

Zaradi njega si je japonski premier privoščil slovensko vino #intervju

Because of this, the Japanese Prime Minister has afforded the Slovenian wine #intervju

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Foto: Matjaž Vertuš

Česa se japonski poslovnež Jukio Mori najbolj spominja o svojem prvem obisku Slovenije? Da je res dobro jedel in pil. Ne čudi torej, da je že od devetdesetih let najpomembnejši promotor slovenskega vina na Japonskem, kmalu pa namerava sonarodnjakom predstaviti tudi prekmursko šunko.

Jukio Mori je Slovenijo prvič obiskal kmalu po njeni osamosvojitvi in lahko bi rekli, da je bila to ljubezen na prvi pogled. Že konec devetdesetih let sta se z ženo **Keiko** odločila, da bosta Japonce navdušila za slovensko vino in začela slovenskim vinarjem utirati pot na ta oddaljeni trg. Zdaj sodelujeta s kletmi Batič, Marof, Steyer, Ščurek in Erzetič, na Japonsko uvažata tudi radgonske penine, vinom pa bo kmalu sledila še prekmurska šunka.

Nekdanji častni konzul Slovenije v Tokiu, ki svojih 80-in-nekaj let niti približno ne kaže, se v Sloveniji mudi večkrat na leto in s seboj vedno pripelje tudi goste iz Japonske, da bi jim pokazal, zakaj je tako navdušen nad našo državo in njeno kulinariko. Še posebej mu je pri srcu Prekmurje, v Murski Soboti imata s Keiko že več kot 15 let svoje stanovanje in sta v tem času nedvomno postala (tudi) Murskosobočana. Ko smo sedeli v bistrotu Uno, "podružnici"

znane prekmurske gostilne Rajh, je zakonca Mori prisrčno pozdravil prav vsakdo, ki je prišel mimo naše mize.

What Japanese businessman Jukio Mori most remembers about his first visit to Slovenia? He really did eat and drink well. It is therefore not surprising that since the 1990s, he is the most important promoter of Slovenian wine in Japan, and soon it plans to present Prekmurje ham.

Jukio Mori visited Slovenia for the first time shortly after his independence, and we could say that this was love at first glance. By the end of the nineties, Keiko decided to impress the Japanese on Slovenian wine and begin to pour Slovenian wine makers into this remote market. Now they are cooperating with cellars Batič, Marof, Steyer, Ščurek and Erzetič, and also radon sparkling wine is imported into Japan, and soon after the wine will be imported Prekmurje ham.

The former Honorary Consul of Slovenia in Tokyo, whose 80-year-old is not nearly evident, has been arriving in Slovenia a number of times a year and always brings with them guests from Japan to show them why he is so enthusiastic about our country and her culinary. Especially for him in the heart of Prekmurje, in Murska Sobota, they have been with Keiko for more than 15 years their apartment and in that time undoubtedly became (also) Murskosobočana. When we sat in the Uno Bistro, the "branch" of the renowned Prekmurje Inn Rajh, Mori's spous were welcomed by everyone who came past our table.



Foto: Matjaž Vertuš Kdaj in kako ste prvič prišli v stik s Slovenijo?

Bilo je še v času Jugoslavije, dve leti pred osamosvojitvijo Slovenije. Bil sem predsednik trgovskega podjetja v Tokiu in nekega dne nas je obiskal predstavnik Litostroja, ki je želel njihove stroje prodajati na Japonsko. To je bil Miran Skender, poznejši veleposlanik Slovenije na Japonskem, a takrat mu nihče v podjetju ni posvečal nobene pozornosti, ker Jugoslavija na Japonskem pač ni imela neke veljave. Bil je tako razočaran, da je že hotel oditi, a se je ustavil v toaletnih prostorih, kamor sem ravno takrat prišel tudi jaz – in tako sem ga spoznal na stranišču (smeh, op. p.)!

Začela sva se pogovarjati, povedal mi je, zakaj in od kod je prišel in vzbudil je moje zanimanje. Sčasoma smo se dogovorili za sodelovanje in začeli na Japonsko uvažati Litostrojve izdelke. Nato pa se je ob osamosvojitvi in vojni komunikacija pretrgala. Po enem letu me je znova poklical, pojasnil, da se je medtem zgodila osamosvojitvev in da si želi znova poslovati z mano, sam pa sem bil nekoliko zaskrbljen, ker o Sloveniji nisem vedel popolnoma nič. Zato sem se odločil, da jo obiščem.

