



Erasmus+

**Project
“Green
Skills for
Social
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Unique facts about Bulgaria



Wine production has over a thousand year long tradition in Bulgaria. The ancient Thracians, who populated the land in ancient times, worshipped the gods Zagreus and Dionysius and used the wine during their religious rituals. Nowadays Bulgaria is a proud producer of fine quality wines, some of which are made from unique sorts of vine, impressing wine connoisseurs worldwide.

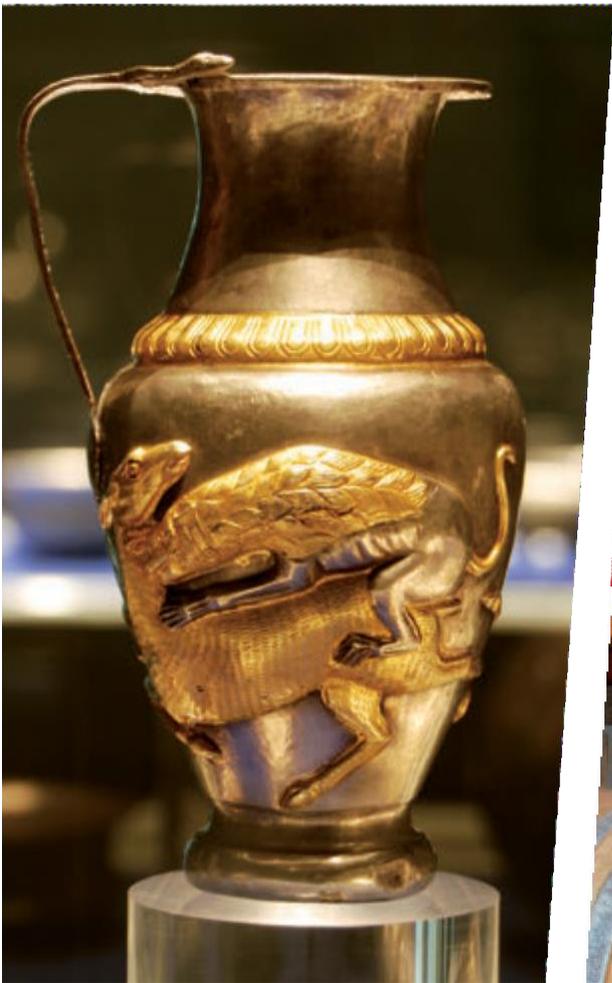
The traditional Bulgarian cuisine is rich in spices, with specific and unique taste. Most Bulgarian meals are easy to prepare – if you follow a traditional recipe to prepare an authentic Bulgarian meal, you will feel the Bulgarian spirit and cosy atmosphere.



The spices, fruit and vegetables used are organic. Only in Bulgaria one can experience the taste of the world-famous Bulgarian yoghurt, as well as delicacy prepared with it. Bulgaria produces the rich flavoured white cheese and rich tasting herbal honey.



History of wine in the Bulgarian lands



Wine is an integral part of the history of Bulgaria, it is also very much a part of Bulgarian culture, customs and spirit. The Bulgarian lands are rooted in ancient civilizations which have left an indelible imprint on modern Bulgaria. The ancient Thracians used wine as an important part of their religious rituals and as a mean of communing with their gods. Evidence for this can be found in the many shrines discovered throughout the country, which bring to mind the ancient rituals and the cult of the god of wine, Zagreus. Bulgaria is home to some of the most important archaeological discoveries, including gold and silver Thracian pieces, most of which were parts of beautiful sets used for serving and consuming wine.

The use of the Orphic drink in religious rituals is associated with traditions in viticulture and winemaking. Homer often mentions in his works the superior quality of Thracian wines.



With the establishment of the Bulgarian State these wine-making traditions were absorbed and preserved. Many medieval travellers who passed through Bulgaria referred to the many different types of good quality wines they were offered.

