

TOURIST FARM BUTUL



Mrs Butul is picking lavender from the Mediterranean herbal garden at Tourist farm Butul together with a visitor (image credit: Tourist farm Butul).

The tourist farm Butul in coastal area of Slovenia is a family-run business which organises culinary workshops and offers tasting menus and boutique caterings. The workshops on Mediterranean cuisine are designed for anyone from beginners to experienced chefs. Visitors can visit olive groves, vineyards, meadows, beehive and vegetable and Mediterranean herb garden. They produce wine, olive oil, jams, syrups and canned vegetables. They are all made of their crops. They add their herbs to wine, beer, cheeses and cosmetic products. The farm's motto is: "Tradition is our mission". They promote traditional Istrian dishes served in an innovative and modern way. They respect heritage and aim to offer their guests an authentic culinary experience. They always base their services and products on their own experience rather than "culinary experts". Since they like to travel, they collect new knowledge related to culinary heritage from different countries and try to apply it at their farm. They agree with an idea that "right when we think that we know everything, that is when we start learning."

Contact

organisation: Tourist farm Butul

name of coordinators: Mr Mitja Butul and Mrs Tatjana Butul

address: Manžan 10d, SI-6000 Koper, Slovenia

email: butul@siol.net

website: <https://butul.net/>

telephone: +386 5 631 1777

Introduction

Their food atelier or culinary studio offers various tasting menus, individual culinary workshops, and boutique catering. Food is produced on 6 ha of agricultural land and prepared following the Slow Food principles, i.e. clean, healthy, local, seasonal, and fair. In winter months they move to Sri Lanka. There, on their second tourist farm, they grow tropical crops, which are then

introduced into Slovenian and Mediterranean cuisine, and vice versa.

They hold around 100 culinary events per year and take part in many international culinary events, such as: Slow Fish (Genoa; IT), Cheese (Bra; IT), Terra Madre (Torino; IT), Berlin Cheese Days, [Raw Wine](#)

[Berlin, Stadt Land Food](#), [Wine rush](#) (Berlin, DE), [Vino Alpi \(Klagenfurt; AT\)](#), [Orange Wine Festival \(Izola; SI, Vienna; AT\)](#), [VLNO.SO \(Amsterdam; NL\)](#), [Kozjansko Apple Festival \(Podsreda, SI\)](#), [Malvasia Wine Festival \(Portorož, SI\)](#), [Sweet Istria \(Koper, SI\)](#), [The Slovenian Istria Agriculture Days \(Koper, SI\)](#), [Winerush \(Berlin, DE\)](#), [VLNO.SO \(Amsterdam NL\)](#), [Bio festival \(Singapur\)](#), [Dinner for 500 people Mount Lavinia \(Sri lanka \)](#).



Photo 1: Members of the Butul family (from left): Mitja, Tatjana and Črt (image credit: Tourist farm Butul).

Culinary experience

The culinary experience at the Butul tourist farm in Manžan near Koper in Slovenian Istria is a family story run by Tatjana, Mitja, and their son Črt. The educational farm holds workshops on Mediterranean cuisine for anyone, beginners and experienced chefs. Visitors are told about and shown their olive groves, vineyards, and meadows as they walk past the beehive to the vegetable and Mediterranean herb garden. The month of April is dedicated to asparagus, while the diverse summer is dedicated to culinary workshops on Mediterranean vegetables and fruit, their growing, preparation, canning, and preserving, while autumn months are dedicated to olives. Along with wine and olive oil, they also grow herbs, while jams, syrups, and canned vegetables are prepared from other crops. They add their herbs to wine, beer, cheeses, and cosmetic products.

The beginnings of the Butuls' culinary efforts date back to 1997, when they started holding their first culinary workshops. Since 1999 this has been their



Photo 2: Students from the University of Gastronomic sciences from Pollenzo, Italy on a study visit at Tourist farm Butul are taking notes while listening to the culinary explanation of Črt Butul (image credit: Tourist farm Butul).

