
used for transport of wine.

Archaeological site of Stobi,
N.Macedonia
I century BC



Ancient Roman Terracotta Redware
Wine Cup.

Archaeological site of Stobi,
N.Macedonia
I century BC

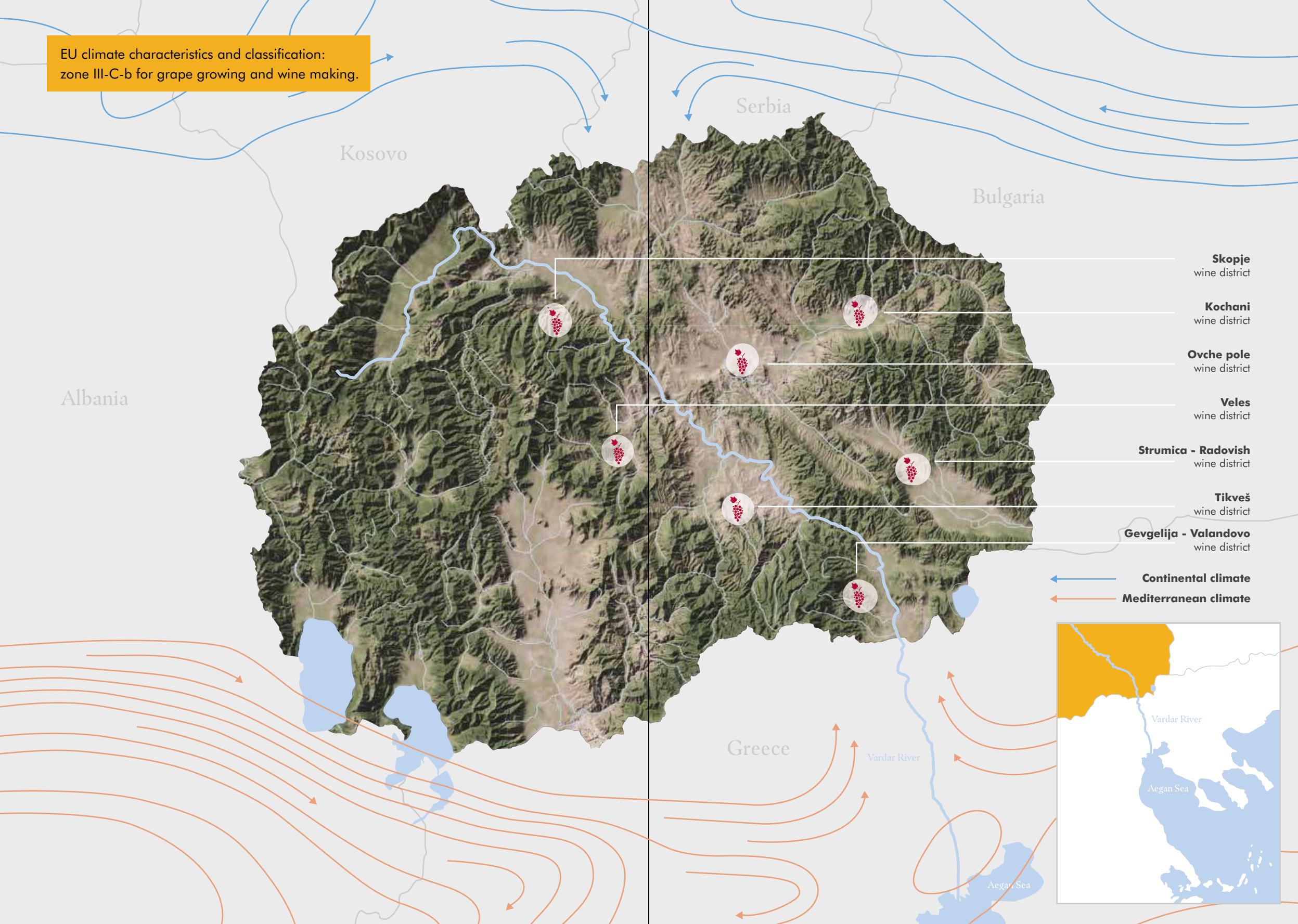


03.

The environment and grape growing



EU climate characteristics and classification:
zone III-C-b for grape growing and wine making.



Climate

North Macedonia is at the border of Mediterranean and continental climates, with warm, dry summers and autumns, and relatively mild, stable winters.

...



The unique climate of the country can be explained by its location and topography. The climate of the plains is largely Mediterranean, moderated by the influence of the Black Sea. Parts of the country are much more continental, especially where the southern mountain ranges prevent hot air masses moving into the northern zones of the country. Conversely, the Šar Mountains in the northwest block cold northerly winds. On whole, the northern and western parts of the country have stronger continental climatic influences, while the south and east are closer to a Mediterranean climate. North Macedonia has four seasons, but the length of the seasons varies based on geography. The spring is often very short. Summers are subtropical and it is not uncommon to see temperatures above 40 °C (104 °F), especially on the flatlands of the Vardar River valley. Winters, although moderate overall, can be quite cold. Snowfall during winter is common and occasionally heavy with notable changes in the last few years due to climate changes.

The average annual air temperature is 11.5 °C (53 °F), but the plains experience higher temperatures, averaging 15 °C (59 °F). The warmest month is July, which has an average temperature of 22.2 °C (72 °F) and the coldest is January, with a temperature of 0.3 °C (33 °F). The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in North Macedonia to date are 45.7 °C (114 °F) and –31.5 °C (–25 °F) respectively.

Average annual rainfall varies from 1700mm in the western mountains to less than 500mm in the drier east. The “Vardarec” wind brings warmer winter temperatures to the Vardar valley – it blows from the mouth of the river, carrying warm air from the sea. Skopje, considered a low-lying city, has an average of 64 rainy days per year. The month of October is the wettest with 61 mm; the driest is August with 28 mm. Rainfall is most common in the spring and autumn.

Topography



North Macedonia is a landlocked country that is geographically clearly defined by a central valley formed by the Vardar river and framed along its borders by mountain ranges. It is situated on the Balkan peninsula between latitudes 40° and 43° N, and longitudes 20° and 23° E. It has borders with Bulgaria to the east, Serbia and Kosovo to the north, Greece to the south and Albania to the west. The terrain is mostly rugged, located between the Šar Mountains and Osogovo, which border the Vardar River Valley, one of the best wine regions. Three large lakes — Lake Ohrid, Lake Prespa, and Dojran Lake — lie on the southern borders, bisected by the frontiers with Albania and Greece.

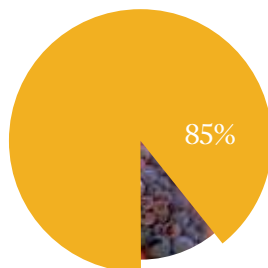
Ohrid is considered to be one of the oldest lakes in the world. The region is seismically active and volcanic soils are not uncommon. North Macedonia also has scenic mountains in two different mountain ranges. First the Šar Mountains that continue to the West into Vardar/Pelagonia range of mountains (Baba Massif, Nidze, Kozuf, and Jakupica), also known as the Dinaric Alps. The second range is the Osogovo–Belasica mountain chain, part of the Rhodope massif. The Šar Mountains and the West Vardar/Pelagonia range are younger and higher than the Osogovo-Belasica mountains.

Vineyard Area

Total vineyard area
33,423ha

Vineyard area under
wine varieties:
28,213ha

Harvest:
Up to **125K tons** of
grapes, from grape growers
and wineries' own vineyards



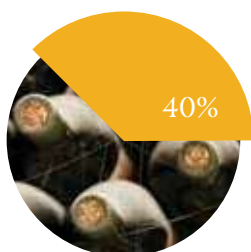
■ wine varieties



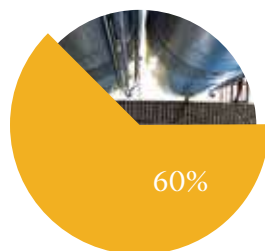
■ table grapes

Wine Production

Nearly
91 million litres



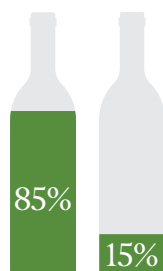
■ produced as
bottled wine



■ sold in bulk

Sales

export to
38 countries



domestic market

74 registered
wineries
20 000 registered
grape producers

Vineyard Management



Several vine cultivation systems are in use
around the country:

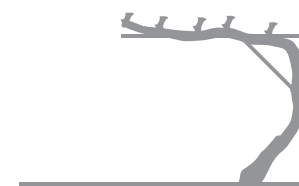
Bush (Goblet) training,

where vines grow without a support structure,
is mainly found in older plantations. It's
also used by small vine growers in warmer
areas to protect grapes from sunburn by
creating canopy shade. Yields tend to be low
and quality can be high as a result, though
everything has to be done by hand.



Single and Double Guyot

is commonly used in cooler areas and limits
the woody parts of the vine to the trunk only,
reducing the vine's vulnerability to spring
frost. Single guyot plantings tend to be closer
spaced, resulting in lower yields and better
quality grapes.



Pergola

is typically a vine-training system for table
grapes. However, in very hot regions, as
well in areas with high humidity, it's a useful
training system to increase shading of the fruit
zone to avoid sunburn and increase canopy
aeration to avoid fungal disease.



In all cases, grape varieties used for wine production should be grown in vineyards within the designated geographical indication, as listed in the relevant ministerial decisions.

White wine

is usually produced using modern technology, including temperature control and typically alcoholic fermentation will be kept to below 20 ° C.

Red wine

is generally vinified according to global standards for red wine vinification, using both modern tank fermentation and oak where appropriate.

Rosé wine

is produced using modern technology and temperature control. Direct pressing of red grapes to minimize skin contact and keep colour pale is increasingly common, though short maceration and saignée methods may also be found.

Sparkling wine

is produced through all three of the primary methods for sparkling wine production: traditional method (bottle fermentation), tank method (cuve close or charmat), and carbonation.



Macedonia's wines are notable for their expressive fruit flavours, though their intensity and characteristics vary depending on the variety, terroir and exact vinification technique.

White wines

are characterized by freshness, liveliness and the best examples showcase "terroir" with floral aromas, fresh notes, and good intensity of flavour. Colours range from greenish-yellow to golden. Specific flavours and aromas depend on the variety and production method though overall, white wines exhibit bright, fruity aromas of apple, pear, peach, apricot, tropical fruit, melon and citrus fruits. In addition, sweeter, candy-like aromas of butterscotch, vanilla, almond, and honey may be present.

Rosé wines

are characterized by freshness and fruity notes, while colour may be pale or and darker pink with orange tones. The primary flavours of rosé wines are red fruit, flowers, citrus and melon, with a pleasant appetizing crispness on the finish.

Red wines

are characterized by rich, ripe fruit backed by chewy tannins, showing characteristics of the terroir with intense fruit notes, typically of red fruits and fruit jam, often with a hint of spice.

Red wines in this region are notable for their deep purple or ruby color, often so intense that red wines are so-called "black" wines. The best wines have opulent aromas, complex and layered, showing black fruits mingled with red berries, followed with spicy oak notes. On the palate, most red wines are vinified dry, offering generous concentrated fruit and succulent flavours, often with serious complexity due to the additional impact of oak or bottle aging. Tannins are typically rounded, ripe and velvety while warm but well-integrated alcohol expresses the southern charm of the country's wines.

Sparkling wines

are clear, with colours ranging from pale straw to mid straw-gold in whites and from very light pink to salmon tones in rosé styles. Aromas in sparkling wines may include apple, pear, freshly baked bread, brioche, citrus, bread dough, subtle strawberry, fresh-cut hay, herbal notes, and toasted almond. On the palate, it can be dry, crisp, creamy, delicate, elegant, fruity and mineral, and depending on production method, it may be youthful and fruity or more complex with notes of autolysis.

