

# Miloš Family Winery: 500 Years of Tradition on the Pelješac Peninsula

Franica MILOŠ

Miloš Winery, Ponikve 15, 20230 Ston

*franca.milos@yahoo.com*



*The Miloš family has lived on the Pelješac peninsula, in our home village, Ponikve, since the time of the Dubrovnik Republic. Most of the family has always been involved in agriculture, mostly production of grapes, wines, olive oil and other endeavors to make their homes and families self-sustaining. Our family winery has survived many different historical events and changes. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wine from Peljesac was exported by specialized ships. After the Second World War and creation of communist Yugoslavia, private entrepreneurship was not permitted, and the family was forced to sell all our grapes to the government owned wineries. Frano Miloš recalls that even in those difficult times, the family worked to keep the best locations of the vineyards, and to produce the best quality of grape. While other wineries produced traditional, lower quality wines, we were first to produce very small quantities of premium wines. With the fall of Communism and with the opening of the new markets, Frano Miloš, at that time 30 years old, had the opportunity to open his own business. This was the opportunity to start with the old family dream: to produce wine under the family name. Soon his wines, named Stagnum, produced from the indigenous grape variety Plavac mali from family vineyards, achieved special status. Wine journalist Hugh Johnson, in his Pocket Wine Guide, pronounced Stagnum the first Croatian cult wine. Today we have 15 hectares of vineyards situated on*

*some of the best slopes of Pelješac peninsula. Although the technology and equipment has been updated, the emphasis is still on producing natural wines with a minimum of intervention. The wine is aged in big oak barrels made of Slavonia oak for minimum of two to three years before bottling, so the wines maintain their own characteristics and the unique qualities of the Plavac mali variety. Today our wines are sold in prestigious restaurants and hotels in Croatia, and are exported to the USA, Canada, UK and EU.*





## The story of Pelješac & Plavac mali

Pelješac is the habitat of Plavac mali. The colors of the Pelješac skyline reflect the purple-red and granite hued colors of the fruit on the vine. In extremely difficult conditions men have created the vineyards woven into the surrounding, dry-stone walls bracing the natural sinkholes, thus forming landscape architecture blended into environment and creating unique micro locations, ideal for raising grape vines.



The vineyard reflects the true essence of the Pelješac peninsula; rough, hard, poor, gentle, tame and plenteous; a blend of many contrasts all in just one place. Soil cultivated for the first time is rich in nutrients. Thanks to the air circulation, abundant light and warmth, chemical spraying is minimal, and enable a production of completely natural wine.

Here, the rock is part of life, a reflection of the layering of time. It forms slopes and valleys, while here and there a circle swirls, forming a natural amphitheater. With a strange intimacy, the rock hides the little land there is and connects it to the Mediterranean ecosystems. This unique biological environment of soil and plant life resists corrosion, and preserves moisture for hot summer days when grapevines need it the most.



Cultivating grapevines on the finest slopes of the Pelješac peninsula us in direct contact with the rock, the soil, the plants, and detailed handcrafted work.

It requires constant reflection and observation of everything what is happening around us, under various influences of wonderful games of nature. A combination of physical effort and passion for the work at hand is how special and natural wines like Stagnum are produced.

The Pelješac peninsula stretches in the southeast - northwest direction. The very position of the peninsula is a prerequisite for the south slopes to receive a great amount of solar energy, light and warmth in early spring, which is favorable for the cultivation of Plavac mali. An excellent substrate for the cultivation of Plavac mali is the sedimentary sandy soil on the south slopes of this hilly and forested peninsula.

### Miloš Wines

A red-purple granite-hued color with reflections of dark blue is a characteristic of our wines while they are young. Once ripe, the color of the wine becomes a deep ruby-red. This multi-layered bouquet reveals an aroma of dark fruit, herbal tones, with sage as the most prominent one, nuances of sandy earth, particularly of warm Dolomite rock after the rain. The playfulness of taste elements calms down in a lasting and gentle finish.

### Traditional herbal teas

The natural ecosystems around the winery are rich in medicinal herbs and animal life, which make their homes in dry stone walls. These abundant natural resources have provided us

with new directions and new products for our winery.



One of our many projects is a plantation of medicinal Mediterranean herbs, whose natural habitat is right here and whose medicinal properties have long been recognized: sage, germander, rosemary, heather, bindweed, St. John's Wort, to name a few. Our goal is to grow plants for the production of natural, tasty, gourmet teas. We are working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for development and protection of landscape biodiversity of the Mediterranean.



Sage (*Salvia officinalis*), heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and mountain germander (*Taurinum montanum*) flourish in the *rich soils* of the Pelješac hills, planted and nurtured them with an ecological approach on the sunniest slopes, in terraces formed and dug by hand, all in the proximity of the vineyards. Human dedication and the energy of the sun have endowed these herbs with healing medicinal properties.

For these very reasons, this is an exceptionally rich herbal gourmet tea and, interestingly enough, compatible with Miloš Plavac Mali wine.