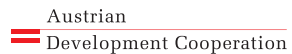




Bjelasica, Komovi & Prokletije

# *The Best Our Mountains Have to Offer*

with funding from



*Health Foods from Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije*



*The Best Our Mountains Have to Offer*  
Health Foods from Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije

**Publisher**

Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica,  
Komovi and Prokletije

**For the publisher**

Jelena Krivčević

**Text**

Sonja Živaljević

**Photographs**

Jovan Nikolić

**Design and layout**

Designbox, Podgorica

**Printing**


PAKO, Andrijevica

**Print run:** 2000

**Printed with the support of**

Austrian Development Agency

*with funding from*

Austrian  
 Development Cooperation



# SUPPORT FOR HEALTH FOOD PRODUCERS

*The Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije is a spin-off of the Austrian-Montenegrin Partnership, a project implemented in Montenegro since 2004. The Agency was set up in 2009, and soon after its the establishment, it received financial support from the Austrian Development Agency worth 1.5 million Euros, as well as the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.*

*The Agency primarily strives for sustainable development in the region. Given that here tourism and agriculture are the strategic development axes, these industries are in the Agency's focus of attention. The competitive advantages for the region in the area of agriculture include its excellent geographical location for producing honey, cheese, medicinal herbs, cereal crops, potatoes, cabbages and the like. Despite the diminishing population in villages due to migrations and ever-fewer people engaging in agriculture, there are farmers working assiduously with their families who offer produce made in the natural, traditional way. With the funds received from the Austrian Government, the Agency supported producers by providing packaging and branding, and helping their produce reach the market by establishing contact with retail outlets in Podgorica.*

*We believe that our region's products are competitive on the*

*market, and that the fact that they were produced locally, in a healthy and natural fashion, will be an additional impetus for buyers. Choosing the best from our mountains, you do not just do your regular shopping for your family needs. You do much more. You provide yourself and your family with healthy and sound nutrition. You help the families that decided to stay in the country and engage in agriculture to make their livelihoods viable. You support organic farming and farmers who put quality above quantity by opting for health food production. In addition, you also contribute to reduced energy consumption that would otherwise be needed in order for some imported products to reach our markets. In general, you foster the economy and the sustainable development of the Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije region. Hence, we present the best our mountains have to offer. We have no doubt you will be assured of the quality once you have tasted our produce. Enjoy!*

Jelena Krivčević, Director, Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije





*Bjelasica – Komovi – Prokletije REGION*



# The Story of Beauty

*Two fairly long, mostly laid-back, but at times also headstrong and hurried rivers, take melted snow, the remnants of which adorn the high snow-capped peaks of Komovi, Bjelasica and Prokletije even in summertime, all the way to the Black Sea.*

*It is said that if you sit next to the Tara and Lim rivers for a while without a thought in your head, you will hear parts of the Great Story of Beauty. No one knows when the story began. It is believed to be never-ending. It is also said that parts of the story may be heard, if you are a worthy listener, from the many springs and brooks, roaring and murmuring from over two thousand metres above, cutting through rocks and hiding in the folds of the thick coniferous and beech woods, watering meadows, sheep and cattle, but also wolves and bears, making a maze, only to calm down and yield to a larger stream.*

*It is said that the story assumes deep, dark green nuances if listened to near one of the lakes, Biograd, Šiško, Ursulovac, Pešića, Plav, Hrid, or maybe Visitor.*

*Unsurprisingly, some details of the story may also be heard from the birds, especially in the morning. From the wind blowing through birch trees. From the May beetles and fireflies. If you concentrate hard enough, the sweetest smelling moments will be learned from thyme and yarrow, the most delicate ones from forest strawberries and raspberries, the most substantial one from the stars whispering to the spruce trees...*



*Bjelasica is the mildest, Komovi possesses magnificent power and simplicity, and Prokletije is a fabulous blend of contradictions, pregnant with surprises...*

*This is an area of heavenly river valleys reached even by the warm Mediterranean currents. It abounds in herbs, mushrooms and forest fruits. Smoke emanates from houses and huts, flocks move slowly...*

*While the cheese is dripping and cream is being separated from milk, while the bees are returning from harvesting, the whole family is out in the meadow or the field. Even the youngest lend a hand... And then – the smell of piping-hot home-made bread fills the air. It is said: such a sweet smell cannot be found any more.*

*Home-made is, after all, sweetest.*







# Bjelasica

*It is maybe at its best in October, bursting with colours. Or when the sun takes a slide down the snow-covered slopes. Or at the time when the flocks are moved to pastures higher up in the mountains...*

*It extends equally in four directions. Its length and breadth are the same, 30 km. The total area is some 630 square kilometres. It is bordered by two large rivers, the Lim and Tara, with the Rivers Ljuboviđa and Lepenica to the north. This area belongs to the territory of the municipalities of Kolašin, Mojkovac, Bijelo Polje, Berane and Andrijevica.*

*Scientists explain the mildness of its beauty by its volcanic origin. Such an origin accounts for its gently rounded gleaming slopes, green in summertime, white in winter. Water stays on the surface, flowing into countless streams and rivers, giving a fairytale feel of lushness and softness, of freshness and healthiness. Bjelasica abounds both in broadleaf and coniferous woods (beech, birch, fir, spruce, pine), and in medicinal herbs, in endemic species, and even its highest peak, Crna glava, at a height of 2,139 m, is covered in vegetation.*


*Lake Biograd (at an altitude of 1,099 m) is the single best-known lake on Bjelasica, and the largest at that. The lake, and the whole of Biogradska gora, is designated a national park of the same name.*



## Biogradska gora National Park

*“Biogradska gora” National Park, covering 5,400 ha, is unique in many respects. It is one of the two remaining primeval forests in Europe. Over 80 tree species grow here, with the vast majority of fir trees reaching 50 m in height, with maple and birch trees only slightly shorter. It houses 25 plant communities with several endemic species. The national park abounds in animal wildlife, various wildfowl, small and big game.*