In the late 19th and early 20th century a professional approach to viticulture and winemaking began to emerge and the foundations of the modern production methods were established for Bulgarian wines. Today, high-quality wines from Bulgaria can be sampled around the globe. Many of the local wines win international awards and astound foreign oenophiles with their high quality and exquisite taste.

The love of good wine and the interest in local varieties has brought about an increase of wine tourism in Bulgaria - wine tours and wine tastings. Many of the wineries in the country organize special events to introduce their newest and best products.



South-western Region

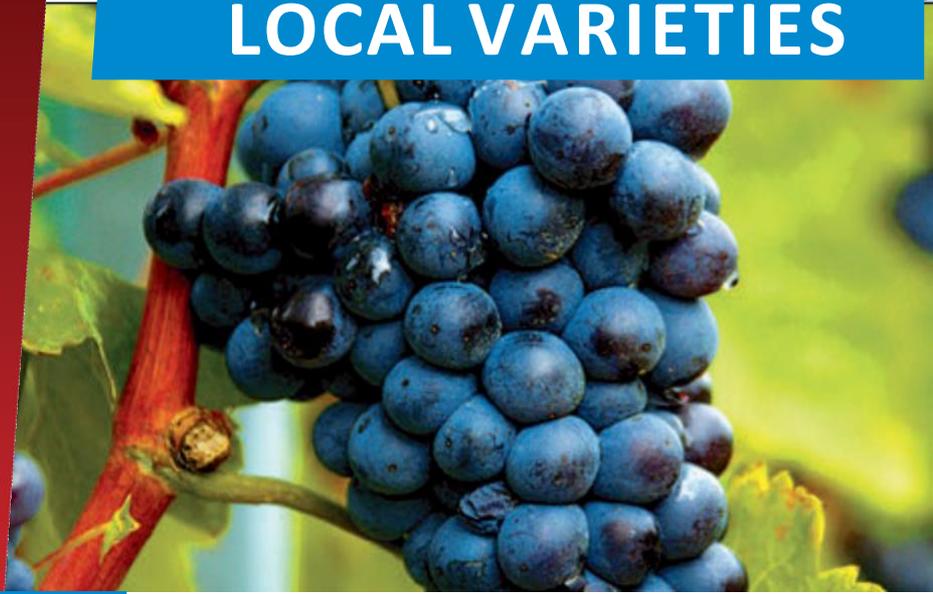
The South-western Wine Region is relatively small and includes the land along the Struma River south of the town of Dupnitsa. The larger wineries of this region are located in Damyanitsa, Sandanski, Blagoevgrad, Petrich and Harsovo. The climate here is very similar to the Mediterranean.