GI

(Wine with Geographical Indication)

Wines are classified into several categories according to quality:

- wine without geographical indication
- regional wines or wines with geographical indication **(WGI)**;
- wines with controlled origin **(WCO)**;
- wines with controlled and guaranteed origin **(WCGO)**.

WGI

Regional wine is a wine with a geographical indication (WGI), whose place of origin is a region or an area, and it is produced according to the following rules:

- **85%** of the grapes originate from a specific named region or area;
- It is produced purely from permitted grape varieties in accordance with the legislation;
- It shows all the characteristics specified in the wine law;
- It must have a minimum of **9.5%** abv;
- The wine must pass a physical and chemical analysis.

WCO

Wine with controlled origin (WCO) is a wine that has an indication of origin and whose place of origin is precisely defined within a vineyard, or within a smaller geographical unit. It must fulfill the following criteria:

- **100%** of the grapes originate from a small named place of origin (vineyard);
- It is produced purely from permitted grape varieties in accordance with the legislation;

WCGO

Wine with controlled and guaranteed origin (WCOG) is a wine whose indication of origin is recognized by specific characteristics and by high quality. Its place of origin is precisely defined within one or a few localities or smaller wine units, and it has as a minimum the following characteristics:

- **100%** of the grapes originate from the specific named locality or smaller wine unit;
- It is produced purely from permitted grape varieties in accordance with the legislation;

- It must conform to the rules of production for that particular wine with controlled origin (WCO);
- Vinification must take place within the place of origin of the grapes;
- It must have a minimum of **10.5%** abv;
- The wine must pass a physical and chemical analysis;
- It must also undergo an organoleptic assessment.

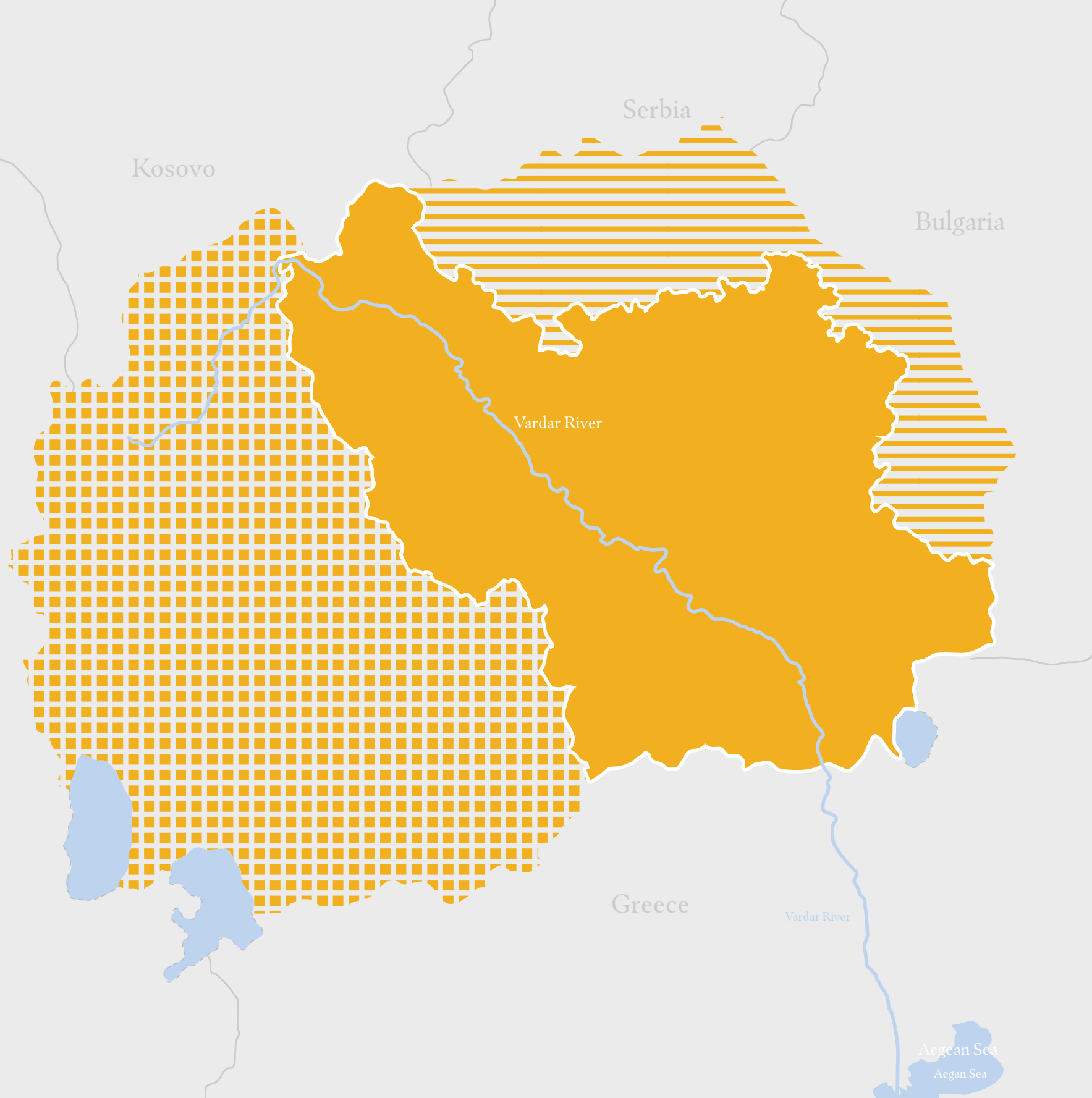
- It must be produced according to the rules of production for that particular wine with controlled and guaranteed origin, as established by the wine law;
- Vinification must take place within or close to the place of origin, locality or smaller wine unit from where the grapes originate, but not outside the vineyard region from where the grapes originate;
- It must have a minimum of **11%** abv;
- The wine must pass a physical and chemical analysis;
- It must also undergo an organoleptic assessment.



04.

Macedonian wine regions





North Macedonia is divided into three main wine regions:

 **Western Wine Region,**
also named Pelagonia-Polog

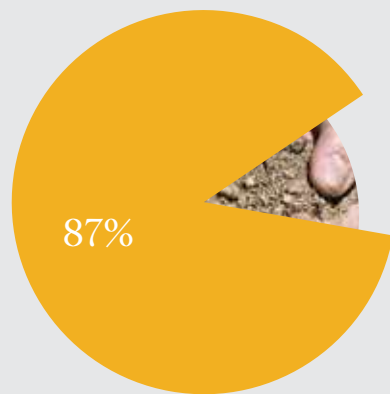
1 817 ha
(7% of the total vineyard area)

 **Central Wine Region,**
also named Vardar River Valley

24 664 ha
(87% of the total vineyard area)

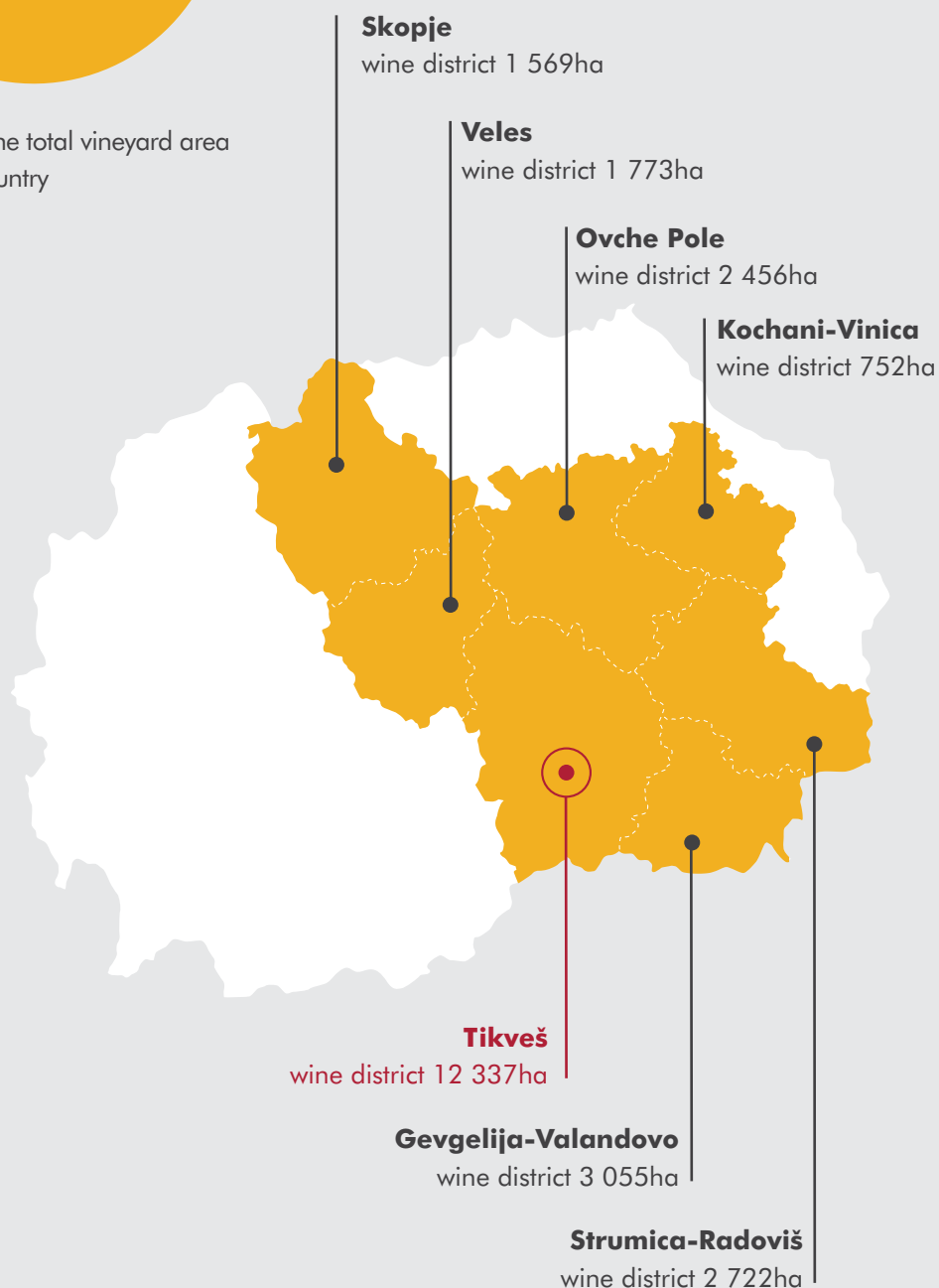
 **Eastern Wine Region,**
also named Pchinja-Osogovo

1 733 ha
(6% of the total vineyard area)



■ 87% of the total vineyard area in the country

Vardar River Valley wine region



...

The Central Wine Region, (also known as the Vardar River Valley or Povardarie) extends along the Vardar river which flows from north to south, passing through many different terroirs. This wine region occupies nearly 45% of Macedonia's territory and includes seven wine districts which vary gradually from north to south. Conventional grape growing is dominant, but the dry climate and well-drained soils naturally limit use of agrochemicals, simply because they are not a necessity. Drip irrigation is common in the wine districts with a more arid environment to reduce vine stress and allow vines to continue to grow normally.

In terms of the importance of wine production and quality, the Vardar River Valley is effectively the main wine artery for Macedonian wine. Numerous ancient artefacts that bear witness to a long tradition of wine-production, while recently Prof. PhD Klime Beleski discovered a unique specimen in Europe: a very rare "wild grape" of the species *Vitis Silvestris* (parent of *Vitis Vinifera*).

It was found in the Demir Kapija canyon, in the southern part of the Vardar River Valley and shows that nature chose "The Valley" a long time ago for growing grapes.