# Secrets of Good Housekeepers



*Everything matters for making a good cheese – the altitude, the herbs, the season and particularly the skill of the lady of the house. In addition to different areas and villages nurturing their own “cheese-making schools”, each housewife also follows “her own recipe”, whether learnt from her mother, her grandmother, her mother-in-law, or whether she herself, by trial and error, came up with a formula for a good cheese. And some types became well-liked and well-known, such as the thin layered cheese of Kolasin. As of late, apart from the prevailing cow’s milk and sheep’s milk cheeses, the region of Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije is increasingly producing goat’s milk cheese; apart from the soft, young, medium and mature cheeses, the layered cheese and the round cheese, there are also hard, Trappist cheeses. Who knows, maybe good vibrations and optimistic thoughts do play an important role in making tasty white mouthfuls!?*





*Milk, Cheese, Cream*

**Milijana i Vučko Pešić,**  
Tomaševo (Bijelo Polje)  
*cow's-milk layered cheese*



It was said once that if the winds coming from the slopes of Bjelasica had not swept this valley, Vraneš could as well have been called Zlatež (Golden Valley). Indeed, the fabulous Vraneš Valley, half-way between Bijelo Polje and Pljevlja, under the heights of the Lisa, Žuber, Kovrenska and Gorička hills, with three rivers all feeding into the River Ljuboviđa, could easily be the Valley of Gold. The beauty here is but a frame for happiness which, nevertheless, needs a little bit of effort. Or at least, it needs someone with some daring.

It is no wonder that the Pešić family, in the village of Tomaševo, within the hamlet of Vranštica, have no regrets about leaving the town. Surrounded by the friendly smile-lit faces of our hosts and all the members of the household, one may wonder whether one is in the midst of an idyllic story of country life, or whether time has been turned back to the days of successful family cooperatives, or might it be a glimpse of a comforting, brighter future ahead?! The Pešićes' home is an extraordinary example of family harmony, happiness, and of growth – a true blessing.

As the traditional toast would have it, since 2007 the beehives and cattle have kept on multiplying. Vučko learned everything there is about making silage, Milijana, apart from the layered cheese, has also started





making rolled cheese (sheets of cheese spread with sour cream and rolled), excellent for festive meals. A real treat! They sell whatever they produce,, and the only thing stalling their plans is – the “Bjelasica hoarfrost” sometimes covering the valley. “Harmony is paramount.” Vučko’s mother agrees. Everybody in the house helps – says Milijana, once an excellent mathematician, now a superb housewife and the mother of six. This fragile woman looks at her five sons and one daughter, aged between 2 and 12, with equal, infinite tenderness. Grigorije, Vukašin, Jovan, Kristina... They introduce themselves politely and earnestly, surprising the guest with a present – wild strawberries threaded on a piece of straw. Even the extended family members make up this family cooperative – helping each other comes naturally.

Everything in the Pešić family is like the comb honey they greet their guests with. Even the cows, Simmentals, a dozen of them, look tranquil and serene in their spacious new stable.

You should better believe it, there is such a thing as the Golden Valley. There, the golden children welcome visitors with straw-chains of wild strawberries.

Tel. 069 665 217



## Milijanka i Miško Puletić,

Lipovo (Kolašin)

*cow's-milk layered cheese, goat's-milk  
Trappist cheese*



Mmmm, the taste of layered cheese, matured just enough.... The work of an artist... Lipovo is one of the most beautiful spots in Montenegro. From the place where the River Plašnica feeds into the Tara, all the way to the foot of the Mount Sinjajevina, a very special mild beauty – the harmony of abundant nature and village cottages, gardens, fields, forests and orchards, the all-pervading sense of fertility and serenity – simply entices one to hold on and stay there.

One does not easily leave the home of Milijanka and Miško Puletić, which one can find by following the “cheese route” signposts. Campers and tourists brought by tour operators stop here to buy groceries or have a wholesome meal. Home-made bread, baked in a wood-burning stove, prosciutto, superb-tasting layered cheese, one of the finest we have sampled, kajmak of a mild and very characteristic taste (it goes perfectly with boiled potatoes), and according to your wishes, local specialities kačamak, cicvara and roast meat...All followed by some finely-sliced goat's-milk Trappist cheese, again in no way heavy or strong, but rather discreet and light, with a fine taste and aroma, with just a bit of bread crust, simply inviting you to take just one slice more...

While guests enjoy themselves and think of the good-natured faces of the taciturn host and the noble appearance of the lady of the house, and how willing they would be to stay overnight, a marvellous white rooster is parading the yard, casting an eye on the fruit trees, on the potato and maize fields, apparently proud of having them in his perimeter, and the thirty or so goats with many lambs, pigs and eight cows.

Although in the last few years they have not been moving the herd up onto Mount





## **Batrić Čampar** Eko Mont CO (Bijelo Polje) *cheese, cow's milk Trappist cheese*

Sinjajevina (their katon or summer pasture hut, is some 8 km away, in the immediate vicinity of the Lake Grkov), they have their hands full with work, but Miško and herself are assisted by their children and grandchildren. Offering tea made from St John's wort and thyme, and pine syrup, Milijanka speaks of her school days in Belgrade, of the knowledge passed on to her by her mother, noting that throughout life one always has to move forwards, to develop, try something new, create... Her seemingly stern, teacher-like appearance is literally transformed by this youthful zeal of hers. With a mischievous smile, she avoided divulging her secret of making borovina (pine syrup). She said only – it is easy, just like any other juice... Well, have a try...

Tel. 068 793 935

The cheese from Korita is as yellow as a gold ducat from Pešter. Simple, clean, and hard as gold, incorporating the stories of Pešter. The story that the Pešter Plateau used to be a lake, reflecting and multiplying the yellowness of the moonlight, is a true one. The one about a three-headed dragon killed by St George inhabiting the lake (this is the largest plateau in the whole Balkans, with endless rolling grazing land at 900 to 1,200 metres above sea level) is possible. There are changeable stories of cold winters and unrestrained winds, and of beguiling summers. Then multi-faceted ones of the simple and arduous life of hospitable hosts, of mediaeval caravans, of the belligerent Klimenti clan...

The gold-like cheese of Korita tells a story of the exertion and struggle for a better life, for oneself and for others. This Trappist cheese is made in a dairy owned by Batrić Čampar in Sušica, a community of Korita

totalling seven hamlets (Korita is located at an elevation of around 1,200 m on the edge of the Pešter Plateau, on the border with Serbia).