	<p>primary activity, while their work has become their way of live. In 2000, in the desire for a healthy life style and contact with nature, they moved from the centre of Koper back to their roots, to the nearby rural area around the village of Manžan. They had the idea of eating a healthy diet, with homegrown food, while offering surplus food to their guests. They participated in a project about a healthy lifestyle, where unlike restaurants that mostly offered processed food, they started to prepare their dishes “slightly differently” – in a traditional way. Tatjana Butul wrote a booklet entitled Zdrava sredozemska hrana (“A Healthy Mediterranean Diet”). It was published by The Healthy Living Society Manžan in five languages (Slovene, English, Italian, French, and German), and distributed in over 20,000 copies.</p> <p>Their culinary workshops were complemented by a tourist farm and accommodation services. Their homestead is neither an inn nor a restaurant. Their home – a tourist farm – is a house with its doors wide open, striving to teach its guests about food and cuisine, where all people with good intentions are welcome. This kind of thinking was passed on to their son, who became a culinary explorer and who brings to the table the experience he gained in Michelin restaurants across the world.</p> <p>Their target group are people who like to know what they eat and how their food was produced. Most visitors, i.e. as much as 95%, are foreigners. They can seat up to 25 guests at a time. They advertise themselves via a simple website, which is in English only. They are advertised through word of mouth, journalists who write about them, and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.</p>
<p>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</p>	<p>The Butul tourist farm’s motto is: "Tradition is our mission". Their cuisine brings their guests back to traditional dishes, served in an innovative and contemporary way. They focus on traditional Istrian dishes. By respecting heritage and coming from the desire to offer their guests an authentic culinary experience, they used stone and wood to make unique plates, wooden trays, tables, and benches. They make their own packaging and labels. They always based their services and products on their own experience rather than “culinary experts”. They travel abroad, learn, and gain culinary and life experience. They follow the motto: “Right when we think that we know everything, that is when we start to learn.”</p>
<p>Organising and managing experience</p>	<p>The Butul farm collaborates with around 40 small local providers of agricultural products and stakeholders that promote them. Since 2014<u>2013</u> they have been a learning centre for the University of Gastronomic Sciences from Pollenzo, Italy, which was established by the Slow Food organization. Students can do their internship with them, while twice a year a one-week culinary field trip across Slovenia is organised for the students. An important stakeholder is</p>

	<p>the Institute for the Development and Research of Catering and Agricultural Activities, SloVino, from Maribor, with which they collaborate in events related to cuisine and wine. Their natural wines were included in Slow Wine Guide 2019. They work with cheese makers at two mountain pastures in the Julian Alps – Matajur in Božca – where they make cheeses with herbs. The Butul family provides herbs from their Mediterranean herb garden and salt from the Sečovlje Salt Pans Landscape Park, while the dairy farmers on the mountain pastures make cheeses from the recipes of the Butuls, which finally age in their cellar. This is a special case of experimental learning of cheese makers and the Butuls, as adding herbs and other additions to cheese is a special challenge (addition of black tea, cream of tartar, rosemary, basil, etc.). With hop growers from the Rojnik farm in Savinjska dolina they are involved in a micro brewery project called “Birca”. From the native barley and buckwheat from the Istrian countryside they created a beer with Butul herbs. Their inventive approach to cooperation with local food producers was recognized by broader public in winning “Slovenia’s Hidden Gems 2018” for creating a two-day food tour named Mediterranean Flavours of Slovenian Istria. Their last novelty is BrunchForbrunch, a relaxing-working experience with culinary workshops of advanced Mediterranean cuisine. They exchange guests with restaurants Hiša Franko and Vila Podvin, and thus make up a triangle of three regions: Mediterranean, Posočje, and Gorenjska. Their products are sold in the Strunjan Landscape Park, LifeClass hotels in Portorož (Istrian Market), in Koper, Berlin, Torino, Marseille, Bratislava, Prague, Rotterdam, etc. They base their collaboration with stakeholders on “a good feeling right from the start, when they feel each other, and with whom they never come up against closed doors”. Collaboration must be genuine, integrated with real life, and without acting.</p>
<p>Policy and strategies</p>	<p>In developing their own culinary experience, the Butul family does not follow any special municipal or national tourist strategy. They have their own strategy, which they pour their souls into. The Municipality of Koper and the Koper Tourist Organisation occasionally provide funds for printing promotion materials. In their activities they take into account the standards and recommendations for various certificates, but do not pursue them due to too much red tape. With workshops for working with wood, natural stone, and ceramics, in connection with cuisine, they take part in training programmes for the unemployed and special needs’ people.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>Tourist agencies do not include the Butul Tourist Farm in their tourist packages, as they typically charge a commission, which is not the Butuls’ policy. This happens only exceptionally, i.e. when this is explicitly requested</p>

by agency guests. The Butul family was involved in the design and beginnings of many culinary events, which have now turned into major culinary events. Among them, Sweet Istria in Koper is probably the most known. In recent years they have held small culinary events in their home village, trying to pursue authenticity by steering away from crowds. They organise the Persimmon Hike (up to 200 visitors) and Šagra fižoletov (Green Bean Festival), where they use culinary workshops to educate people.

Innovative aspects

In 2010 they arranged the Mediterranean Herb Garden in Slovenian Istria, which was declared the best tourist product in the Municipality of Koper. In 2011 they made it to the semi-finals for the Sejalac award – the Slovenian national tourist board event for the best national tourist product.

The Butul family follow the principle that innovative culinary experiences should bring food production and processing closer to people and teach them something new. Their guests are shown the garden, fruit, vegetables, olive trees, grape, and herbs, and told about their production. Right after that they taste the food with a different attitude. Their biggest innovation is that their guests get to feel the tradition and domesticity – they come into their homes, which is the most that anyone can offer.