The vast majority of grape growers and wineries are concentrated in this amazing valley. The size of each vineyard varies, ranging from small individual grape growers to larger blocks of several hundred hectares managed by the biggest wineries. Climates vary from moderately continental to Mediterranean, and together with varied soils, this makes an ideal environment for successful growing of a wide range of grape varieties. This gives winemakers great raw material to work their magic and produce some of the country's most sought-after wines. Traditional wine production can still be found among small wine producers, but in general the Valley represents modern wine production using cutting-edge technology that allows producers to showcase this great wine region and produce wines with real regional character.



History

Grape growing has flourished here since Roman times. Wine has been produced in this region for many centuries, confirmed by multiple artefacts found in the Roman city of Skupi from 3th century BC and at Skopje Fortress dating from 4th century AD.

Skopje is the bustling capital of North Macedonia and Skopje's wine district is the top of the barrel. Grapes grow in abundance on the outskirts of the city, where several wineries harvest their crops; and within the city, wine bars and restaurants serve wine-loving tourists in some of the city's most historic districts.



Vineyards

- 1569 hectares
- Altitude 250 – 600 m



Dominant grape varieties

White

- Temjanika (Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains)
- Rkatsiteli
- Chardonnay
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Grenache Blanc

Red

- Vranec
- Kratošija (Zinfandel | Primitivo)
- Stanušina
- Syrah
- Pinot Noir



Climate

The Skopje basin has a sub-continental climate and the impact of the Mediterranean is less than for other wine districts in the Vardar River Valley. This results in cold winters and hot, arid summers.



Soil

The vineyards in the Skopje wine district are mainly located on the foothills of mountains that shape the basin. These foothills offer good drainage and varied soils derived from various bedrocks including carbonate, limestone, schist, and in some locations the much prized terrarossa. Mixed clay and sand soils offer good texture for drainage while clay retains moisture for the dry season, and a longer ripening season helps increase aromatic intensity and tannin structure. Vineyards close to the Vardar river tend to have alluvial soil with more gravel and sand that helps to emphasize fruitiness in wines.

Annual average temperature



12.5 °C

Average temperature at veraison



17.1 °C

Max annual temperature



43.0 °C

Annual average precipitation



460 mm



Wine Expectations

In general, wines from the Skopje Wine District are expected to express freshness in both their aroma and flavour profiles. The ripening period is slightly prolonged compared to the Tikveš Wine District, giving more time for development of aromatic compounds in grapes, which is reflected in the wines. In this area vineyards with southern exposure typically grow on chalky clay. These are high pH, cold soils that typically result in whites with higher acidity and tannic reds. Alluvial sand and gravel soils on the valley floor provide more fruit-driven and slightly lighter-bodied wines. In line with today's wine trends, some producers have begun to make orange wines from Rkatsiteli or Grenache Blanc, though these are more niche products for restaurants and specialist retailers rather than key commercial lines. There is a successful traditional method sparkling rosé on the market, as well as brut sparkling versions of Temjanika (Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains) and Chardonnay. Sweet wines are only produced in tiny quantities, usually in the style of a Vin Doux Naturel (gently fortified) late-harvest wine.



Terroirs

Kamnik, Four Roads, Markova Sushica, Markov Manastir



History

Wines has been produced in this wine district for many centuries, confirmed by artefacts found in the ancient city of Stobi. This is a stunning archaeological site situated between the Veles and Tikveš wine districts, near today's city of Veles, which was a Paeonian, Macedonian and Roman city. A few statues of Bacchus (the Roman god of wine) have been found at this site, a strong indication that wine has been produced in this area for millennia.

Vineyards

- 1113 hectares
- Altitude 110 – 550 m

Dominant grape varieties

White

- Temjanika (Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains)
- Chardonnay
- Riesling
- Sauvignon Blanc

Red

- Vranec
- Kratošija (Zinfandel | Primitivo)
- Syrah
- Pinot Noir

Climate

This wine district has a sub-continental climate. The vine-growing district extends south of the Skopje wine district and has a slightly higher temperature because of an increased Mediterranean influence compared to the more northern district.

This wine district is also directly influenced by the Vardar river, which brings refreshing breezes from the north along the river valley and this also increases the diurnal temperature range. The artificial Veles lake also has an impact on mitigating the continental climate and contributes to the unique meso-climate here.

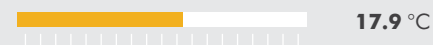
Soil

The vineyards of the Veles wine district lie along the Vardar River, mostly on the rolling hills of the left bank, though some lie on the foothills of the high mountains that define the valley. Soil types are quite fragmented and particularly vary in chemical content, rather than in texture. High calcium levels define some soils, and in some areas Terrarossa can be found as well as small pockets of nutrient-rich black soils. This gives scope to better producers to vinify wines as separate parcels from different blocks. The mix of clay, sand and limestone bedrocks provides sufficient drainage as well as water retention during dry periods.

Annual average temperature



Average temperature at veraison



Wine Expectations

The Veles wine district is noted for refreshing, aromatically intense and elegant wines. The majority of wines show clear regional expression in the glass, reflecting the picturesque landscape and giving an impression of the refreshing breezes of the Vardar River Valley. The wines are also well-structured with medium to full body, and potential for lengthy aging in oak to increase complexity. Tannins are typically more pronounced but are far from grippy, being ripe and velvety. Some wines show distinctive spicy or herbal notes due to the prolonged ripening period.

It is no secret that grapes or wines from this district are often blended with grapes or wines from the warmer regions to the south of the valley. This is done to increase freshness, and vice versa, to add more body, extract and complexity to blends from the region. Sparkling wines made by the traditional method, based on Chardonnay, are not uncommon for this wine district in addition to still wines, although these are merely promising beginnings.

Terroirs

Sopot, Bel Kamen, Nikolovo Dabche, Ridot, Kamenjata

Max annual temperature



Annual average precipitation



Vardar River Valley wine region



History

The Tikveš wine district is the heart of Macedonian wine. Based on archaeological discoveries, recorded viticulture and wine production began in the 4th century AD but it is believed that wine has a much longer history here as ancient Macedonia was on a major route for a huge migration from beyond the Caucasus. Documents written about Alexander the Great reveal that after battles soldiers were rewarded with wine. This was produced from grapes from vineyards behind the mountains of Pella, the birthplace of Alexander the Great, where the Tikveš wine region is located. A large number of terracotta statues honouring gods, originating from 1st century BC, have been found at the Stobi archaeological site which is located in this region. Viticulture and winemaking as significant industries continued to develop through the Middle Ages, as is confirmed by several important miniatures dating from the early 10th century found in the village of Vatasha which show work in vineyards and grape harvesting. These miniatures are now kept in the Vatican Library. Today, Tikveš is the most well-known wine region in North Macedonia. It is located in the very heart of the country and lies at similar latitudes to Bordeaux in France, Tuscany in Italy and the Napa Valley in California.



Vineyards

- Nearly 13000 hectares or 1/3 of all grapes grown in North Macedonia
- 43.7% of the total vineyard area in the country
- Altitude 110 – 650 m

The most important soils that give terroir expression to the wines include calcareous mixtures with sand and clay in the Lepovo micro-location; volcanic sub-soil at the micro-location of Barovo and so on. These specific features of the area contribute to the production of wines that are characterized by intense fruit flavours, freshness and liveliness.



Climate

The Tikveš basin is surrounded by mountains on three sides and lies in the part of the Vardar River Valley where the Mediterranean climate arrives from the south and meets the continental climate from the north. These intermingle in the unique meso-climate of the basin that ranges from mountain climate in the foothills, through moderately continental on the rolling hills, to Mediterranean on the valley floor.



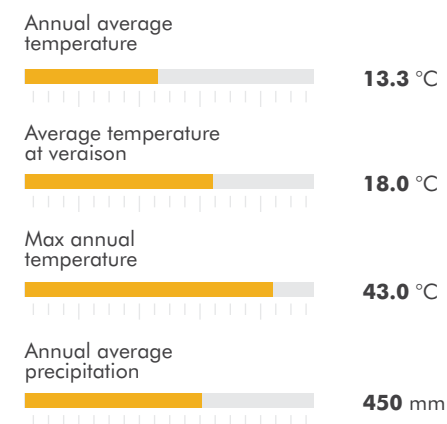
Terroirs

Barovo, Bela Voda, Lepovo Hills, Vilarov, Disan, Vrshnik, Smolnik, Ridishte, Svrachka, Mechkovec, Ramniste, Cicevo, Aerodrom, Grachansko, Ozor, Besvichki livadki, Popova Kula, Kokoladec, Crveni Bregovi, Sopotski Ushi, Vikaloto, Orle, Koria i Sokolche



Soil

The Tikveš wine district covers a wide area with differing soil types, alluvial at the base of the foothills and diluvial in the river valleys. Chemical content and texture are varied, and together with climate, this has an impact on the range of grape varieties that can be planted. As a result, there is a huge diversity of grapes and blends produced here.



Dominant grape varieties in Tikveš wine district

White



• Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains

Its local name is Temjanika, and here it is usually vinified as a dry varietal wine. Occasionally a small percentage is added to blends to increase aromatic expression. It always shows distinctive fragrant and inviting grapey aromas, often with notes of elderflower and has a pleasant and vivid, but light-bodied palate, with a moderate finish.

• Rkatsiteli

Usually found as a varietal wine, but it can be found undeclared in blends (in line with labelling laws) as it's useful component to increase acidity and thus improve structure. It is typically shy on the nose, with slight hints of apple or tropical fruits. It is noted for a crisp refreshing palate and medium body though only a short finish, often more enjoyable to drink than the aroma suggests.

• Chardonnay

Although sometimes found in blends, dry varietal versions are most common and may be produced in fruit-driven or more complex styles. The aromatic profile is typically based on stone and tropical fruit with balanced freshness, medium to full-bodied structure and appealing length.

• Sauvignon Blanc

This grape can be found in blends, where it is added to increase freshness and complexity, but largely its wines are dry, single varietal styles which may be fruity or complex in style. Recently, some more New World styles have appeared, expressing intense pyrazine aromas with greater concentration. The palate is typically "nervy" and crisp, light to medium-bodied in style with an appetising, fresh, citrusy aftertaste.

• Grenache Blanc

Sometimes used in blends but more often vinified as dry varietal wines. The wines usually show fairly subtle aromas of green fruits and white flowers, followed by a supple medium to full-bodied palate and moderate length.

Dominant grape varieties

Red



• Vranec

Notable for deep-coloured, bold reds which can be found as varietal wines, but also as a blending component where it increases complexity and gives more fleshiness and colour to the wine. Mainly vinified as dry wines, in either fruity or more complex styles. The aromatic profile is typically based on black fruit notes, followed by a vibrant palate more inclined towards red fruits, supported by ripe and nicely rounded tannins. Warm but well-integrated alcohol adds to the full body and builds structure that allows for ageing potential. The finish is often long and can be fruity or complex, depending on the wine style.

• Kratošija (Zinfandel | Primitivo)

Often used for blends, particularly with Vranec where it may be co-fermented, especially where older vineyards are mixed plantings harvested as field blends. It also can be found as a varietal wine in a powerful dry style. In a blend, it acts as a structural component increasing the level of acidity, thus increasing potential for prolonged ageing and complexity of the wine. Its aroma profile includes both red and black fruit, followed by a refreshing and elegant, full-bodied palate with generous red berry flavours. It typically has medium to high levels of ripe velvety tannins and a pleasantly fruity aftertaste.

• Stanušina

North Macedonia's indigenous grape variety, nicknamed "Macedonian Girl" because of its elegance. It offers aromas of red forest fruits and a crisp, lively and fruit-driven palate. It is light to medium-bodied with silky tannins and a medium, fruity finish. Mainly dry in style, its best expression is as a refreshing and fruity rosé, although it can also be found as red and even white wine.