In his dairy, Batrić processes the milk from his cows, but he also buys milk from a dozen other households. This is an important piece of news for an area known for decades as a place to leave. Naturally, his wife Dubravka is beside him, and at times they are assisted by their two daughters. There is enough work for two more workers, and everything takes place under strict supervision of an engineering technologist. The result: daily production of 50 kg of cheese and the highest awards. At the International Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad and the Agricultural Fair in Budva the Čampar family was awarded the Grand Gold Medal and the Gold Medal for Quality.

Rightfully so, gold medals for gold ducats!

Tel. 069 050 953

**Feho Muratović,**  
Petnjica (Berane)  
*cow's-milk, sheep's-milk  
and mixed-milk cheeses*



Where precisely in the Pešter plateau the Konjska Rijeka (Horse River) katun is located is difficult to explain. Even more difficult is actually reaching it. Perhaps there is a road of some sort, but... Pešter can be very odd. In the wonderful grassy landscapes, in the endless silence, in the maze of mildly rounded hills and conifers, in the mists and chilly nights, paths and roads emerge and vanish as if by magic. Pešter lives in a dimension of its own.

The whole family of Feho Muratović from Petnjica spends four months a year in Konjska Rijeka, somewhere midway between the two border checkpoints. They keep cows and sheep, make cheese, cow's-milk cheese, sheep's-milk cheese and mixed ones. What else could that be but a true marvel, at that altitude, grown from such herbs, and made by such an industrious wife. In the old, dilapidated mountain house now used for housing the dairy, the freshly varnished floorboards shine yellowish, spick and span, within the house and around it everything is in its proper place, neat and tidy. While others look after the sheep and cows, Rukija makes cheese and watches it mature and seals vatfuls of cheese. In the evenings, a well-deserved rest, the crackling of a fire and immense tranquillity, between the two soft covers – one of aromatic herbs, the other of whispering stars. No one thinks of trails and paths then

Tel. 069 474 276





**Zdravko Stanković,**  
Vinicka (Berane)  
*goat's-milk feta  
and Trappist cheese*



The names of villages in this area are reminiscent of very old settlements. Thus, the name Vinicka is indicative of grape growing and wine making, dating back to mediaeval times.

A very interesting man lives in this village. He has been involved in farming for a long time, in a very peculiar manner: he fully devotes himself to one area, has great success, only to move on to some-

thing new. Zdravko Stanković is an innovator and a creator! He is known for his honey, he is also a successful fruit-grower, and as of recently he also has a goat farm and a small dairy specialising in goat's-milk Trappist and feta cheese. He is certainly not short of family support, either: although they have their own businesses and live in town, his sons find time to lend Zdravko a helping hand.

Tel. 069 555 999





# *Is There Anything Sweeter or Healthier?*

*This is, indeed, a land flowing with milk and honey. The superb richness of the flora of Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, tireless bees, with a little help from the devoted people, turn so many medicinal and endemic plants into top-notch honey which could be a Montenegrin brand name. Maybe you did not know this: out of the 5,000 plant species in the whole Balkans, Montenegro, covering only one twentieth of it, grows around 3,000. For bees, this might be said to be a fabulous buffet. Moreover – each mountain ridge, each elevation, on the account of its topography and climate, has its own vegetation cover, thus making honey from different areas unique in certain respects. Meadow honey is a magical nectar, while forest honey invigorates and strengthens with the power of conifers and forest herbs. And where there is honey – there is also mead, the ancient drink of the Old Slavs.*





*Honey*

**Milija Madžgalj,**  
Mojkovac  
*honey*



“Bees are scared of the sound of a scythe.” Milija knows this well and interrupts his work every now and then, cutting grass among the beehives in the vicinity of his house in the suburban settlement of Podbišće near Mojkovac. This is only a fraction of his possessions created through dedicated work over the past 17 years. There are over one hundred colonies on Mt. Sinjajevina where thyme and mountain germander abound in nectar. These plants, as well as some from the slopes of Bjelasica, account for the aroma of the honey that has brought Milija a handful of medals and the highest awards. He himself is also to be given merit for its quality.

Apart from the lighter-coloured meadow honey, this young enthusiast also produces a forest one, owing its taste and darker colour to conifers, wild blackberries and raspberries... There is on offer also comb honey, propolis, honey with candied fruits, mead (made also by Milija’s grandfather), and Milija’s mother managed to produce honey brandy. The recipe is a secret, the brandy is fabulous, very expensive since a small amount of brandy requires a large amount of the raw material – pure honey.

Podbišće also features a miniature museum of bee-keeping: having





on display vrškare and pletare – old wickerwork hives, daubed with a mixture of lime and cow dung. Then there are also daščare, beehives made only from four planks of wood, as well as a “dubina” – a hollow tree inhabited by bees in the wild. At one time, people used to destroy both the bees and their habitat in order to reach the honey.

You will learn from Milija and his mother that bees can stand snow better than rain, that the swarming season is from May 1st to July 15th, that natural swarming is a unique experience,

“a pleasure to watch, they cover the whole sky”... A story filled with love.

Bees are extraordinary creatures. They give multiple benefits in return for the care and concern, for all the tenderness. They endow everyone with honey, and the bee-keeper with a honey life filled with peace, tranquillity and wisdom. The young apiarist from Mojkovac, Milija Madžgalj is living proof.

050 474 654

069 681 796



**Velibor Šćepanović,**  
Kolašin  
*honey*



Only two and a half kilometres from downtown Kolašin towards Jezerine, following the signposts on the “cheese road”, you will reach Selište, and the neat garden and house of the Šćepanović family. Here, at one thousand metres above sea level, everything is shipshape, even the bee-yard at the back of the house. Protected from the back by the hill and mixed forest, and from the front by pear trees, the beehives stand there in colours recognisable to its inhabitants: blue, yellow and white. Bees come and go with little boots of yellow powder on their feet, and the entire life of their colonies develops against the backdrop of the incessant murmur of the nearby River Svinjača.

Yes, also with the sound of birdsong, although bees evidently have no time for them. Bjelasica abounds in so many things, and one has to visit them all – meadow beauties of all kinds, dandelion, white clove, thyme, St John’s wort, wild rose, blueberry, dogberry, hawthorn, juniper, wild blackberry and raspberry, then hazel bushes, linden, beech, wild cherry, fir, maple, spruce, pine...

