Wine lovers had the opportunity to attend the traditional and prestigious Wine Festival VINISTRA, already in its twenty-first edition, happening in the beautiful city of Poreč. The Festival had taken place from May 9 - 11, 2014. Istria is a very exciting region with the very rich history. While driving through Istria you can enjoy the view of the beautiful Adriatic Sea and really impressive and breathtaking landscapes.
Istria is full of gorgeous hilltop towns and villages across its beautiful inland areas. Truly wonderful scents I felt in the crisp air it is very hard to forget. The locals are warm and friendly. A real pleasure is felt when consuming a rich Istrian traditional cuisine. This charming region with very old architecture and cohabitation of different cultures is a very popular destination for tourists. A spring is also a perfect season if you would like to enjoy a tour of the beautiful Istrian vineyards and feel opulent and charming wine-cellars!

Wine is an intrinsic part of the identity of Istria. Istrian winemakers have impressed visitors with its wide selections of wine at the festival. While tasting wine winemakers would give you detailed descriptions of the wines. I genuinely enjoyed tasting all these great wines. Wine lovers could taste a lot of lovely wines such as Istarska Malvazija, Teran, Muscat, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz made by famous winemakers such as Matošević, Kozlović, Brečević, Coronica, Trapan, Degrassi, Benvenuti, San Tommaso, Terzolo, Geržinić, Roxanich, Arman etc.

Istrian Malvazija and Teran are the most important local grape varieties. Istrian red indigenous variety Teran is mentioned for the first time in the XIV century. It is a red wine with strength, endurance and character, in which both Istrian farmers and aristocrats enjoyed for centuries. In the early nineties French varieties became so popular, however Teran is bouncing back nowadays. It is indeed possible to produce superb Teran wines of the top quality. Malvazija is the leading variety and Istria is recognized for her great Malvazija wines. Bordeaux varieties Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon that produce beautifully aromatic wines are unbelievably elegant in Istria and they radiate the intensity of the taste and smell. I was, however, most fascinated by Teran! The greatest merit for return of this Istrian variety to the main stage belongs to Moreno Coronica. His enthusiasm and hard work in the vineyards and cellar, applying very modern viticultural and winemaking techniques, have ensured that his Teran is one of the top quality red wines on the contemporary Croatian wine scene.

Teran wine has a special red color with purple reflections. The wine is rich; its robust character is evident while the grapes are still on the vines. It is characterized by seductive fruity cherry fragrance with a touch of herbal notes and intense lively flavor and especially with prominent acids. The aroma is pleasant and expressed with typical fruity feel. Teran grows in large bunches with mid-sized berries packed with resistant skins. If the weather during September is nice, sunny and rain-free, it gives the vine indeed high quality.
A glass of Teran is an excellent match for all meat and wild game dishes, particularly spiced ones. It is also recommended to match Teran with prosciutto (Istrian dried ham) and cheese - which are typical Istrian starter. Teran is best served at about 18 degrees Celsius. Teran plantings cover only around 10% of the total vineyards area in Istria. Some of the best Teran wines, currently available on the Croatian market, were produced in the wine cellars of Coronica near Umag, Kozlović at Momjan, Cattunar in Brtonigla, Benvenuti in Motovun, and also in cellars of Trapan, Degrassi, San Tommaso, Clai and Agrolaguna.

If you are a person who likes new and interesting flavors Teran is definitely right choice for you. As almost every wine this grape variety comes in two faces, as a young (or fresh) Teran - resembling, for instance, Chianti or Barbera and aged Teran, which could be compared to Barolo. Young Teran is a fine wine that is served daily in bars and restaurants. Aged Teran is an ambitious wine that would be made only in the very best vintages and is consequently served during some special occasions. It should be noted that Teran is essential in making rose or red sparkling wines. A great number of winemakers at the festival participated in the master classes. The Festival was enriched with the lovely presentation entitled ‘Teran - unexplored potential of Istria’ presented by Saša Špiranec - a well-known wine publicist and Gianfranco Kozlović, a famous Istrian winemaker. We heard at the master-class some proposals how to call various renditions of Teran. Thus, the name for young Teran could be ‘Teran Classic’ and for aged Teran: ‘Gran Teran’.

We had the opportunity to taste six great Teran wines at the presentation - from the lightest to the most intensive. We tasted the following Young Teran wines: Kozlović Teran 2013, Institute Poreč 2013 and Laguna Teran 2013, as well as the following Aged Teran wines: San Tommaso Teran 2011, Coronica Gran Teran 2009 and Benvenuti Teran 2011. The emphasis in this presentation was placed upon the importance of authentic wines for better recognition of Istria as a wine region. Špiranec and Kozlović singled out the advantages of Istria and concluded that wine producers need to perform a common strategy in the creation of the market image of Teran. The existing advantages of this wine region include: originality, authentic Istrian tradition and already established wine market. We all know that a genuine customer confidence can only be acquired through trademarks which guarantee a minimum of style and quality, as well as with a good price/quality ratio. A fine, elegant and high quality Teran wine, shall naturally become more attractive for a new type of a wine consumer! The future is in a Young Teran, as this is a fresh and well-balanced wine. Foreign markets that prefer fresh wines include, for instance, UK, Scandinavia, Benelux countries, and also Germany, Austria, Switzerland, USA and Asia.
The VINISTRA Festival was indeed a wonderful opportunity to learn a lot about Istrian wine scene, to meet great winemakers of Istria and also to taste the top quality Croatian wines! From year to year more and more winemakers of Istria recognize the quality of Teran and they continuously increase the total plantings of this indigenous Istrian variety. Teran really makes Istria much more desirable wine region!

Therefore, my suggestion to the local wine producers is to plant more Teran vineyards and apply new standards and technologies in wine production, where applicable, and international success is guaranteed! At the end of the day, it was such a pleasure for all wine lovers to enjoy this charming Mediterranean wine region!