• Syrah (Shiraz)

In North Macedonia, Syrah is closer to New World versions in style so should perhaps be called Shiraz. It is produced as dry varietal red but can also be found in blends with Cabernet Sauvignon, Vranec and/or Merlot. Both black and red fruit aromas appear in the reds from this district, while the intensity of peppery notes, the hallmark of Syrah, varies depending on vintage and exposure to the sun. The wines are typically pleasant on the palate with vivid freshness, ripe velvety tannins, and fleshy full body. The finish is long and may be fruity or complex depending on style.

• Pinot Noir

Although the warm climate is not on side of Pinot Noir, it still finds a place producing easier styles of wine in line with tradition. Its wines are mainly dry and varietal, offering powerful red fruit and subtle earthy notes. Freshness, silky tannins, elegant light to medium-body and a complex finish ensure a place on Macedonian wine lists for Pinot Noir.



History

In ancient times, people from this wine district were commonly the ones who contributed to spreading wines across the whole region, thanks to their belief that wine and the sun were sources of wealth and luck. During this period, the land that is North Macedonia today was one of the most renowned regions for growing grapes. This has been confirmed by archaeological findings from the Valandovo region, mostly on the archaeological site of Isar-Marvinci.

Vineyards

- 3055 hectares
- Altitude 60 – 100 m

Dominant grape varieties

White

- Temjanika (Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains)
- Rkatsiteli
- Chardonnay
- Grenache Blanc
- Sauvignon Blanc

Red

- Vranec
- Kratošija (Zinfandel | Primitivo)
- Stanušina
- Syrah
- Pinot Noir



Climate

The southernmost wine district of North Macedonia. It's a relatively small basin: to the east it reaches the town of Valandovo; southwards it extends along the Vardar river to Gevgelia then even further south across the open plains towards the Aegean Sea. This topography increases the influence of the Mediterranean climate. Long warm summers and mild winters, with over 300 sunny days, characterize this district. During the heat of the summer, freshness is brought by mountain breezes blowing from the north through the tiny canyon of Demir Kapija (which literally translates as Iron Gate). Freshness also comes from frequent torrential summer rains that maintain high humidity. This combination of excessive sun and high humidity are usually managed with the pergola system. This helps prevent sunburn and increases air circulation but can be very productive, so it's important to control yields to increase grape quality.



Soil

The climate and environment determine the best spots for setting up vineyards, and the right choice of soil is essential. This wine district encompasses different soil types and on the rolling hills, preferred sites feature clay on slopes, which can drain off surplus torrential rainfall and at the same time retain sufficient moisture for the upcoming dry period. The vineyards along both banks of the Vardar river enjoy the well-drained and nutrient-poor gravel and sandy-clay soils.

Annual average temperature



14.3 °C

Average temperature at veraison



18.5 °C



Wine Expectations

It's common for all wine styles from this wine district to show ripe or even baked fruits, big body and warm alcohol, as well as a high level of dry extract. The wine law permits acidification so some corrections may be made to improve freshness and ensure the wine is well balanced. The art of winemaking here is all about achieving balance as phenolic ripeness can be quite late compared to biological ripeness, and as a result the palate can be quite astringent. The intensity of bouquet may vary with vineyard orientation, grape variety and period of ripening. However, wines from this district are expected to be less aromatically intense for aromatic whites, while expressing tropical and stone fruits. Reds show typically jammy or baked black fruit with notable tannins and a long enjoyable finish. There have been some promising attempts in production of late-harvested sweet wines in extreme drought-affected vintages, as well as some fortified sweet wines, made from the black grape variety Vranec.



Terroirs

Avlak, Kalajdziev Brest, Selemlija, Bogorodica, Stojakovo, Bogdanci, Gavato, Crnicani, Josifovo, Pirava, Udovo, Chaparica, Kaljkovo, Grciste, Mrvinci, Balanci, Brajkovci, Cheshtovo, Kazan Dol, Dedeli, Sobri, Rabovo

Max annual temperature



44.0 °C

Annual average precipitation



640 mm



History

There is a tradition of wine production in this district dating back many centuries, supported by archaeological discoveries in the Carevi Kuli fortress in Strumica, an ancient site dating back to 3500 BC. Winemaking was recorded here during the Roman era but was largely abandoned with the fall of the Roman Empire.

Vineyards

- 3118 hectares
- Altitude 250 – 450 m

Dominant grape varieties

White

- Temjanika (Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains)
- Rkatsiteli
- Chardonnay
- Grenache Blanc
- Sauvignon Blanc

Red

- Vranec
- Kratošija (Zinfandel | Primitivo)
- Stanušina
- Syrah
- Pinot Noir

Climate

This is a unique isolated basin in the south-east corner of North Macedonia. It extends from Radoviš along the Strumica river, a tributary of the Struma River. The Struma river valley opens towards the Aegean barely 100km away, and channels significant Mediterranean influences up the valley to the vineyards. Around the time of veraison, cooling breezes arrive from the northern slopes of the Belasica mountain, though this is not enough to compensate for the low rainfall of just 287mm in this period, so drought can be a problem. This wine district typically sees 210 sunny days allowing growers to produce high-quality grapes. Overall the climate of this wine-district is closest to the climates of the northern zones of Vardar River Valley.

Soil

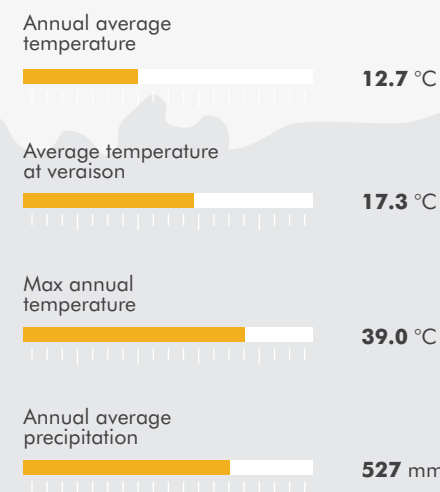
The climate and environment define the best spots for vineyards, along with right choice of soil. Soils here are varied and locations with clay are preferred on sloping sites where heavy rainfall can drain but enough soil moisture is retained to survive drought. Vineyards along both banks of the Strumica river benefit from well-drained but nutrient-poor gravel and sandy-clay soils.

Wine Expectations

It is common for all wine styles to show ripe and even baked fruit, with generous body and alcohol content, along with high levels of extract. The wine law permits acidification, so corrections may be made to ensure freshness and good balance. Phenolic ripening can be later than sugar ripeness here leaving wines astringent, so the best winemakers work hard to mitigate this. White wines tend to have less aromatic expression and feature ripe tropical notes and stone fruit characters. Reds tend to be very ripe and even jammy with notable tannin structure and good length. Most wines are still but there are some promising experiments with sparkling wines made from the local Župljanka grape variety planted at higher altitudes.

Terroirs

Hamzali, Pogana, Josifovo, Pirava, Chaparica, Rabrovo





History

Wine has been produced in this wine district for centuries, as confirmed by many artefacts found at the Bargala archaeological site, a Byzantine fortified town constructed between the 4th and 6th century AD.

Ovche Pole wine district plays a significant part in the wine production in North Macedonia, covering areas of grapevine cultivation around the cities of Sveti Nikole, Štip and Probištip, north from river Zletovo.



Vineyards

- 2456 hectares
- Altitude 330 – 560 m



Dominant grape varieties

White

- Temjanika (Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains)
- Rkatsiteli
- Chardonnay
- Grenache Blanc
- Sauvignon Blanc

Red

- Vranec
- Kratošija (Zinfandel | Primitivo)
- Stanušina
- Syrah
- Pinot Noir



Climate

This wine district has a predominantly continental climate, though sub-Mediterranean influences may also be felt. In general, this wine district has hot summers and cold winters. The topography itself allows vineyards to utilize optimal sun exposure with southern winds, whilst the surrounding mountainous landscape serves a protective function from cold northerly winds. This mixture of climate and landscape, combining to create this distinctive terroir, promotes balanced ripening which results in grapes that are perfect for wines with expressive fruit characteristics and good structure. During the summer months, drought periods are a normal occurrence, so irrigation is a necessity. This area is known as “the windiest place on the Balkans” due to constant winds throughout the year.



Soil

This wine district encompasses a wide range of soils. Vineyards are typically planted on gentle slopes and plateaus where the soil is nutrient poor with higher pH, chalk, sand and good drainage. Some schist and gravel mixed with clay may be found, which radiate heat and mitigate the microclimate around the vines during the night when temperatures usually fall significantly, resulting in improved ripening of the grapes. The diurnal temperature range differs significantly, resulting in slower grape ripening and helping to ensure that biological and phenolic ripening coincide.



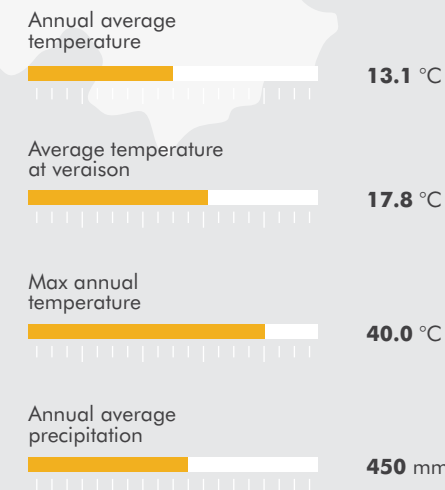
Wine Expectations

The best wines come from higher altitudes with their more intense fruity aromas, freshness, elegance, succulence and appetising palates. Whites are light and crisp, while reds offer mainly red fruit aromas overlaid with herbal or peppery notes, depending on the variety. These wines show firm structure and potential for further ageing. The wines are mainly still and dry in style, although it is possible to find a small number of herb-infused dry reds or some attempts at sweet fortified wines from aromatic Temjanika (Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains) and the much loved Vranec. Wines from the plains are still good in quality. However, they can be lacking in character so are destined for bulk sales, from bag-in-box up to tank. Recently, a few promising sparkling wines have appeared, made by the traditional method, though these have not yet been released to the market.



Terroirs

Balabanica, Vrpka, Rajkova Cuka, Preod, Veternica, Krshla, Golem Rid, Beshtipe, Tupanec, Ovoshtarnik, Struga, Ostresh, Ljuboten





History

Grapevines may have been cultivated here since ancient times, supporting by the discovery of many artefacts at the ancient ruins of Vinicko Kale, located on the hill above the town of Vinica. The name Vinica is derived from the word "vine" because the city was formerly noted for its vineyards. On terracotta icons found in Vinicko Kale, the name of the city is recorded as Vinea or Vince.

This ancient city also played an important role during the Roman era, when wine production was booming in the region. The destruction and fall of the Roman Empire meant that cultivation of grapes was abandoned, followed by a dramatic decline in wine consumption in Western and Central Europe. Nevertheless, wine production in the region continued uninterrupted, though on a smaller scale.

Vineyards

- 752 hectares
- Altitude 400 – 700m



Dominant grape varieties

White

- Temjanika (Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains)
- Rkatsiteli
- Chardonnay
- Grenache Blanc
- Sauvignon Blanc

Red

- Vranec
- Kratošija (Zinfandel | Primitivo)
- Stanušina
- Syrah
- Pinot Noir



Climate

The dominant climate here is continental with mountain influences. This wine district is surrounded by high mountains to the south, north, and east which provide protection from significant cold north winds and rains. The region is more open to the west, across low areas with rolling hills, towards the Vardar River. These low-lying vineyards benefit from the influence of the river Bregalnica, a tributary of the Vardar.



Soil

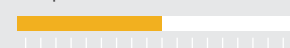
The vineyards are mainly located among the foothills of mountains and on rolling hills, which means on slopes. The soils are typically nutrient-poor and thin, as soil erosion can be a problem. Chemically the soils vary in calcium and potassium content. What is much more important is the texture of the soil which offers good drainage, as well retaining soil moisture during periods of drought. Sun exposure and concentration of UV increases with altitude and gives a unique intensity of character to the grapes and thus to the resulting wines.