A part of the Šćepanović family “honey factory”, in existence for thirty years already, is located in Selište. The exact number, obviously, is never mentioned, but they have around two hundred beehives. For years, Milija has been assisted by his sons, Velibor and Vlatko, with





## Vladimir Šebek, Resnik, Bijelo Polje *honey*

new knowledge in beekeeping being constantly applied, and the range of products increased. If you happen to drop by, make sure you taste the mead!

Actually, you should drop by. Not only to sample the mead and buy excellent honey: the time spent in this household will enrich you with the beauty of a well kempt place, you will see what a gooseberry, the jostaberry plant, or the bee plant phacelia look like. You will see well-tended fruit trees and a small fish-pond in Svinjača. And the river itself, which people tend to call Kolašinska, whose rocks were brought out into the world, making a huge impression on the sculptor Šćepanović. Alongside the murmur of the water, you will hear also the sound of cutting stone, relentless and persistent, like the sound of thousands of worker bees in a hive...

This is Bjelasica, the noble mountain.

067 538 985, 067 868 356  
pcelarstvoscepanovic@t-com.me

Interestingly, the love of bees transfers easily from one generation to another. Again in Resnik – a family tradition: for decades Vladimir Šebek has been engaged in beekeeping. He is assisted in the apiary by his son, and at the time when the honey is extracted and packaged even other family members lend a hand. They have some 40 beehives.

Although very expensive, they use exclusively organic substances for treating bees. The beehives contain only stainless steel grids (thus the hives have no corroding materials).

As the popular saying nicely puts it: the horse is not ridden by the one who owns it, but by the one who has learned how to. Apart from his displays at fairs, Vladimir constantly undergoes further training, participating in seminars and lectures, selflessly sharing his newly-acquired knowledge with his colleagues, as president of the Apiarist Association of Bijelo Polje.

069 432 470



**Milan Kljajić,**  
Kurikuće, Bjelasica  
*honey, beehives, raspberries*



It was a joint decision – moving their bees, both Ranko Vešović and Milan Kljajić saw Banjevac as an ideal location for organic honey production. They applied and were both assessed positively by Monteorganika as eligible to engage in organic production in this area. The experience of his senior colleague proved to be of substantial assistance to Milan.

The Kljajić family has some 70 beehives, and they plan to extend the production. Apart from the organic apiary in Banjevac, they also have a conventional one in the village of Kurikuće on the slopes of Mt. Bjelasica. Both Milan's father and grandfather were involved in beekeeping. In the apiary he is mostly assisted by his son, and during the honey-extracting season, the whole family is involved.

Milan also makes beekeeping equipment. For the Ministry of Agriculture's programme "Support to Young Beekeepers" he makes annually around 300 beehives.

Growing raspberries is his additional activity. In one year, in an area of around 3,000 square metres Milan harvests close to four tons of raspberry.

Tel. 069 537 601



## Ranko Vešović, Berane *honey*



After twenty years of beekeeping, Ranko Vešović, has some 80 colonies in two bee yards. In Rاکلја, at an elevation of some 500 m above sea level he has a conventional apiary. At Banjevac (around 850 m ASL) for the past two years he has been keeping bees as a transitional period towards organic production. Monteorganka gave a positive opinion on his engaging in organic production in this area.

The requirements for organic beekeeping were set by the EU Council in 1999. Among other things, care must be taken of the ability of bees to adapt to local con-

ditions; against the Varroa destructor mite only oxalic, formic, lactic and acetic acids may be used, as well as thymol, camphor, menthol and eucalyptol. There is no use of antibiotics, plastics, metals or other chemicals, apart from the above. Apiculture products may be regarded as organic if in the vicinity there is only organic crop farming, fruit growing and cattle raising, or wild-grown, untreated herbs. And Bjelasica abounds in such environments.

Ranko Vešović has displayed his honey at various fairs over the two decades of his beekeeping. At the Agricultural Fair in Petnjica he won second prize. Today, the help from his son and the organic honey, as the newcomer on the market, announce that even greater things are ahead.

Tel. 067 529 159









# Komovi

One immediately recognizes Komovi, for it stands out with its height, colour and shape, certain aristocracy. The peaks are powerful, high and proud- Kučki 2.487, Vasojevički 2.460, Ljevorečki 2.469 meters.

Numerous folk tales speak of fairies on Komovi, not by chance.

Only the peaks are bare and carved with erosion. Lower down, declivities with thick layer of earth spread all around, with the abundance of wells and streams, covered with woods(beech, oak, maple, ash, fir, spruce, Serbian spruce, black pine), meadows full of mellow grass. The abundance of water and a moderately milder climate have created a very rich flora. All the richness in mountain flowers is revealed in the month of June. Endemic species are :Valeriana pancicii, Papaver kernerii, Valeriana bertiscea, Silene macarantha. Gems are the plants with the folk names of bilja and jablan, of which the songs were sung. There is also the flower endemic for the Balcans- Androsace mathildae.





# *Scent and Power of the Mountain*

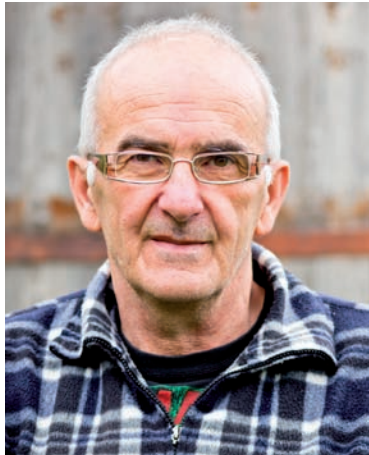
*Traditional, folk healing methods have developed through centuries of trying and succeeding, transferred through stories from generation to generation. Today, it is much easier to learn about the herbs and their function, but finding the herbs is not. The whole region of Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije is extremely rich in medical herbs, mushrooms, fruits and forest fruits. Many are endemic and relict species, many habitats are hard to reach. Growing, collecting and drying takes talent and a lot of love. No matter how resistant to long winters and high snow, harsh winds and scorching sun, no matter how useful, beneficial, powerful, sanative...mountain plants are one extremely sensitive, subtle world*





*Medical herbs and forest fruits*

## **Bogdan Račić,** Slatina (Andrijeвица) *herbs and dried fruits*



Most of his life so far Bogdan had spent in town, in Kragujevac. Upon retirement he came back to Slatina and dedicated his life to plants. He learned and became a professional picker and collector, he studied the traditional drying technology, and developed his own through many experiments. Now he proudly presents dried herbs that kept their natural colour and look as if they have just been picked.