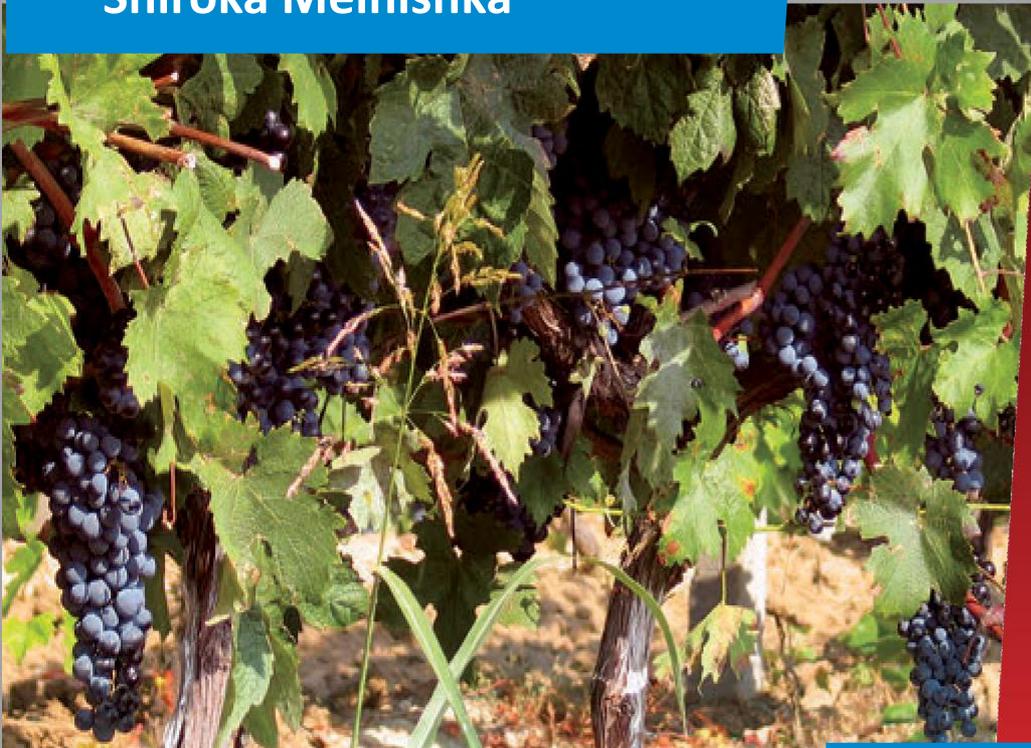
The climatic conditions around Melnik and Sandanski are most favourable for growing grapes. The variety Shiroka Melnishka, which grows only here, is important for wine production in the region. Merlot, Caberne Sauvignon and other varieties are also cultivated.



UNIQUE LOCAL VARIETIES



Shiroka Melnishka



Shiroka Melnishka is a local red variety which grows only in the regions of Melnik, Petrich and Sandanski, since it is vulnerable to low temperatures. The colouring of the wine is medium deep. The wine produced from this grape variety is of excellent quality, with ripe cherry and herbal aromas, and in the presence of oak it develops undertones of tobacco and leather. The flavour of the young wine is fresh, with pronounced tannins.

With maturity its taste becomes softer but retains its spicy finish. The unique flavour of the wine from grape variety Shiroka Melnishka can be experienced in the wineries in the region of Sandanski and Melnik.

Melnik 55 or Early Melnik vine

Early Melnik vine or Melnik 55 is a wine grape variety. It is spread only in the region of Sandanski and Katuntsi. Suitable for the variety are humus-carbonate soils or sand-clayey, warmer soils. Relatively stable variety of low winter temperatures. The vines are sensitive to manna and odium. The grapes are resistant to gray rot. The variety is medium-ripened. The grapes ripen on September 20-25. The vines are very growing, with very good fertility and yield. The yield is about 1500 kg / ha. Variety wines are made with a rich ruby color, rich aroma and aging potential.



Wineries and Wine Tasting



Vila Melnik is a modern winery that opened its doors in the spring of 2013. Thus, we began to write our modern legend.

The winery's capacity is 250 tonnes of grapes per year. It is built on three levels, and the cellars are dug into the sandy hill. The wine-making process is organized so that the flow of the wine moves by the force of gravity through the three levels of the building. In addition to being extremely energy efficient, this method allows us to treat the wine gently, without putting unnecessary stress on the grapes, and maintaining the wine's natural structure.



THE BULGARIAN CULINARY TRADITION



Bulgarian cuisine is colourful and diverse. It is rooted in centuries-old traditions and practices. In some places recipes have been passed down from generation to generation and have remained unchanged for hundreds of years.

Characteristic of Bulgarian cuisine is the simultaneous heat treatment of most products. The recipes include a large number of vegetables and spices, among which are garlic, black pepper, thyme, spearmint, savory, bay leaf and paprika.

Some dishes are prepared for specific Bulgarian holidays - Christmas Eve, Easter, St. George's Day and St. Nicholas Day.

Herbs and Spices

Herbs have a prominent place in Bulgarian cuisine. Various healing herbs are used for seasoning in many traditional dishes. These include basil, thyme, oregano and spearmint.