Wine Expectations

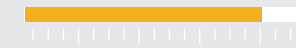
The wines from this wine district are quite similar to Ovche Pole, offering intense fruity aromas, freshness, elegance and appetising qualities. Whites are light and crisp, while reds typically express intense red berry aromas with herbal or peppery notes, depending on the variety. These wines are usually vinified dry and may show firm structure and potential for further aging. Wines from lower lying vineyards still offer sound quality but are less characterful and are often destined for bulk sales.

Annual average temperature



13.1 °C

Max annual temperature



40.0 °C

Average temperature at veraison



17.8 °C

Annual average precipitation

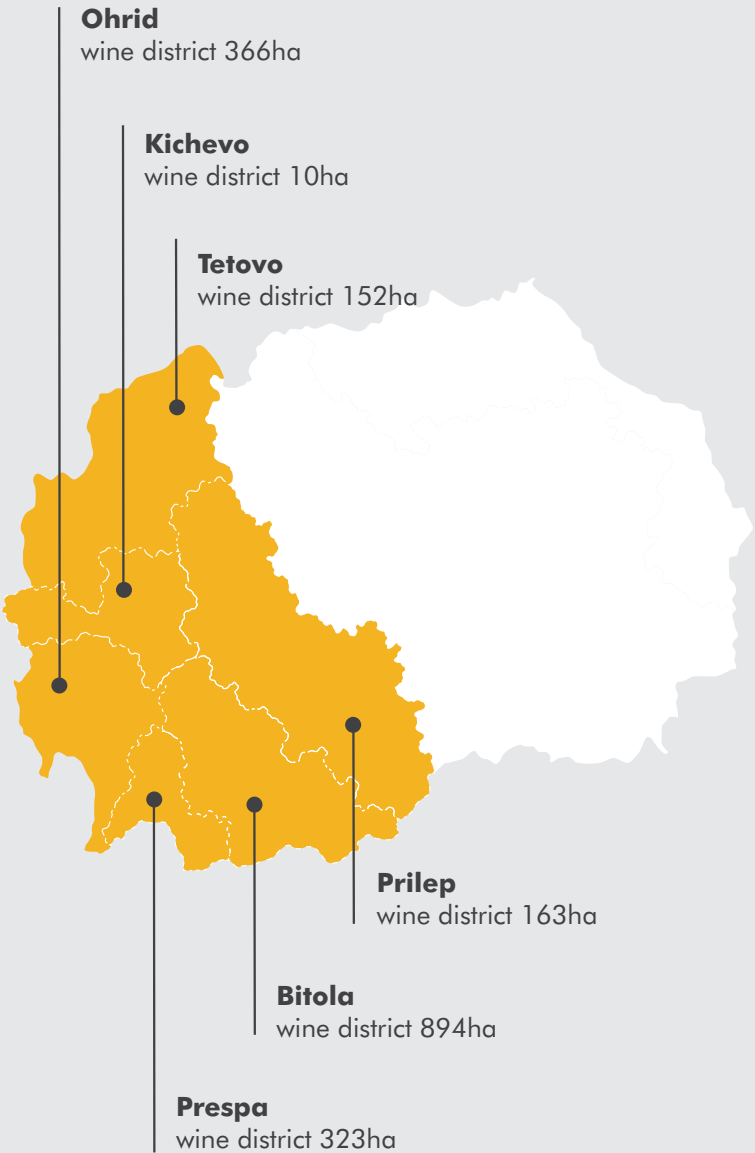


350 mm



■ 7% of the total vineyard area
in the country

Pelagonia-Polog wine region



...

The Western Wine Region (also known as Pelagonia-Polog) consists of two main basins located in the south-west (Pelagonia) and north-west (Polog) part of the Macedonian wine region.

This wine region includes six wine districts and accounts for nearly 35% of the total area of North Macedonia's vineyards, though it contributes barely 7% of wine grape production.

The vineyards are scattered throughout the wine districts and show distinctive characteristics and quality.



History

Ohrid wine district has a unique climate of Mediterranean, mountain, and continental influences, mitigated by the oldest lake in Europe, Lake Ohrid. It is believed that grapevines have been cultivated here since ancient times. This long tradition is verified by many artefacts found at the Trebenista archaeological site, an ancient ruin located between cities of Ohrid and Kicevo. Important archaeological wine finds have been excavated at this site that prove the presence of vineyards and winemaking centuries ago. A wine krater (a bronze vessel 81.5cm high and 44.5cm wide) used for infusing wine with herbs and watering-down wine to reduce its strength, as well as a golden wine gold cup dating from 5th to 6th centuries BC show that wine played an important ceremonial role in this region.

Orthodox churches played an important part in continuing wine production during the Ottoman period. There are more than 360 churches in this region that kept the tradition of winemaking alive for the whole territory.

The region is windy which protects vines from fungal diseases and results in healthy grapes. The wines are mainly fruit-driven, with a typically elegant, refreshing palate and silky tannins, a touch of salinity and nice expression of the terroir.



Vineyards

- 366 hectares
- Altitude 650 – 750 m



Climate

The Ohrid wine district is largely mountainous and is high in altitude, so it has elements of a mountain climate, but it is also tempered by huge water body of Lake Ohrid. The mild influence of the Mediterranean climate is also felt through the river Drim. Summers are pretty warm during the day and cooler by night, while winters are mild. Late spring and early autumn frosts can be an occasional but rare risk.



Soil

The vineyards are undulating and occasionally hilly, with gentle slopes. The best sites for grapevines are south-facing. Vines are mainly grown on diluvial, brown and cinnamonic soils.



Wine Expectations

The Ohrid Wine District is regarded as an area for refreshing, aromatically intense and elegant wines. The vast majority of the wines express the district in the glass, showcasing this picturesque landscape and the influence of the refreshing breezes from the surrounding mountains. The wines are also well-structured and have the potential to undergo ageing in oak to increase complexity. Tannins are easily detectable but are fine-grained and silky, supporting the body of the wine which ranges from medium to full. A long ripening season means that some wines also show spicy or herbal notes.

It is no secret that grapes or wines from this district are often blended with grapes or wines from the warmer districts to increase freshness and vice versa to add more body, extract and complexity to the blends made here. There are also some promising amphora (qevri) wines made with lengthy skin maceration in a return to ancient winemaking traditions.

Annual average temperature



11.5 °C

Average temperature at veraison



16.5 °C

Max annual temperature



36.2 °C

Annual average precipitation



718 mm



History

Scratch the surface almost anywhere in North Macedonia and you are likely to find an artefact linked to the country's rich cultural history, and especially its wine and food traditions. The ancient town of Heraclea, established by Philip II of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great) in 4th century BC, bears witness to the long tradition of wine production and consumption in this wine district. There are records from Ancient Macedonia showing that wine was served to warriors before battle and also in honour of victory, and more rarely, as a consolation after defeat. Furthermore, this wine district is located on the crossroads of the Via Ignatia, a once-famous, ancient trade route. The Romans traded wines and other goods all along this route, and spread vine growing and wine production.

Today, Bitola is the gastronomic heart of Macedonian cuisine, supported by wines from the well-known Vardar River Valley region, along with local wines from garage wineries that are mostly consumed in people's homes.



Vineyards

- 894 hectares
- Altitude 550 – 670 m



Dominant grape varieties

White

- Rkatsiteli
- Riesling
- Chardonnay
- Smederevka

Red

- Pinot Noir
- Stanušina
- Prokupac
- Alicante Bouschet



Climate

The Bitola wine district is quite mountainous and lies at high altitude, giving it features of a mountain climate along with moderate continental aspects. Summers are pretty warm, while winters are very cold with temperatures low enough to cause freezing damage to vines.



Soil

The district can be unofficially divided into three important wine sub-zones that differ in soil. The first is located north of the town of Bitola, upstream along the Black River. Vineyards are planted mainly on the plain where the nutrient-rich, alluvial loams cannot produce high-quality crops, so most wines are destined for bulk production. However, it's worth noting that this sub-zone extends for a short distance to the west in direction of Demir Hisar. Here some good quality vineyards may be found on the foothills of the mountains with nutrient-poor soils based on gneiss and clay. The second sub-zone is located on the foothills of Mount Pelister. There's a cooler climate here and Lake Strezevo moderates the extreme continental-mountain climate, so together with the silt, sand and clay soils, this is a good environment for the production of Pinot Noir, the indigenous Stanušina, Riesling, Rkatsiteli and so on. The third sub-zone is located to the south-east of the town of Bitola, near the Greek border and close to the hamlet of Tepavci, where the rocky limestone and red clay terrain at 550m altitude gives very good results with Gamay.



Wine Expectations

The region produces mainly elegant and refreshing wines with a sense of place, and a hint of minerality. Wine production is based mainly in small garage wineries, using traditional methods of vinification.

One local speciality can be found in the area's rosé wines. These are often made in a unique traditional method using white grape varieties with skin contact and gaining colour from co-fermentation with aromatic black grapes. The resultant wine is deep in colour – closer to France's Tavel than Provence-style rosés – and showing good concentration of fruity and floral aromas and a refreshing palate with medium body and fine creamy texture.



Terroirs

Srpci, Beranci, Lisolaj, Magarevo, Tepavci

Annual average temperature



11.0 °C

Average temperature at veraison



16.8 °C

Max annual temperature



37.5 °C

Annual average precipitation

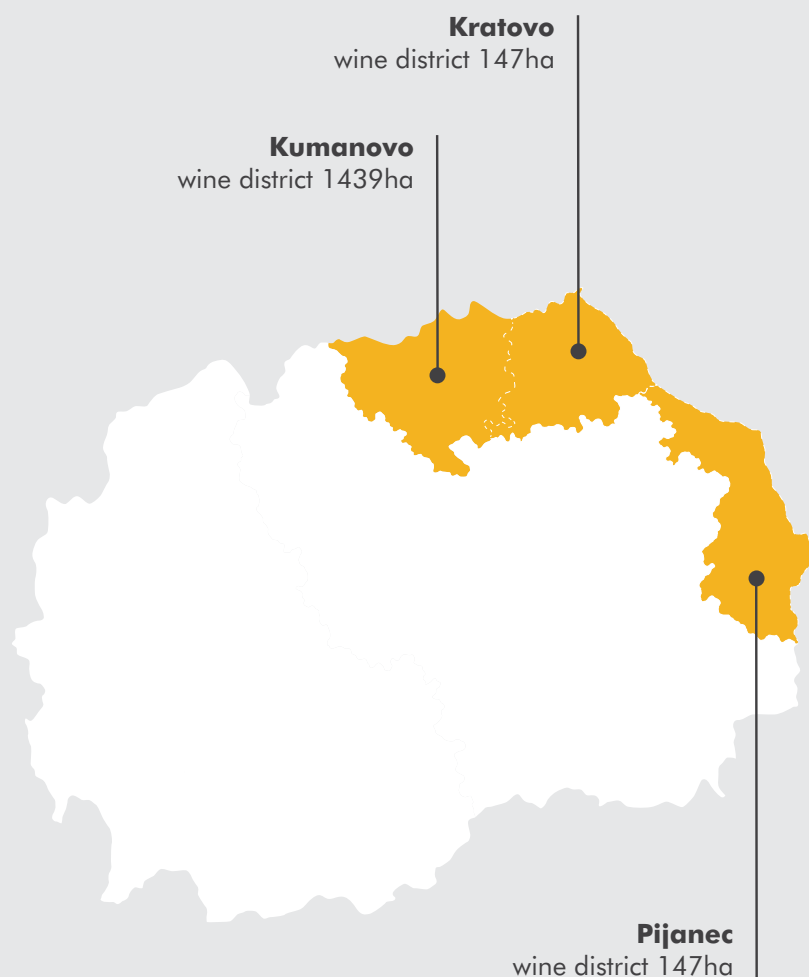


764 mm



■ 6% of the total vineyard area
in the country

Pchinja - Osogovo wine region



The Eastern Wine Region

(also known as Pchinja-Osogovo) extends along the northern part of Pchinja River Valley towards the Osogovo Mountains and includes three wine districts: Kumanovo, Kratovo, and Pijanec. The vineyards are fragmented and scattered throughout the wine region, and express different terroirs and quality. Each wine district has its own distinct meso-climate: Kumanovo tends towards continental while the Pijanec climate is more influenced by mountains and Kratovo lies between the two. The vines are mainly grown on the mountain slopes with an altitude of 440 to 850m.