When asked how did he learn so much about the plants he simply answers: "I learned through love." And it is possible he was predestinated by God to help people, because both his mother and grandmother knew herbs and made ointments. A winding asphalt road leads to his home from the main road, through a picturesque landscape, with orchards around. As the road ascents, the view becomes wider and even more beautiful.

After four kilometers, on the altitude of exactly 1000 meters- Račić' house. The branches of the fruit trees bent towards the earth with the weight of the fruits, cherries melt in the mouth, juicy and cracked with ripeness, vegetables climb the stakes towards the sky as magic beans in the Jack and the Beanstalk tale. And the sky is not far away. Here, under the orange rocks of Željeвица one can see Rudo brdo, Gradišnica, Balj, Komovi and Prokletije. The mixture of continental and mediterranean climate is to „blame“ for the richness of the valley and the whole region.

You will find the house, but it is not easy to find Bogdan there. Bjelasica, Komovi, Prokletije- all his terrain, some of the plans can not be reached even by the narrowest of paths, one has to find those in the wild, pick at exactly the right moment, till noon, carry with care, without them being pressed. Yarrow, primrose, thyme, ramson, common majoran, St. John's wort and many other- all have specific requirements.

Bogdan Račić is a dedicated man, and nature rewards him back with fulfillment and joy, health and vitality. His children, studying and living in town, come to visit, and when people are thanking him he usually replies: "I am not giving, God is."

069 578 617





**Momo Đukić,**  
**Pepiće, (Plav)**  
*organic raspberry*  
*blackberry, plum, blueberry*

In Pepiće, a village between Murino and Plav, only twenty out of hundred houses are lived in. Although everything is there: flat land, road, high mountains serving as a shelter, water wells and Lim. One does not have to go all the way to America to earn a living, a crust of bread. In Pepiće, not only that there is bread, there is also „vine and cookies“. We tasted, at Momo Djukić's, both the cookies and the vine made of blackberries. Behind Momo's house, next to the plum orchard, rows of raspberries and blackberries facing the Sun. One can barely see the flowers, all covered with bees. Between the rows- fruit trees, natural umbrellas. European experiences and rules are applied here; therefore the certificate for the product is also European. „The packaging of the organic products also has to be special. The fertilizers have to be natural, and the cows fed exclusively with natural food, no concentrate feeds...Organic, among other things, means up to 25% less crop, since there is no spraying with chemicals, not even in the neighborhood...“ Momo expla-

ins, and looks above and beyond, towards Prokletije, plans and ideas are multiplying...

Raspberries and blackberries are very sensitive, subtle fruits, and many things have to be done before they arrive to our tables looking their best, offering us the most out of them. Pleasant and quiet voice of the lady of the house seems to be agreeable to them. Taking care of the whole household (beside the work in the house, there are cows, pigs and hens to care for) but also every leaf of raspberries and blackberries, Momo's wife Slavica is helped by their five children. At harvest and other major works members of the extended family are also there. „This is Visitor, the one opposite of us is Štit, Goleš is to the left, those there are Čakor and Mokra“, points Radoš as we taste the first ripe raspberries. School is not far away, in Murino, and the town- well he says that he does not miss it at all. „Countryside is so much more fun...“

069 415 211







# Prokletije

*Prokletije resembles a kind of wall at the edge of the world. It is a mountain chain 70 km in length, covering an area of 250 km, bordered by the rivers Cijevna, Lim and Ibar.*

*The highest peaks in Montenegro are located here, on the border with Albania: Zla Kolata – 2,534 m, Dobra Kolata – 2,528 m, and Maja Rosit at Bjelič – 2,525 m. Maja Bor, Maja Šćapica and Krš Bogičevce are also peaks above two thousand metres.*

*Prokletije hides in its bosom the pearls of the Balkans, the magnificent lakes of Plav, Hrid, Visitor, Bukumir, Rikavac and many streams and springs. The best known are Ali-Pasha's Springs near Gusinje, and Oko Skakavice (Savino oko), a spring that looks like a small lake. Another highlight is the Grlja Gorge cut through by a little river creating gigantic hollows and waterfalls. The fairytale-like valley of Grbaje is also unforgettable.*

*The strength and resilience of some plants is unbelievable. On Prokletije some plants survived the last ice age. Some got accustomed to warmer air, with the Mediterranean climate reaching all the way up here through deep cuts into the mountain sides. Some endemic species stand out from this large company: *Daphne alpina*, *Cicerbita pancici*, *Valeriana pancicci*, *Silene macranta*, *Tanacetum larvatum*, *Saxifraga montenegrina* and *Kentranthus slavnic*.*

*This area is known for blueberries. But one should not forget wild strawberries, small raspberries or mushrooms, either. Even at higher altitudes vegetables grow well, at one time even cereal crops were grown.*

*Prokletije National Park is the most recent addition to the national park network in Montenegro.*



## POLIMLJE

*Just like Switzerland, many thought about following the road from Ribarevina to Plav, where the Lim sets out on its 234-kilometre-long journey, all the way to the Drina. It is secluded by the gentle slopes of Mokra and Sjekirica, the steep sides of Visitor and Zeletin. Due to being thus somewhat encircled, Polimlje enjoys a more temperate climate than other neighbouring valleys. The soil is very fertile, scattered with brooks and streams. The mountains are magnificent, ideal for cattle-grazing. Summer pasture huts - katuni – are not too far from the villages. Not even the towns strung along the River Lim (Andrijevica, Berane and Bijelo Polje) disturb this idyllic image.*

*The standstill that followed industrialisation had a good side to it, as well. Today, Polimlje, just like the River Lim itself, is clean, green and hospitable. A godsend for rural tourism.*



# *Everyday Treats*

*Up in the mountains, during the night, everything grows in a rush. Peas lean downwards under the weight of their yield, beans climb all the way up to the branches of a cherry tree, cabbage rows overlap, the potatoes are white with flowers. And moreover, a chilly morning washes and freshens the leaves, polishes them into full brilliance, the sun's early rays sharpen the edges and highlight the curves. Both the stalk, the leaf and the fruit, including the ladybirds on the leaves, all shine in the morning as if shaken through a fairy's sieve, or as if made ready for some big festivity ...*

*Up in the mountains, in the early morning, vegetables sing along with the birds.*





*Vegetable and Cereal Crops*

**Milo Bojović,**  
Gusinje  
*Carrot and cabbage*



It is easy for Tanja and Milo Bojović to weed out a hectare-and-a-half carrot field when they have their own personal, equally hard-working assistants – their four children.

