



# Keeping it local in Slovenia

Slovenia has made the most of its myriad landscapes and influences to create a locavore's paradise and raise eyebrows across Europe's gastronomy scene

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**S**lovenia is hard to describe to those who have never been there. The sun-splashed Adriatic coast is distinctly Mediterranean in spirit, with its red-roofed medieval towns and excellent seafood. On the other hand, Alpine Slovenia – dominated by the snow-dusted Julian and Kamnik-Savinja Alps – can often feel like an extension of neighbouring Austria, packed with hale and hearty Mitteleuropean fare and dizzying mountainscapes. Head instead to Slovenia's wine regions, however, and you could be forgiven for thinking you're in Italy (another influential neighbour). And as for foodie capital Ljubljana? That has a singular Balkan-meets-Austro-Hungarian charm all of its own.

For a country similar in size to Wales, Slovenia's landscape is surprisingly diverse, and its cuisine, thanks to the surround-

ing influences of Austria, Hungary, Italy and Croatia, is as wide-ranging as its topography. However, no matter which direction you travel, a few things remain the same. First, the food is fresh. As one of the greenest countries in Europe, with an abundance of top-quality natural ingredients, farm-to-fork dining is less of a buzz word here and more a way of life.

Next, the food is good. With its mix of historic *gostilna* (traditional restaurants/inns) and buzzy high-end hotspots – often in spectacular rural settings – Slovenia has entered the global spotlight as a culinary destination. Just last year, it held the title of European Region of Gastronomy, while a half-dozen restaurants have been awarded Michelin stars (another six received Green Stars for their sustainability) since 2020, proving this bite-size country has big-time gastronomic chops.

**Cake with a view**  
(top) Lake Bled is not only the pin-up destination for Alpine Slovenia, but it gave birth to arguably the country's most indulgent dessert: the Bled cream slice

## 5 DISHES YOU SHOULD TRY (AND WHERE TO TRY THEM)

### 1 Potica

*Potica* is a kind of pastry dessert flavoured with walnuts, hazelnuts, cheese or tarragon, typically baked in a *bundt* (ring-shaped) cake tin. It is a fixture around Christmas, though it can be found all year round in places like Ljubljana's chic *Butik lePotica* ([le-potica.si](http://le-potica.si)), where they are baked fresh throughout the day so you can enjoy them warm. There are many local takes on *potica*, but *goriška gubánca* (made with a sweet dough and spiralled like a cinnamon bun) is one of the oldest and is typically found in Mediterranean Slovenia and Italy's nearby Friuli-Venezia Giulia region.

### 2 Kranjska klobasa

Arguably the best-known of Slovenia's delicacies, this traditional pork sausage is popular throughout the country and has Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status, meaning at least one stage of its production must be tied to Slovenia to use the name *Kranjska klobasa*.

Ljubljana's hip *Klobasarna* ([klobasarna.si](http://klobasarna.si)) – once a famous watchmaker's shop – is the spot to try this slightly smoky sausage, best enjoyed alongside a dollop of mustard and a local beer.

### 3 Bled cream slice

Alpine Slovenia's postcard-perfect social-media darling Lake Bled is a beautiful location. But beyond its pretty setting, it has one other delight: *Blejska kremšnita* (Bled cream slice), a must-try dish that is popular across Slovenia. Almost every eatery around the lake serves this sweet treat made from layers of puff pastry, vanilla cream and custard. The dessert has roots dating back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but the lake's Park Café ([sava-hotels-resorts.com](http://sava-hotels-resorts.com)) is said to be the home of the original recipe.

### 4 Štruklji

A staple in most Balkan countries, *štruklji* is a kind of dumpling made with boiled, baked or steamed rolls of filo pastry, or, depending on

where you are, leavened dough. It is filled with savoury or sweet fillings, with cheese curd and apple among the most popular here – though the buckwheat *štruklji* with walnuts is a delight. Try a selection at *Moji Štruklji* ([moji-struklji.si](http://moji-struklji.si)), a dedicated dumpling spot in Ljubljana's Central Market.

### 5 Bograč

Bordering Croatia and Hungary, the country's easternmost region is known as Thermal Pannonian Slovenia for its warm waters, and its local speciality, *bograč*, is no less cosy. Taking its name from the Hungarian word for 'cauldron', *bograč* is a kind of *goulash* made with different meats, potatoes and, in autumn, mushrooms. Try a bowl at the family-run *Gostilna Rajh* ([rajh.si](http://rajh.si)) in Murska Sobota, where it comes served in a cast-iron kettle. Finish with a slice of *prekmurska gibanica*, a layered strudel cake made with filo, apple, *skuta* cheese curd, walnuts and poppy seeds, which is another regional treat. 



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## DID YOU KNOW?

Slovenia is a country obsessed with bees, and in 2017 it was able to get 20 May declared World Bee Day by the United Nations. There are about five beekeepers for every 1,000 people here, and the indigenous Carniolan honeybee is particularly treasured. Karst honey – from the Karst Plateau – is especially prized and even has Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status.

### WANDERLUST RECOMMENDS

You can't talk about food here without mentioning self-taught, game-changing chef Ana Roš of the two-Michelin-starred *Hiša Franko* in the remote Soča Valley. Check out her autobiographical cookbook, *Ana Roš: Sun and Rain* (Phaidon, 2020).