Climate

The climate is continental temperate, colder than Central and Eastern regions, with strong northern winds.

On average, there are 110 days with a temperature of over 25 °C in summer. Average precipitation levels are 550mm each year, and between 300 and 400mm during the vegetative period. Periods of drought are rare during this time.



Soil

The type of soils varies significantly, both diluvial and alluvial soils are present with varying chemical content and texture. Cinnamonic soil, limestone rocks, sand-clay mixes and so on can be found. In general, wines from this wine region are characterized by a refreshing and elegant palate followed by silky or velvety tannins, some minerality, and elegance.



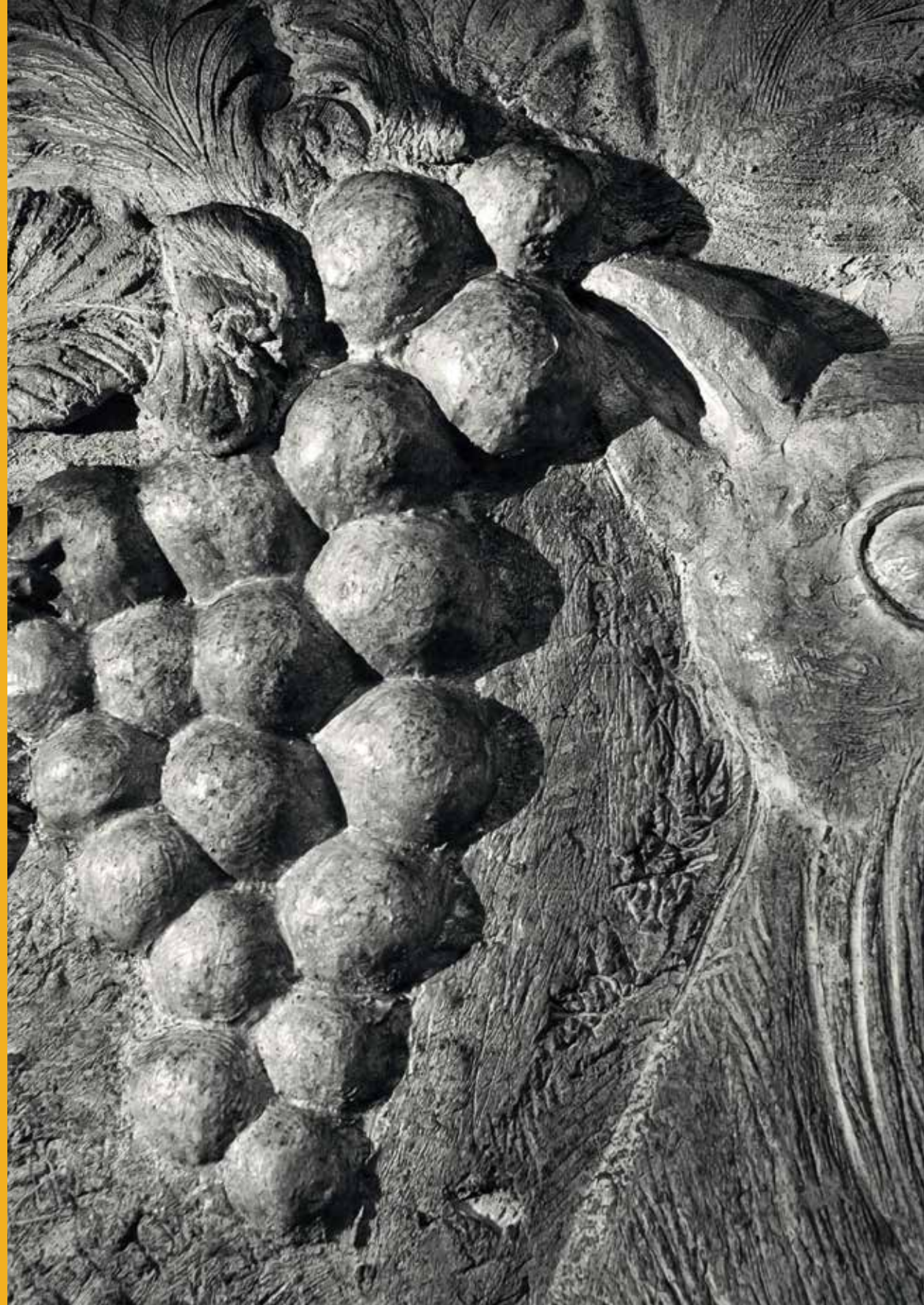
Vineyards

- 1733 hectares
- Altitude 440 – 850 m



05.

Grape varieties



Wine Variety	Type	% of total wine ha	Ha planted per variety
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Vranec	●	38.40%	10,800
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Smederevka	●	26.57%	7,500
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Merlot	●	4.40%	1,240
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Cabernet Sauvignon	●	4.02%	1,140
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Kratošija	●	3.70%	1,050
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Rhein Riesling	●	3.51%	990
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Chardonnay	●	2.90%	818
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Pinot Noir	●	1.80%	508
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Rkatsiteli	●	1.71%	482
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Prokupac	●	1.70%	480
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Stanušina	●	1.50%	423
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Wine Variety	Type	% of total wine ha	Ha planted per variety
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Temjanika	●	1.35%	381
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Muscat Hamburg	●	1.35%	381
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Italian Riesling (Welschriesling)	●	1.08%	305
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Župljanka	●	1.00%	282
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Plovdiva	●	0.94%	265
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Žilavka	●	0.75%	212
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Sauvignon	●	0.74%	209
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Syrah	●	0.32%	90
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Teran	●	0.29%	82
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Plavac Mali	●	0.17%	50
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Others	● ●	0.35%	525
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Key white grape varieties



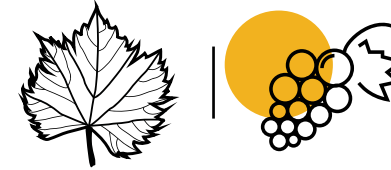
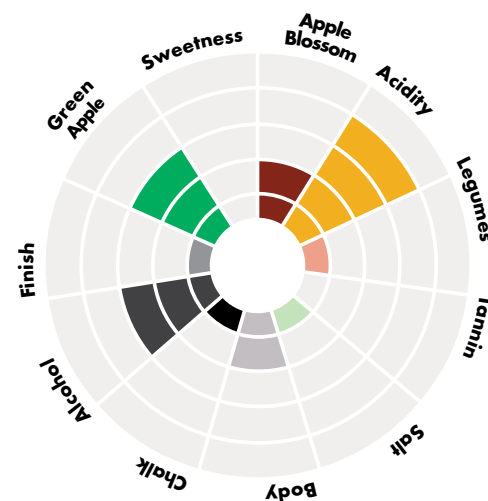
Smederevka / 7500 ha

Macedonia's leading white grape variety, predominantly used for production of everyday white wines and for distilling into grape brandy, known locally as "rakija." Smederevka is considered to be of Balkan origin, due to its significant presence in Bulgaria's vineyards as Dimyat (or Dimiat).

It's also grown as Smederevka in Serbia and in Greece as Zoumiatiko (meaning sugar-rich fruit). Genetic analysis has recently shown its parentage to be Coarna Alba and Heunisch Weiss though no one knows when it first appeared. It is a highly productive grape variety, which is why growers are so keen to continue cultivating it and it can still give a generous crop, if mediocre in quality, in warm climates and where the soil is rich in nutrients. It produces wines that are aromatically neutral, light to medium bodied and with refreshing acidity, sometimes up to 7 g/l.

It is often blended with Welschriesling for a more refreshing blend, as consumers here often mix such wines with sparkling water to make spritzers on very hot summer days.

Smederevka



Chardonnay / 818 ha

Chardonnay is widespread throughout the world due to its ability to grow in different climate zones and soils resulting in different styles and quality of wines. Expressed in numbers, the vineyards planted with Chardonnay cover 818 ha, mainly within the Vardar River Valley. Still wines made from Chardonnay can be roughly divided into two styles: fruity and complex.

In North Macedonia, fruit-driven wines are primarily made from Chardonnay grown on the plains and at higher yields. Such wines still retain sufficient palatable freshness, fruitiness and some detectable body. It's quite common for Chardonnays from warm climates to have little potential for further ageing due to light structure, so consumption is intended to be within a year or two of the harvest.

The aromatic profile of such Chardonnay is led by green apple and stone fruit, even some tropical fruit notes in the warmest wine districts. Winemakers often leave such wines in contact with fine lees for a short period in order to improve the body of the wine and add some creamy notes as well as increasing complexity.

Some of these wines may be found in blends with other white grape varieties to meet certain market price points.

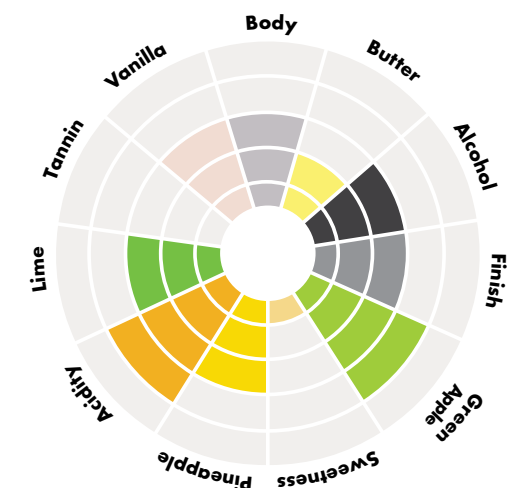
Complex Chardonnays are made from high-quality grapes from vineyards that are planted on slopes and poorer alkaline soils ensuring good structure and thus affinity for prolonged aging.

Yields are typically lower, resulting in a smaller but higher quality crop with more intense aromas and structure.

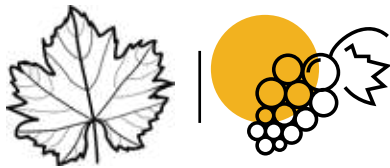
Some of these wines, especially from particularly good micro-locations may be close in quality to Burgundy's Côte de Beaune with bouquet reminiscent of Pouilly Fuissé.

Sparkling wines are not part of Macedonia's wine tradition and what is produced tends to be quality-focused and made in small quantities by the traditional method. There are some successful examples of blanc de blancs made from Chardonnay in the Skopje wine district.

Chardonnay



Key white grape varieties



Temjanika

Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains / 381 ha

Temjanika is a local synonym for white grape variety recognized worldwide as a Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains. You can still find some arguments that Temjanika is a synonym of Muscat de Frontignan, but that is now recognized as another name for Muscat Blanc, specifically destined for sweet wines from village Frontignan in France. However, Temjanika has found a place among Macedonian whites as a much-loved aromatic wine. Although this versatile grape variety can be used to produce many different styles of wine, its main role globally is in producing sweet and fortified wines thanks to its high acidity and intense aromas.