Five kilometres from Gusinje, not far from the Albanian border, is the hamlet of Bojovići. The home of Milo Bojović, at the foot of Mount Lipovica, is on one bank of the River Grnčar, the field on

the other. The wide river bed dries out in summer, and a drive in a jeep over the large pebbles is an extraordinary experience. The sand from the Grnčar can even be found in the ploughed field and it does not disagree with the carrots, not in the least.

When you look around, it becomes clear why these carrots from Gusinje are so sweet-tasting and in such high demand. Prokletije is a marvel of beauty and might! The magical valley of Grbaje entices the visitor with its splendour, the bare peaks of the Karanfil mountain shine in the sun, topped with gleaming snow, the green woods glitter sprinkled with shadows of dazzling white clouds, there are springs everywhere, brooks, water disappearing deep into the ground or emerging from great depths, and to the south, where the Grnčar comes from, a gate, a passage through which, Milo explains, warmer air currents arrive. Once many traders and caravans would arrive, too. Gusinje was the centre where traders from Peć, Metohija, and those from the coast met. The fact that such a climate has always been beneficial both for vegetables and for people is well proven by the very name Grnčar (Potter), linked with the times of the Ancient Greeks.





## **Elijas Feratovic,** Gusinje *Cabbages and potatoes*

The carrot is a plant which loves stable humidity in soil and steady sun in the sky. Here, next to the River Grnčar, it gets all it needs. Not only enough light and water, but also a lot of human care and a gentle touch.

Milo is a physics teacher. He took to farming as a summer job to bolster the household budget. He learned this trade with the full support of Tanja and the children, and it has paid off: in recent years they have immediately sold everything they have grown. While looking at the large verdant cabbage leaves, the long carrot beds and his youngest farmhand, Milo's face emanates the characteristic serenity and contentedness of a husbandman whose splendour, like the shine of the pebbles in the Grnčar river bed, touches and enlivens the viewers.

Tel. 067 827 908

The Grlja Canyon, Oko Skakavice and Ali-Pasha's Springs are but some of the pearls of Prokletije you may see passing through Gusinje and the surrounding villages. This area, unique in its beauty, is also renowned for superb vegetables.

The foot of the Prokletije Mountains offers perfect conditions for vegetable growing: the right altitude, soil quality, climate. Just the right amount of cold, just the right amount of warmth, and clouds which never bring hail. Good air and good water. This is why the cabbage leaves are so huge and succulent, why potatoes from Gusinje are so tasty and famed for their quality.

Elijas Feratović has allotments at different locations along the River Grnčar. He grows considerable amounts of cabbages and potatoes, and is also involved in fruit growing. The whole family earns its living purely through farming and are all involved in the work. They live in Gusinje. Elijas Feratović would agree that "Everywhere is nice, but being at home is best".

Tel. 069 408 941



## FARMING COOPERATIVE

### “VRBICA”, Petnjica

*Potatoes, cabbages, rye, buckwheat, wheat, barley, oats, maize*



The house of Avdul Adrovic, an agronomist, is located in Vrbica, some fifteen kilometres from Berane. Avdul is the central person in the Farming Cooperative “Vrbica”, established back in 1984 by some fifty or so farmers. One would say, cooperatives existed once but have now disappeared! This one has not only survived but become a leader in producing potatoes for seeds and for consumption (700 tons a year), and is becoming ever more well-known for growing cereal crops, particularly rye and buckwheat.

The cooperative gathers 120 members, or families farming their own land (156 ha in total). Along with the seven permanent staff members and some 70 seasonal workers, the students of the agricultural high school can also be seen in the fields acquiring their first hands-on experience. In 2007 the cooperative was entered onto the Register of Organic Food Producers in Montenegro.

The villages of Vrbica (Lower Vrbica at 950 m and Upper Vrbica at 1029 m) are the leaders in the agricultural development of the area of Petnjica, popularly known as Upper Bihor. The territory is divided among the municipalities of Bijelo Polje, Berane, Rožaje and Tutin. A large part of the area is covered by mountains: Turjak (1,409 m), Vlahovi (1,599 m), Ciglen (1,393 m) and Lađevac (1,545 m). Past Lađevac, the terrain gently undulates into the Pester Plateau.

Petnjica covers an area of 174 km<sup>2</sup> and is very conducive to agricultural development, fruit growing, cattle raising and fishing. It contains 5,000 hectares of arable land. The climate is continental, in higher regions even alpine, with clearly pronounced seasons. The valley of the River Popča is known for the phenomenon of temperature inversion, with higher altitudes having higher temperatures than the lower ones. Autumn is milder than spring, which fa-





vours the ripening of crops and good harvests. Water is plentiful here. At one time, the rivers here powered 113 mills.

Under the motto of “good food – long life”, tons after tons of potatoes, cabbages, buckwheat, rye, wheat, barley, oats, and maize grown in the area of Petnjica supply green markets and retail outlets throughout Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo. Great recognition of the efforts of the cooperative’s members and the awards won at trade fairs boost Avdul’s creative eagerness and the wish to enhance both the cooperative and his local area, and stimulate his countrymen to work. Thus, his aim now (“to be for the benefit of all”) is for the cooperative to acquire larger storehouses, to better preserve the produce and ship it from a single location. Buckwheat pillows are now being prepared, and he finds the idea of cereal tea very interesting...

If only there were more enthusiasts and hard



workers like him in Montenegro... Because, as Avdul’s sister Šučrija, who packed up heljdija (buckwheat pie) for us for our journey back to Berane, said “nature is our mother”. It offers everything. It is up to us to respect it. To work, to create, and to enjoy – the fruits of our labour and beauty.