Almost all Bulgarian dishes include parsley. It is used in main dishes, soups and salads, both fresh and dried. It is not only used as seasoning, but according to folk medicine it helps cure digestive and kidney diseases.

Basil also has a special place in Bulgarian cuisine. It is most often used to season meat, beans and potato dishes.

No one in Bulgaria can imagine bean soup without spearmint. This aromatic spice is used both fresh and dried. The taste of wild mint is also excellent.

Thyme is also used as a spice and has various medicinal qualities. It has been believed since ancient times that it is a cure for colds, bronchitis, heart disease and rheumatism.

Pirin cuisine is diverse and deliciously interesting. It utilizes a wide variety of spices. You can best explore this local cuisine in the area of Bansko.

The taverns of Bansko, as well as larger establishments in other towns of the Pirin region, are charming with their old-style furnishing and authentic atmosphere. Here a visitor can sample some of the most interesting dishes and delicacies in Bulgaria - banski starets, kapama, chomlek, banska kavarma and katino meze.

Many guest houses will even offer to teach a guest to cook some of these dishes. While in Pirin red Melnik wine is a "must try".

Also in the region of Pirin the local versions of kachamak, sarmi and pastarma are a must.

Pirin Cuisine



BULGARIAN CUISINE

Shopska Salad

Ingredients: 500 g tomatoes, two cucumbers, 1 pepper, 1 onion, 200 g white cheese, parsley (to taste), vinegar, salt and oil (to taste)

Dice the tomatoes into cubes. Slice the cucumbers into rings and finely chop the onion or cut it into crescents. Slice the pepper into thin strips, add the spices and stir. Crush or grate the cheese on top of the seasoned vegetables. Chop parsley finely and sprinkle. It is best to serve the salad well chilled. Olives may be added if desired.



Hotchpotch

Ingredients: 500 g pork, 500 g potatoes, 200 g green beans, 200 g eggplant, 100 g okra, 100 g peas, 1 onion, 2 carrots, 1-2 tomatoes (fresh or canned), parsley, savory, salt, pepper (to taste)

Dice the meat into cubes and sauté or stew briefly and put in a crock pot. Cut the vegetables into cubes and add to the hotchpotch. Add the spices and stir. Bake with the lid on for about an hour and a half to two hours in hot oven. The lid may be taken off in the last 20 minutes to get a crust. In some regions of the country a cup of rice is added to the dish.



Tarator

(Cold Cucumber Soup)

Ingredients: 2 cucumbers, 400 g yoghurt, crushed walnuts (to taste), 1 clove of garlic, vegetable oil, dill

Peel cucumbers and cut into small cubes. Stir yoghurt while still in the pot. Add to the cucumbers and continue stirring. Add ½ litre of cold water. More or less water may be needed depending on the desired density. Use a pestle and mortar to crush the clove of garlic with some salt and add to the soup with the ground walnuts and finely chopped dill. Season with a little vegetable oil. Tarator is served cold as an appetizer.



(Cheese Pastry)