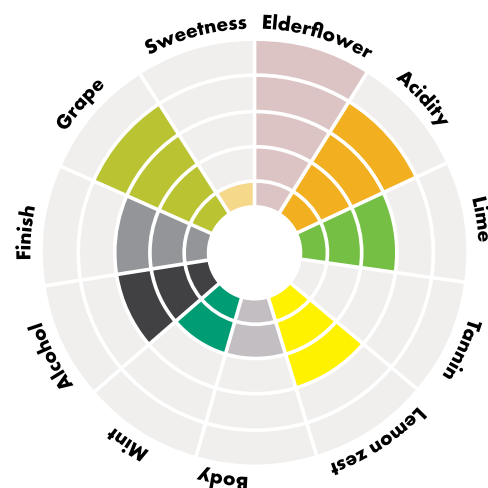
In contrast, the vast majority of Macedonian Temjanika wines are made in a dry and fruity style, which has become quite fashionable worldwide in the last decade. It is typically vinified in tank using reductive techniques to protect the aromatic varietal compounds.

Temjanika is characterized by intensely fruity and floral aromas (e.g. elderflower, white grapes) and a dry palate with refreshing acidity, light body and medium length. It is a good companion with green salads seasoned with fruity dressing, or even with some fruity and creamy desserts, especially for wine styles with slightly higher residual sugar.

Temjanika suits a warm climate and is able to retain acidity along with sufficient sugar to produce wines with light to medium alcohol. Cooler climate wine districts such as Tikveš (here mostly south-east facing and/or high-altitude vineyards), Veles, Ovche Pole, and Skopje may offer more expressively aromatic wines. To appeal to consumers who prefer less aromatic wines, Temjanika may be blended with the more inferior Muscat Ottonel and/or Chardonnay.

In the Skopje wine district, there has been a promising attempt to making sparkling wine from this grape variety by the traditional method. However, it's expected that sparkling production will shift towards the Charmat method to give more focus to the variety's lovely aromatic profile.

Temjanika



Sauvignon Blanc / 209 ha

It's well-known that Sauvignon Blanc prefers a cooler climate. Although Macedonia's wine districts are influenced by a warm climate with a lot of sunny days, they still can offer an adequate environment for successful production of grape varieties that more usually grow in cooler areas.

Solutions In the vineyard include higher altitude, northern orientation and allowing a more vigorous canopy to provide shade (something this "wild white" can do) then in the winery, cutting edge technology supports precise winemaking. The vast majority of Macedonian wines made from Sauvignon Blanc will show more citrusy aromas followed by fruity ester notes as a result of low-temperature fermentation which reduces expression of pyrazines and varietal character.

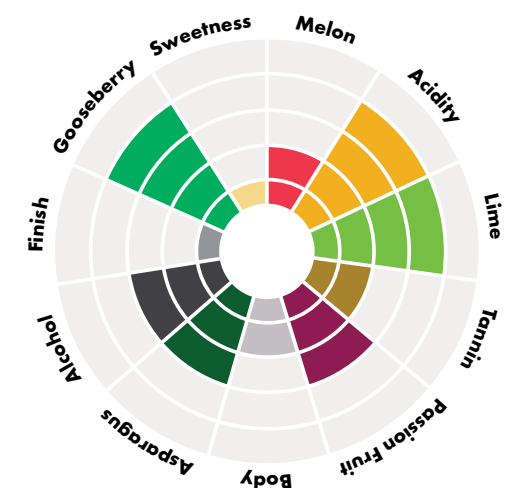
Some successful premium versions of Sauvignon Blanc incline towards a New World style, particularly New Zealand Sauvignon with its higher aroma intensity led by pyrazines (fresh cut grass, green bell pepper, asparagus) intertwined with ripe citrus and green fruit aromas (lime, lemon juice, passionfruit, gooseberry).

A refreshing palate and medium body are common for majority of wines. Some premium examples will offer a lighter body to focus on easy-going and refreshing, fruit-driven wines from this grape variety.

French and rarely American oak barriques are being used for building complexity in some wines labeled as Fumé Blanc. Some wineries promote buttery aromas and some creamy hints during maturation on fine lees supported by battonage.

Sauvignon Blanc wines are mainly found in the wine districts of the Vardar Valley, but it is not unknown in the other wine regions as the passion for producing refreshing wines in the warm, southern region is pretty high.

Sauvignon Blanc



Key red grape varieties



Vranec | Vranac / 10 800 ha

The origin of this black grape variety has been officially declared to be Montenegro (where it's spelt Vranac) but it seems that its promised land has been found in North Macedonia.

North Macedonia has the biggest area of Vranec in the world with 10,800ha, while Montenegro has just 3,600 ha of this grape. Vranec plantations can be also found in Serbia, Kosovo, Herzegovina and Croatia.

According to Prof. Nastev, the story of Macedonian Vranec began in the 1950s when Vranec was planted in an experimental vineyard near the capital Skopje, and from there it quickly spread all over the country.

The fact is that Vranec can be a really productive variety, but in North Macedonia it has also found a perfect environment for producing high-quality grapes.

The 1950s was a time when rebuilding the newly poor and devastated Yugoslavia after WWII was the main target.

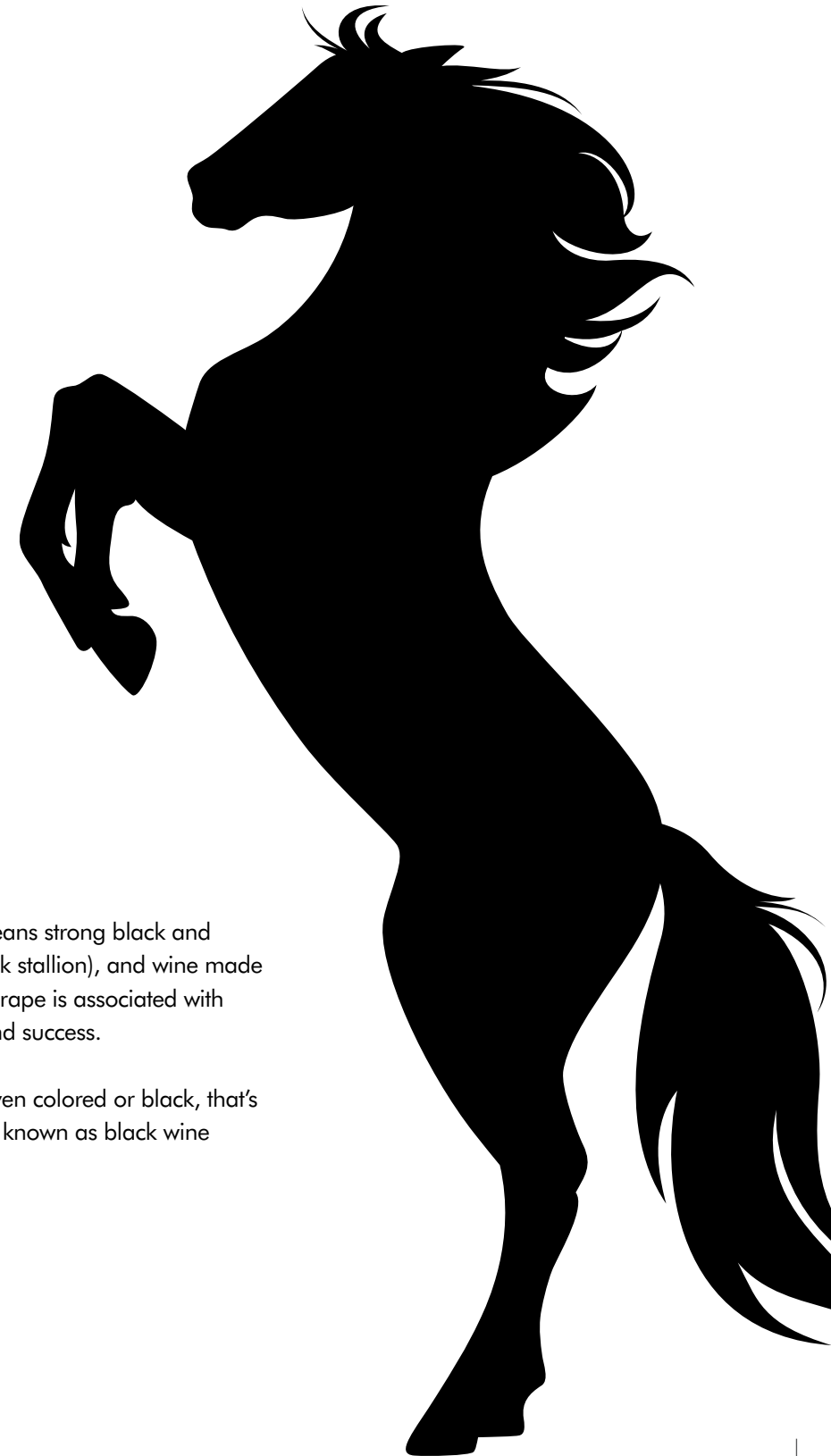
Macedonia had lots of fields with great potential for agriculture, though the focus was on huge quantities rather than high quality. Among all the other grape varieties, Vranec was able to offer both. It wasn't exactly the very highest quality but good enough and sufficiently generous in yield to quench the thirst of 20 million inhabitants all over Yugoslavia. It was love at first sight between grape growers and Vranec, and from that moment the region gained an image of a bulk wine region.

Even today vintners are still struggling to shake off that label, even though the last decade has seen the best wineries "harvesting" a lot of international awards, proving the quality of wines made from Vranec.

Today Vranec can be found all over North Macedonia in all 16 wine sub-regions, each of them with unique terroir that can be expressed in their wines.

The word Vranec means strong black and powerful horse (black stallion), and wine made from this variety of grape is associated with strength, potency, and success.

Vran also means raven colored or black, that's why red wine is also known as black wine in the Balkans.



Hi, I am Vranec, how do you do?

The Grape

Black grape variety

My young canes are slightly curved with buds on the top with a distinctive pale yellow-green colour and pinkish edges. When my canes get older, they become thickened and rounded with short internodes, and a chestnut-grey colour.

My leaf is my fingerprint. It is huge, divided into five parts by the lateral sinuses (the indentations of the leaf) which are deep close to the leaf tip and overlapped close to the petiole. The lobes are medium and quite pointed. The face of my leaves is shiny, smooth and deep green in colour, while the underside has fine prostrate hairs between my veins.

My flowers are hermaphrodite and pollinate well, people just gossip that I need my parent Primitivo (aka Kratošija) to pollinate me, although it is always welcome in my vineyards for other reasons.

My sought-after fruit grows in long cylindrical clusters, with one or two wings.

My berries can be medium or large in size, densely packed, and always with thick skin, nicely coloured a rich blue-black thanks to lots of anthocyanins. Succulent juice from my ripe berries contains nearly 230 g/l sugar and up to 6.5 g/l acidity, resulting in naturally well-balanced and harmonious wines.

If you ask me where I want to live, I feel relaxed in moderately moist soils with medium fertility, exposed to the south or south-east. Please do not leave me in poor and cold, swampy terrains, I don't like the plains either. I've always enjoyed a nice view closer to the sky, as I am grape of the sun growing in the land of the eternal sun.



The Wine

Powerful, bold, succulent and opulent wine offering plenty of southern charm



My Nose:

From the vineyard

Swirl me and you will find a fruity tornado. My aromas are ripe and often well defined. My aromatics are dominated by ripe black fruit and some red berries when I come from cooler regions. In order of intensity you can find: bramble, blackcurrant, black cherry, ripe sour cherry and wild blueberry, followed by floral notes of violet.

Look deeper and in my youth, I will show you subtle wild herb notes reminiscent of freshly picked sprigs. Later I will offer you gentle savoury notes similar to Mourvedre (Monastrell). If I come from cooler regions, my intensity will increase as a result of a slower ripening and giving me more time to develop aromas.



My Appearance:

Deep ruby in colour, with intense purple highlights when I am young. I gathered a lot of extract and anthocyanins to increase my concentration. My tears are dense and slide slowly down the glass.