84312 Vrbica, Berane  
051 248 331; Fax: 051 248 325  
067 557 319; 069 581 772  
[www.zzvrbica.ne23.net](http://www.zzvrbica.ne23.net)  
[zzvrbica@t-com.me](mailto:zzvrbica@t-com.me)



*It is ready when  
the smell starts  
to fill the room*

*Immediately after the Berlin Congress, Priest Miloš Velimirović from Kralj (in the foothills of Bjelasica) visited the katuns of Komovi and Bjelasica and in 1898 published these articles about food in the “Annals of Nikola Čupić” in Belgrade:*

*“Something was always simmering in a pot hanging over the hearth. For lunch and dinner, cabbage with meat, beans with meat, and potato stews would be prepared.*





*The Cuisine of 150 Years Ago*



## ***Cicvara or gotovac***

*Cicvara is classed as fast food. It would be made for unexpected guests. Melt a generous amount of kajmak in a pan and add some maize flour, then eggs. There is no frugality in preparing cicvara, but it is eaten in moderation.*

## ***Bread “under the sač” or “bljuštur”***

*Heat the stove hotplate well. Stir the embers. Brush the ashes off the hotplate and place the well-kneaded maize dough on top of it, moulded by hand into the shape of a hemisphere. Once formed, place „sač”(a shallow iron bell used for baking) over or put dock leaves over it, until they fully cover the whole dough. Cover with embers; it is ready when it can be turned on the plate or when the smell of baked bread starts to fill the room.*



## ***Maize kačamak***

*The main dish of the foothill region. Use a suitable container, a pot, put in a certain amount of water, add some peeled potatoes, and hang the pot over the fire. When fully cooked and beginning to fall apart, add salt and maize flour. When the water starts to boil through the flour, pour out the excess water. Cook for another hour. Take it off the fire and place on a flat surface where a strong hand is required to thoroughly beat the potato using a kačamak mallet to blend with the flour, and the kačamak starts to fall off the mallet.*

*Put a substantial amount of cream in a separate container. Once it has melted over the fire, add crushed soft cheese and when the mixture has boiled pour it into the kačamak and whisk again until it completely blends. This is the so-called osmočeni kačamak (kačamak with cheese), and is served warm with goat's milk or sauerkraut in the wintertime.*



## **Butter**

*In autumn, milk is not used to make cheese any more, but instead to make butter. Put strained fresh milk into a churn and move it around with a special stick featuring a stick with a round wooden end. The milk is churned by moving the dash up and down until the butter becomes lumpy and separates from the buttermilk, which remains very weak.*

## **Melted butter**

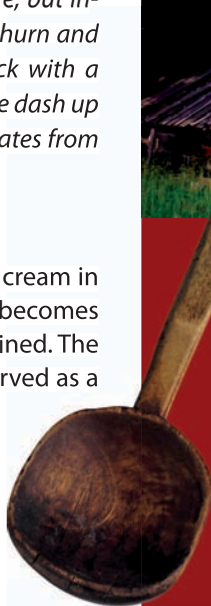
*It is made by melting the skimmed cream: put the cream in a pot over the heat, constantly stirring, and once it becomes hot, the butter floats to the surface and is thus strained. The buttermilk that remains is known as 'trop' and is served as a dairy sauce.*

## **Sour cream (pavlaka)**

*Pravi se u jesen ovako: mlijeko se procijedi, malo smlači, razlije na karlice i onaj skorup koji se na takvom mlakom mlijeku uhvati za jednu noć, to je pavlaka. Za zimu se ostavlja u male sudove, kabljiče.*

## **Jardum**

*Jardum or ovčanik is made solely of sheep's milk, between St Elijah's Day (August 2nd) and the autumn, for as long as sheep can be milked. Strain fresh milk and place it over heat, add salt. While it is being heated, stir constantly with a spoon until it thickens. It is then ready. Jardum may be kept in a cool place for several days and a much thicker cream forms on the surface than with any other type of milk.*



*A centuries-old tradition:*

## **Up to the katuni for summer grazing**

*Each village household had to go up into the mountains in spring, around St George's Day.*

*Katuni (summer pasture settlements) were usually located on a plateau on the verge of a forest, protected against the winds, and always near a spring of drinkable water. The shepherds' cabins or huts were made of logs covered in wooden boards. The interior is divided into a dairy pantry and another room for living and sleeping quarters. While the men prepare the firewood, timber for the huts, and shear the sheep, the women "of the mountains" cater for the food. They milk the sheep and cows twice a day, every morning and in the evening when they return from grazing. The fresh milk is strained, boiled placed into shallow dishes, made into cheese or cream is skimmed from it.*

*As the folk saying goes: where there is milk, there is a remedy.*

## *From sač to spoon...*

*The main utensils and cutlery were kept near the hearth. In the Lim basin this room was also called*

*the kužina. The kužina was used for cooking and dining. At times it is still possible to see some of the following items: crepulja (a shallow clay pot for baking bread), sač sa kukama (an iron pan for roasting), načve (a wooden trough for kneading dough), vagan (a deep container), časa (a shallow container), goružda (a wooden ladle), karlica (a shallow dish for pouring milk into for skimming), štruglja (a container used for milking sheep and cows), spoons, pljatovi (plates) and other wooden kitchenware.*



## *There used to be much more maize*

*Once it was believed that to feed a family it was important to have meat, cream, beans and cabbage, while other vegetables were regarded as “pauper’s food”. Among all the vegetables, the oldest is the potato (kompijer). It was brought from the Old Montenegro in around 1830.*

*In earlier times some other crops were used as food, as testified to by many place names, such as Eldine (buckwheat) and Prosine (oats). The censuses of the Ottoman times show that among cereal crops, wheat, rye, barley, oats, and even lentils were grown here. Oat was replaced by maize (called kolomboč in the Lim basin) purchased from Metohija.*







*Some More Curiosities*

## *Proja – good for one's memory and inner peace*

*Maize is an important source of thiamin (vitamin B1). One serving (164 g) meets around one fourth of your recommended daily amount. Thiamin is extremely important for brain cells, since it is needed to synthesise acetylcholine, the neurotransmitter essential for good memory - if deficient, one's memory fails.*