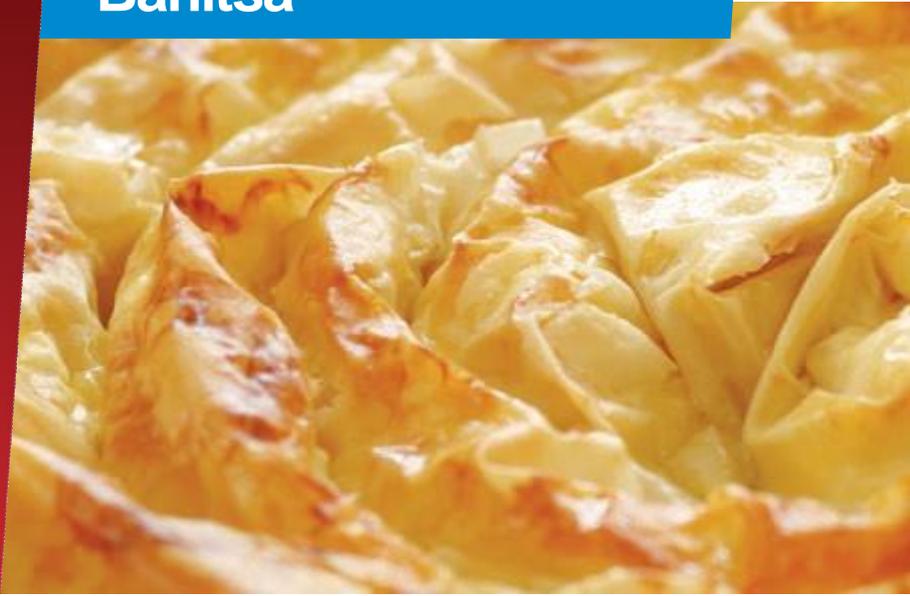
Ingredients: To make the pastry from scratch: 2 cups milk, 1 tsp sugar, 1 tbsp salt, 2 eggs, flour – as much as can be absorbed, 50 g yeast

Or: 1 package ready pastry sheets, 400 g white cheese, 2 eggs, 400 g yoghurt, butter

To prepare the pastry dough mix the milk, salt, sugar, eggs, yeast and flour and allow dough to rise. Then tear small balls from the dough and roll out on a floured surface.

Place the rolled-out sheet on aluminium foil or wrapping foil. Spread a mixture of the eggs and cheese on each sheet. Use the foil to roll up the sheet. The rolled-up sheets are placed on a baking pan in the form of a spiral. Bake in preheated oven at 200-250 °C until brown.

Banitsa



Flatbread



Ingredients: 1 kg flour, ½ litre of water (or 400 g of yoghurt), 3 eggs, 1 tsp sugar, 1 tbsp salt, vegetable oil, yeast, butter

Dissolve the yeast in water and add 2 eggs stirring constantly. While stirring, add the flour until a homogeneous dough ball is formed. Add 1-2 tablespoons of vegetable oil and leave for 30 minutes to rise, pat into a flat, round shape. Bits of the dough can be used to decorate the surface of the loaf. Use one egg to glaze the surface. Separate the yolk from the white of the egg and spread the yolk evenly with a cooking brush. The flatbread is baked in a preheated oven. It takes about an hour at 200-250 °C.

Royal Pickle

Ingredients: (For a 3-litre jar), 2 ½ to 3 kg vegetables: bell peppers, cauliflower, carrots, cabbage, 500 g sugar, 100 g salt, 1 head celery, garlic, 250 ml vinegar, 1 litre of water, aspirin, black pepper, bay leaf

Clean the vegetables and cut into cubes. Pack vegetables in a jar as tightly as possible. Bring to boil the water, sugar, salt, vinegar and aspirin (finely ground). Add the spices after removing the marinade from the stove. Pour over the vegetables and seal while still hot. Arrange the jars and turn over every few days. After two weeks the pickles are ready for consumption.



Bean Soup

Ingredients: 250 - 300 g white or pinto beans, 1 carrot, 1 onion, 1 dried red pepper, 2 tomatoes (fresh or canned), savory, spearmint and salt to taste, sliced sausage may be added to the soup, if desired.

Soak the beans in water for at least 5-6 hours. Wash them, put them in a pot of water and bring it to a boil. Pour off the water. Rinse the beans again and add fresh water. If a pressure cooker is used it takes 50 minutes to 1 hour. If an ordinary pot is used, cook them for a minimum of 2 1/2 and a half hours.

In a separate pan sauté the finely chopped onions, tomatoes and carrots and add them to the beans. Reduce heat to simmer until all vegetables are soft. Before removing the pot from the stove add the spices.



Cabbage Sarmi



(Stuffed Cabbage Leaves)

Ingredients: 20 cabbage /sauerkraut/ leaves, 2-3 onions, 500 g minced meat, 1 cup rice, paprika, black pepper, savory, parsley, vegetable oil.