*From the winery
(vinification, élevage and maturation aromas)*

Some creamy or subtle buttery tones may be revealed when I pass through the process of malolactic fermentation. If you find some spices: pepper, nutmeg or sweet notes such as vanilla, coconut, cinnamon or clove that usually means that I've spent some time in oak barrels. If you find another layer of aroma, such as prune, fig, dried cranberry, cocoa, coffee, chocolate, leather, meaty and so on, this explains that I spent some time in a bottle after lying around in oak barrels.



My Palate:

My offer to the world is fruit-driven, juicy, mainly dry and refreshing high acid reds. My wines have high but often well-integrated alcohol which, together with a backbone of ripe, nicely rounded tannins and amazing concentration, building my full body. My flavour characteristics mostly follow my nose but lean more towards red berries.

On the palate, I will show you the lead "dancer" of vivid, ripe, juicy, sour cherry or sometimes more succulent pomegranate, both followed by ripe black cherry, subtle blackberry and blueberry notes. If I'm aged in oak or bottle, my palate will follow my nose. With all my power (and I have a lot) I will offer you a lingering finish, either memorably fruity or sometimes complex.

Vranec

The wealth of styles

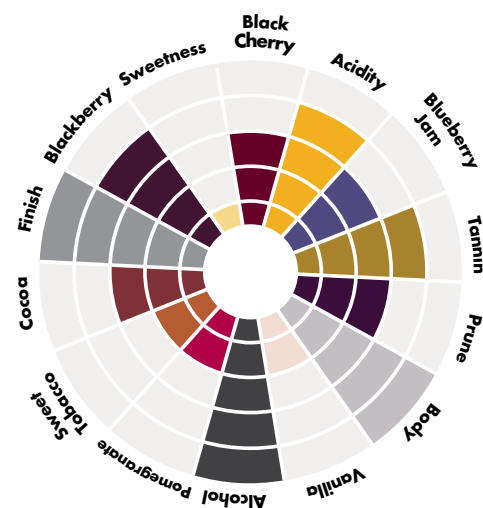
Vranec is quite variable, resulting in many wine styles within the category of still wines, largely influenced by the main aspects that make up terroir. There are sixteen Macedonian sub-regions and these can be divided roughly into two main wine styles, influenced by warmer or cooler climates. North Macedonia is a small mountainous country and as such differences in climate may be due more to altitude than latitude. However, taking into account the different types of soil, precipitation, exposition, vineyard management and so on, Vranec can offer a myriad of different wines which confirm its ability to express terroir. Reduction of the crop in the vineyard is widely used to help produce quality grapes with a sense of place, but it must be done carefully as excessive reduction can impact badly on the biological balance of the vine, resulting in unbalanced grapes and thus wines.

The final touch of a winemaking “wizard” and often the most important process in the winery is the assemblage. Creating blends is a skilled job where main aim is to achieve perfect balance among two or more wines. It doesn’t matter whether they are made from the same grape variety, or if they come from different terroirs, or different blocks in one vineyard.

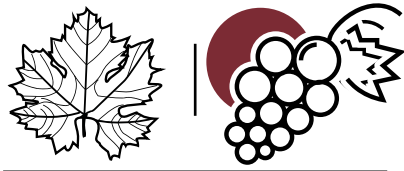
Vranec can become a friendly wine within blend when it has been “tamed”; it might contribute colour (its deep colour is why it is called Vranec or black stallion); structure (due high content of dry extract and tannins) and complexity from its varietal aromas and flavours. Within a Bordeaux blend, Vranec plays the role of an intermediary, supporting the structure of Cabernet Sauvignon and filling out the mid-palate, as well to improve the body and freshness of Merlot. It can also show interesting results blended with Syrah and Cabernet.

The most traditional blend is with Primitivo, under its local name Kratošija. Primitivo improves freshness and increases total acidity within the blend, adding more palatable tannins and increasing complexity. A similar role may be taken by the Croatian grape variety Plavac Mali producing blends with a little less acidity. In terms of blends, some winemakers are “thinking outside the box” and trying blends of Vranec with Cabernet Franc or even with Pinot Noir (even if Pinot Noir is usually produced as a single varietal wine).

Vranec



Key red grape varieties



Kratošija | Tribidrag (Crljenak Kastelanski) / Primitivo / Zinfandel **1050 ha**

Previously thought to be an indigenous Croatian grape variety, though recently identified as most likely to originate in neighbouring Montenegro under the name of Kratošija.

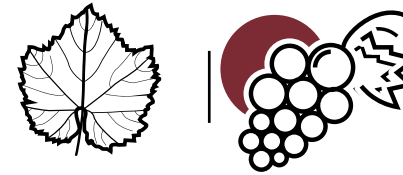
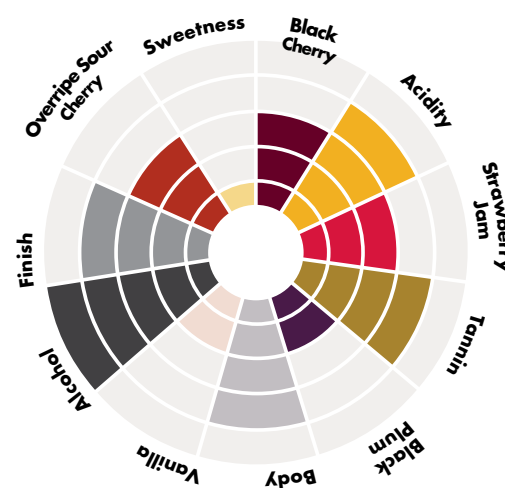
Kratošija has traditionally been grown there and has sometimes been confused with its progeny Vranec. Therefore, there is an unconfirmed view that this grape variety came to Macedonia together with Vranec in the 1950s. On the other hand, some older grape growers argue that they have cultivated Kratošija since they were born. In addition to this theory, there are historic documents that describe powerful reds being taken from Macedonia to ancient Rome, though there's no proof that this was actually Kratošija. What is more important is that there's an unbreakable link between Kratošija and its offspring, especially in blends with Vranec. Today, Kratošija is mainly found in blends although some high quality single varietal wines have appeared recently.

Kratošija is able to produce bold red wines with aromas of black and red fruit, with a refreshing and yet full-bodied palate.

The wines are typically well-structured with an affinity for prolonged ageing in wood, predominantly French new oak, and then bottle ageing, to promote complexity and polish the tannins.

Kratošija wines vary considerably in quality as there are a wide range of different vine selections in vineyards, often selected for yield over quality in previous eras. Formal clonal selection of North Macedonian plant material has not yet been developed, though this would be an important step in improving quality and preserving the unique features of local plant material.

Kratošija



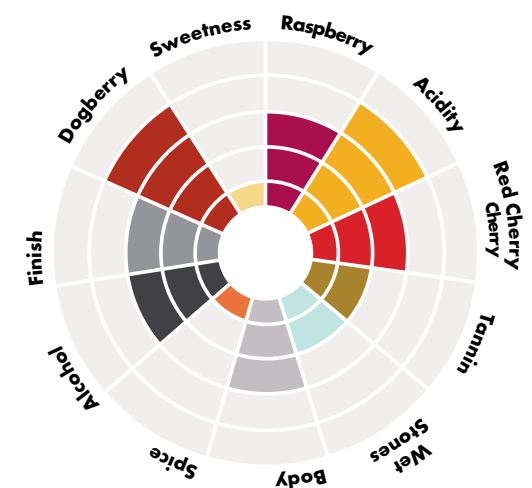
Stanušina / **423 ha**

Stanušina is an indigenous Macedonian black grape variety recently revived by Prof. Klime Beleski and launched commercially by a few wineries. The name etymologically comes from "Strnušina" that literally means 'steep slopes', 'hard-to-reach location', often with poor soil. Actually, the name explains how this grape variety survived the programme of uprooting in Ottoman times, together with its ability to survive drought. The styles of varietal wines are described through the nickname of this grape variety - "Macedonian Girl" pointing to beauty, seductiveness, and tenderness.

Traditionally this grape variety produces relatively light red wines, which usually feature some red fruit aromas led by cornelian cherry and raspberry, and a refreshing mid-bodied palate with silky and ripe tannins. Research continues and there are some promising results with other styles of wines such as rosé and even white wines.

In terms of wine styles, feedback from the market suggests that rosé is most style successful so far, offering mid-intensity, fruity aromas, followed by some vinous notes. It typically has a crisp, refreshing and enjoyable palate which is a perfect match with fish such as salmon, trout or carp. It's also a good option with dishes with lots of fat due to its palate-cleansing high acidity. Stanušina is often used in blends with bolder and more tannic reds to increase freshness and help provide more elegance. The regions of Ohrid, Tikveš, Bitola and Veles are regarded as good locations for producing high quality from this grape variety.

Stanušina



Key red grape varieties



Merlot / 1240 ha & Cabernet Sauvignon / 1140 ha

Macedonia's wine regions offer great conditions for growing Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon and can demonstrate how good Macedonia's grape growing terroir is, as everyone can recognise a good example of these grapes, either alone or in blends.

Traditionally the two are blended together with Cabernet Sauvignon providing the bone and Merlot the flesh. In cooler climates Cabernet Sauvignon may not ripen fully and benefits from support from the softer fleshier Merlot. Here in North Macedonia, both ripen fully and may be found on the market as single varietal wines.

Red wines from these grape varieties offer intense, well-defined red and black fruit aromas, in some cases intertwined with some herbaceous notes. On the palate, a succulent full-bodied palate is typical with supple, well-ripened tannins followed by a long savoury finish.

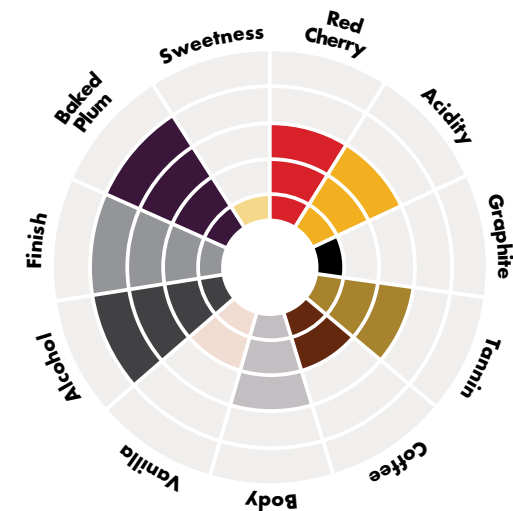
Heading south along the Vardar River Valley the wines rarely develop herbaceous notes and a jammy character may appear. Cabernet Sauvignon seems to be more appreciated among Macedonian wine consumers who like its more intense tannins and firm structure, its potential for ageing and its complexity.

Merlot is somewhat in the shadow of other reds here and sometimes seen as red wine for beginners due to its smoother and more rounded character.

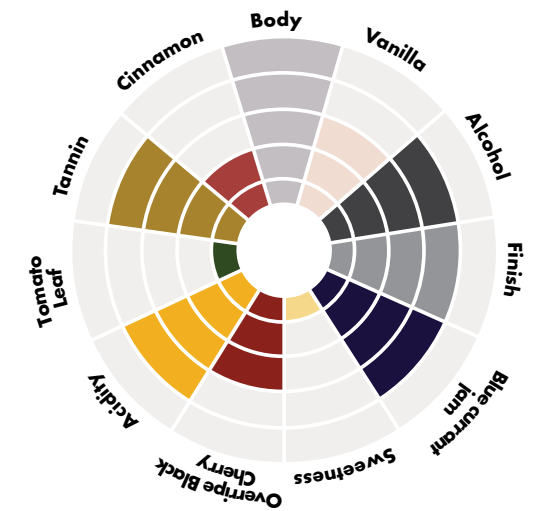
However Macedonian Merlots can be extremely good and are worthy of more attention.

As everywhere else in the world, winemakers in North Macedonia also produce blends from Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon and give them a unique character by adding local Vranec. Vranec has a further impact on the blend by adding more freshness and complexity along with potential for ageing.

Merlot



Cabernet Sauvignon







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