*Maize is also a good source of vitamin B5, particularly important for people under stress since it supports the function of suprarenal glands.*



## *Rye bread for slimming diets*

*Rye is reminiscent of wheat, but has longer and thinner grains, and the colour varies from yellow-brown to grey-green. Since it is difficult to separate the germ and bran from the endosperm, rye flour contains a large amount of nutritious ingredients. It is a rich source of magnesium, dietary fibre, selenium and protein. It contains 335 kcal per 100 g.*

*Most people do not consume enough fibre with their regular diet, and rye is a good source of fibre. These are mostly non-cellulose polysaccharides which have a high ability to bind water and quickly give the feeling of being full and well-fed, which makes rye bread the right choice for those wanting to reduce weight. One cupful of rye contains 17.3% of the recommended daily amount of fibre.*





## *Both food and a medicine: buckwheat*

- *Unlike most of other cereals, buckwheat does not contain gluten (the cause of celiac disease that children are particularly prone to) and is suitable as an alternative to wheat, oat, rye and barley.*
- *Folk medicine makes use of tea made of dried buckwheat plant or seeds and buckwheat meal.*
- *Buckwheat reduces cholesterol and high blood pressure, and stabilises blood sugar levels. Western medicine uses buckwheat as an arteriosclerotic, a dermestic, a painkiller, for treating skin and blood-vessel diseases, and diseases of the nervous system. The tea improves memory and rejuvenates blood vessels...*
- *In Russia buckwheat meals are served to scientists and students since it improves memory, and in Australia they make buckwheat porridge for infants.*
- *Coarse buckwheat flour is used to prepare compresses for skin conditions (lichen, eczema, boils) and in cosmetics for skincare – peeling masks.*
- *Buckwheat flowers have a distinct aroma and are used for making a dark honey which has a strong flavour.*



### *Heljdija (buckwheat pie)*

- *wholegrain buckwheat flour*
- *wheat flour (type 500)*
- *salt*
- *kajmak (cream cheese) or whole-fat cheese*
- *eggs*

*For pancakes, use equal quantities of wholegrain buckwheat and wheat flour and make a mixture somewhat thicker than for regular pancakes.*

*FILLING: whip the kajmak and eggs (like for a filling for cheese pie). Use a fireproof container and place a row of pancakes, spread with the filling and grill in the oven.*

## *So delicate, yet so strong*

All mums know that raspberry juice soothes coughing for little tots. In folk medicine, raspberries are used for soothing rheumatic pain, reducing excessive gastric acids and it is also recommended for bronchitis, urinary-tract diseases and liver diseases. Raspberries are very rich in antioxidants, much more so than kiwi! The anthocyanins that give it its characteristic colour also have an antibacterial and fungicidal effect. It is important in tumour prevention, since it was proven that it contains certain substances which prevent the activation of some enzymes linked with tumour growth. Being rich in fibre makes raspberry a good choice for improving peristalsis and regulating blood-sugar and cholesterol levels.



## *The Power of Blackberries*

Tea made from blackberry leaves is an age-old medicine well appreciated by the Ancient Greeks and Romans. It is used as an astringent, against diarrhoea, haemorrhoids, various skin contusions and damage to mucous membranes. Externally, it is used as an antiseptic in treating angina, laryngitis, gingivitis, for wounds and skin diseases, as well as a mouthwash in case of mouth ulcers. It is frequently used for colds, coughs and diabetes. In wartime, blackberry leaves, on their own or together with raspberry leaves, were used as a substitute for black tea.

Blackberry syrup is good against diarrhoea. Blackberry wine is excellent for reinvigoration, and is recommended for people with anaemia.

## *A remedy for everyone*

Yarrow grows everywhere and flowers throughout the summer. Yarrow tea is used to improve appetite, for stomach ailments, bloatedness and slow digestion, in folk medicine for healing wounds as a haemostyptic and for assuaging pain. Yarrow is one of the ingredients of bitter herbal teas, purging tea, a tea to prevent excessive bile flow, a tea to normalise metabolism and a soothing tea.

## *Top dog*

The local saying 'healthy as a dogberry' just goes to prove this fruit's reputation. Even not fully ripe dogberries have medicinal features. Sour, unripened dogberries (creating a mouth-puckering sensation) are used against diarrhoea, haemorrhage, enteritis and fever caused by digestive tract diseases.



Dogberry fruits and bark, prepared as a tea, help with bowel diseases, and are particularly effective against diarrhoea and fever. When children have diarrhoea, they should take a teaspoon or a tablespoonful (depending on age) of dogberry preserve, jam or syrup several times a day.



### **Tea against diarrhoea:**

Seep dried dogberries (5 -10 g) for 5 minutes in 200 ml of water. Leave to steep for twenty minutes, then sift and drink one cupful, unsweetened, three times a day after a meal.

### **Rakija:**

The elderly know that rakija filled with dogberries (100 g of ripe berries for each litre of strong rakija) is good against digestive tract ailments and diseases.

### **Uncooked marmalade:**

Sift the berries and remove the seeds. Take equal amount of berries and sugar and mix together until it becomes an even paste, about 3 hours. And that's it – you have your marmalade.

*Bogdan Račić harvests and dries mushrooms and berries, and is full of praise for dogberries. He recommends everyone to try a forest fruits tea mixture: wild apple, wild pear, dog rose, blueberry, strawberry and, last but not least, dogberry.*

## **A Pillow in the Fridge**

*It is a type of healing pillow filled with buckwheat hulls which has been used for centuries in the Far East. It is a good solution for headaches, migraines, insomnia, snoring, asthma, dust-mite allergy, and shoulder and neck pain.*

*The buckwheat hull is its outer covering which is characteristic in that it does not get compressed under pressure. Thus such a pillow supports anatomical structures, but also massages the muscles in the neck, the shoulders and the upper spine, and the spine retains its ideal position during sleep.*

*A very high content of silicic acid in buckwheat hulls reduces the possibility of harbouring bacteria (self-disinfection). The hulls allow air to pass through and thus prevent the head from sweating. In the summer, you can even cool it in the fridge before going to sleep. If you warm it mildly, you will have additional therapy for your stiff neck or simply for a more enjoyable sleep in the winter.*





*Berane, 2011.*