The added value of the innovative culinary experience at the Butul farmstead is that visitors are made to think about their own diets. If people start thinking about what they eat, they will surely make at least a small step toward a healthier diet. Innovation lies in meeting the food producer, serving food where it was grown, for example on a table inside a vineyard, tasting olive oil under an olive tree, visiting a mountain pasture to see how cheese is made, seeing the cow that gave milk for the cheese, drinking a glass of milk that will become cheese, and learning the cow's name. Innovation lies in discovering old traditional tastes served in a modern way so that the guest participates in food preparation and that the provider's story is real, tangible, and honest. Each morning the Butuls bake bread for their guests and themselves, as they all eat the same food. An example of its innovation is that intentionally there is no sign saying "Tourist Farm Butul" hanging out front – when guests leave the place they understand why. They do not accept unannounced guests, and their work schedule is agreed in advance. Another innovation of their culinary experience is that it is not for the masses, but is personal and small-scale. The Butuls are inspired by the Slow Food organisation.

In 10 years' time they see their current range of services as significantly upgraded, they will travel abroad where they will present Slovenian Istria and bring to it, with its activities, as many visitors as possible. They will keep pouring their souls into their products, as this is what leads to high-quality services that make them proud. This is how they attract their future guests to

	<p>come visit.</p> <p>They will bring tasting menus back to popularity and continue to run the tourist farm in its current scale, following the motto “less is more”. They do not want to turn into a restaurant or a “farm hotel”, as many others have done. Their focus will remain their link with the soil, while they will build on local integration of products and people.</p>
<p>Monitoring</p>	<p>The success of their culinary workshops and culinary and educational hosting is measured via surveys distributed among the participants. The response to other services is evaluated through personal discussions with users. The main obstacles to networking among the people in Istria are: (1) mentality, (2), envy, (3) lack of readiness to collaborate, (4) fear of new things, (5), search for an easy way. People do not know how to be successful as they are afraid to try new things and of their own success, and they do not believe in themselves. Rather than stepping out of the box, people prefer to complain and stay inside the box. Success comes from believing in one’s work and long-term commitment. There is no overnight success. The Butuls established their own way of work that they stick to, as they know that it is a good one.</p> <p>Older people must surround themselves with young people and give them the opportunity to pursue culinary arts. If they are doing well, they should be commended for it in front of others, but when they make a mistake they should be told in private. The stakeholders and beginners who want to form their own culinary experience must be familiar with their locality and its culinary tradition, the ingredients that were used in the past, and with what grows in their vicinity. Their range of services must provide profound experience. They must believe in what they do. They must offer their guests the food that they eat themselves, while knowing its origin and being fair to their guests. Food is people, while cuisine is one of the connections between nature and humankind.</p>
<p>Stakeholders view on good practice</p>	<p><i>Rok Stres, cheese maker at mountain pasture Planina Matajur</i></p> <p>The collaboration between Rok Stres, cheese maker on the Matajur mountain pasture, and the tourist farm Butul dates back to 2012. The cheese maker had previously tried to make cheeses with various additions, such as pepper, sweet peppers, and chilly peppers. Following the Butuls’ recipe, he started to make cheeses with less traditional additions, such as lavender, savory, rosemary, basil, cream of tartar, and black tea from Sri Lanka. The Butuls deliver herbs from their Mediterranean herb garden and salt from the Sečovlje Salt Pans to the mountain pasture. In their common experimental learning, i.e. of the cheese makers and the Butuls, they learnt that adding herbs and other additions in cheese making is a special challenge. The fact that the cheese maker makes</p>

cheeses together with the Butuls is an advertisement for him, and he sells more cheese as a result. He also experiments by making cheese with coffee beans.

Dejan Baier, Institute for the Development and Research of Catering and Agricultural Activities SloVino

The collaboration between the SloVino institute and the Butul tourist farm goes back to when they met at a business fair; this has now lasted for more than 15 years. They are connected through the Slow Food movement, where the Butuls lead the Primorska convivium, and SloVino the Štajerska convivium. The SloVino institute has held sommelier courses at the Butul tourist farm for over 10 years.

Over the years their business relationship has grown into friendship. The Butul family is the best part of the Butul tourist farm. They are genuine and put all their efforts in their lives with cuisine. They live what they speak. It is nice to work, live, and share good ideas with Mitja, Tatjana, and Črt.

We have exhibited with the Butul tourist farm at various culinary events in Bratislava, Prague, and the Terra Madre Salone del Gusto in Torino. The Butuls always take part at the International Wine and Delicacy Salon, VinDel, in Maribor.

Tamara Kozlovič, Tourist organization of Koper

The City Municipality of Koper and the Koper Tourist Organisation have collaborated with Tourist farm Butul for a number of years to promote gastronomy. In 2009 at a tender held by the City Municipality of Koper for co-financing new tourist products, Tourist farm Butul received funding for developing the Mediterranean Herbal Garden of Slovenian Istria. With its diverse gastronomic range, thematic culinary workshops, tasting evenings, accommodation capacities, and guided tours of the Mediterranean Herbal Garden, Tourist farm Butul significantly increased the visibility of the City Municipality of Koper, its rural areas, and Slovenia as a whole. With its activities, it endeavours to bring rural areas, gastronomy, and local products closer to people, thus making the gastronomy more recognisable. In its work it takes into account and builds upon the guidelines from the Development Strategy for Gastronomy in Slovenia (2006) and the Development and Tourism Marketing Strategy of the City Municipality of Koper by 2025.