Fry the finely chopped onions and add the minced meat and some water. When the meat is almost done add the rice and a cup of water. Stir until the rice absorbs the water. Add the spices to taste.

Cut the solid part of each cabbage leaf. Put a little of the stuffing in the centre and wrap the sarma. Arrange the ready sarmi in a saucepan and add one to two cups of water, cover with a few cabbage leaves and simmer.

The sarmi may be prepared without meat. If not using meat, add raisins and walnuts to the rice stuffing.

Stuffed Peppers

Ingredients: 8 peppers, 1 onion, 1 cup rice, 1 carrot, ½ kg minced meat, salt, paprika, black pepper, flour.

Cut the onions and carrots into small pieces, fry them in oil and add water to cover. Add minced meat and continue to fry until the meat changes colour and is broken down into small pieces. Then add the rice, half a cup of water and seasoning. Stir until the rice absorbs the water.

Clean the peppers and remove the stems and seeds. Stuff each pepper with the prepared mixture. Cover the hole and arrange the peppers in a baking dish. Add several cups of water. Place pan in a preheated oven.

Serve with yoghurt or sauce. For the sauce use an egg, cup yoghurt, two cups of water and 2-3 tablespoons of flour. Mix these ingredients and let them sit for 5 minutes. Pour over the peppers just before serving.



BULGARIAN BARBEQUE Skewers

Ingredients: 1 kg pork, 2 tomatoes, 2 onions, 2 peppers, thyme, salt, black pepper, vegetable oil

Dice the meat, remove the fat and season with thyme, salt and pepper. Oregano and red wine can also be added. Soak the meat in the marinade for several hours.

Cut the tomatoes and onions into rings and the peppers into strips. Thread the meat and vegetables on skewers and barbeque. Turn the skewers to cook the meat evenly on all sides.



Kebapche

(Minced Meat Sausage)

Ingredients: 1 kg minced meat (beef or mixed beef/pork), salt (to taste), pepper (to taste), 1 tsp cumin

Mix the minced meat with the spices and let stand to absorb the flavour. Shape as sausages and grill, turn periodically to cook evenly.



Ingredients: 1 kg minced meat, 1 onion, 1 egg, 1 slice bread, chopped parsley, black pepper, savory, salt, cumin

Soak the bread in water or milk, crumple it and add to the minced meat. Add the finely chopped or pressed onions, the egg and spices. Knead the minced meat until well mixed. Shape balls from the mixture. Flatten the balls slightly to make a patty. Grill on a pre-heated barbecue, turn periodically.

Meatballs



THE TYPICAL BULGARIAN FOODS

Honey

The Bulgarian honey is of very high quality, and its taste and nutritional values are impressive. The country produces many kinds of honey and bee products - acacia, herbal, pine, honeydew and polyfloral honey. The different regions of the country produce different kinds of bee products depending on their natural resources. Some herbs are found only in Bulgaria and there are also some rare or endangered plants here. This makes Bulgarian honey delicious and very unique. It also increases its healing qualities.

Bulgaria produces very high quality propolis with proven healing powers. Propolis has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties and also stimulates the immune system. The propolis produced in the region of the Rodopes is of the highest quality.





Yoghurt



Yoghurt is a traditional Bulgarian product. The microorganism responsible for the fermentation of the milk bears the name "Lactobacillus bulgaricus".

This dairy product has a very pleasant taste and is used in the recipes for many beloved Bulgarian dishes: tarator, banitsa, snezhanka salad and as topping for some main dishes as well as a soup thickener. In addition to its excellent taste, it is also beneficial to good health. Studies have shown that it has anti-cancer effect.

According to some legends, yoghurt has been around since Thracian times. The Thracians learned to add sour sheep's milk to fresh milk in order to make it keep longer. Therefore a product named "prokish" or leavened milk was created. Other theories associate yoghurt with the Bulgars and the drink "kumis", a drink made from horse milk.