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Maja Danica Pečanić/CNTB | Pljukanci with truffles

The irresistible lure of the Istrian truffle

Istrian cuisine is symbolised by this valuable fungus – here is our guide to how to eat it and where

Written by [Jonathan Bousfield](#) Monday 31 October 2022



If there's one thing that serves as the culinary ambassador of the Istrian peninsula, then it's the truffle. This pungent but delectable fungus is ubiquitous in local cuisine but tends to be used sparingly, such is the overpowering nature of its distinctive flavour. Every local restaurant worth its salt will have something truffle-related on the menu, and just a few shavings of this mushroom-like aphrodisiac will be enough to ennoble the most unpretentious of dishes.



Zoran Jelača | Motovun

In Istria, truffles only grow in the belt of forest between Motovun and Buzet. They take shape slightly underground, and trained dogs are required to sniff the things out. Mildly flavoured black truffles are found throughout the year, while the more highly prized white truffle only occurs between September and January. Indeed, it is in the autumn that the woods of central Istria are filled with truffle-hunters, striding forth optimistically with their nostril-flaring hounds.

Truffles have such a strong taste that they are best served with simple dishes which allow the truffles room to assert their sensory superiority. Truffle omelettes or truffle-garnished pasta dishes are frequently the best way to enjoy them, and it is with uncomplicated dishes like these that the truffle-curious should begin their culinary exploration.

Popular examples include pasta twists with truffles (*pljukanci s tartufima*) and *fuži* pasta with truffles (*fuži s tartufima*). Istrian *fuži* (folded pasta tubes) come in many shapes and sizes, perfect for soaking up a creamy sauce garnished with truffle flakes. You'll also find sheeps' cheese with truffles (*ovčji sir s tartufima*), an unmistakably Istrian gastronomic souvenir sold at specialist stores across the region. There's even truffle ice cream. The combination of pungency and sweetness go together spectacularly well, even when you add a drop of pure Istrian olive oil.

The centre of the local truffle industry is in the heart of Istria. Spread across the valley floor below the hill town of Motovun, the village of Livade is Istria's most famous truffle-procuring and truffle-processing location, selling jars of truffle oil and truffle-flavoured sauces in shops here and elsewhere throughout the peninsula. Absolutely everything is garnished with truffles, from starter to dessert, from seafood to steak.



Ivo Biocina | Cooking with truffles

Livade also hosts a [Truffle Days festival](#) in autumn, with workshops, presentations, special truffle dishes and truffle-hunting demonstrations in the nearby forest. In 2022, the event takes place every weekend in October. There's also a region-wide [Truffle Days festival](#) around the same time.

This article is sponsored by The Croatian National Tourism Board: ['Croatia Full of Life'](#).



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[Jonathan Bousfield](#)

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