It was still in Yugoslavia, two years before the independence of Slovenia. I was the president of a trading company in Tokyo, and one day, a representative of Litostro was visiting us, who wanted their machines to be sold to Japan. This was Miran Skender, later ambassador of Slovenia to Japan, but then nobody in the company paid any attention to him, because Yugoslavia did not have any influence in Japan. He was so disappointed that he wanted to leave, but he stopped in the toilet rooms, where I just came - and so I met him in the toilet (laugh, op. P.)!

We started talking, he told me why and where he came from and woke my interest. Over time, we agreed to cooperate and began importing Litostro's products into Japan. Then, when independence and military communication broke out, After a year, he called me again, explained that in the meantime there has been an independence, and that he wants to do business with me again, but I was somewhat concerned that I did not know anything about Slovenia. So I decided to visit the country.

Kako je bil videti ta prvi obisk?

Pripeljali smo se z Dunaja in se najprej ustavili v Mariboru. Nikoli ne bom pozabil tiste prve večerje – jedli smo kuhano šunko s hrenom. Fantastično! Prvi vtis, ki sem ga dobil o Sloveniji, je bil res dober. Nato smo šli še v Ljubljano, obiskali Litostroj in podobno. V enem tednu, ki sem ga preživel tu, sem spoznal več kot sto ljudi in bil tako prijetno presenečen, da sem bil odločen, da moramo začeti poslovno sodelovati.

How did this first visit look?

We drove from Vienna and first stopped in Maribor. I'll never forget that first dinner - we ate a cooked ham with a horseradish. Fantastic! The first impression I received about Slovenia was really good. Then we went to Ljubljana, visited Litostroj and similar. In a week I spent here, I met over a hundred people and was so pleasantly surprised that I was determined to start business cooperation

Takrat to sodelovanje še ni bilo povezano z vinom?

Ne, primarno sem iz tehnološke panoge, pa tudi sicer se takrat na vino nisem prav spoznal. Ko sem ga prvič pokusil, je bilo to neko resnično slabo japonsko vino, ki je bilo bolj podobno kakšni kemikaliji. Pokusil sem tudi kakšen zelo sladek renski rizling, ki nam ga je za božič pošiljal poslovni partner iz Nemčije, prav tako smo ob kakšni poslovni priložnosti pili francoska in ameriška vina, ki me niso navdušila. Zaradi tega dolgo nisem bil ljubitelj vina, raje sem imel viski.

At that time, was this cooperation not yet connected with wine?

No, I'm primarily from the technology industry, but I did not even get to know the wine at that time. When I first tried it, it was a really bad Japanese wine that looked more like a chemical. I also tried some kind of sweet Rhine Riesling, which was sent to us by a business partner from Germany for Christmas, and we also drank French and American wines that did not impress me at what business opportunity. For this reason, for a long time I was not a fan of wine, I preferred whiskey.



Foto: Matjaž Vertuš

Med prvim obiskom Slovenije pa kar nisem mogel verjeti, kako dobra vina smo pili povsod. Oho, to je pa nekaj drugega, sem si mislil.

During my first visit to Slovenia, I could not believe how good we were drinking everywhere. Oh, that's something else, I thought.

Kako je prišlo do odločitve, da boste začeli slovenska vina uvažati na Japonsko?

Kmalu po mojem prvem obisku se je Slovenija s svojimi vini prvič predstavljala na FoodExu, velikem prehrabnem sejmu v Tokiu, pri čemer sva pomagala tudi midva, predvsem Keiko. Toda Slovenije na Japonskem takrat ni poznal nihče in slovenski prostor na sejmu ni imel obiskovalcev. V tem je bistvo: preden začneš govoriti o vinu, moraš govoriti o državi. Zato je Keiko dejala: slovenska vina so odličen produkt, a nanje nihče ni pozoren, ker nihče ne ve za Slovenijo. Zakaj jim ne bi midva pomagala? In to sva storila. Spet sva se vrnila v Slovenijo, obiskala več kleti in nabavila za kontejner vina, kakšnih pet tisoč steklenic, ter ga uvozila na Japonsko. Tako se je začelo.

How did you decide to start importing Slovenian wines into Japan?

Soon after my first visit, Slovenia for the first time presented itself at FoodEx with wines, a large food fair in Tokyo, and we also helped, especially Keiko. But at that time Slovenia did not know anyone in Japan and the Slovenian space did not have visitors at the fair. This is the essence: before you start talking about wine, you have to talk about the country.

That's why Keiko said: Slovenian wines are a great product, but nobody is paying attention to them because nobody knows about Slovenia. Why should not we help them? And we did it. Again, we returned to Slovenia, visited several wine cellars and procured a wine container, about five thousand bottles, and imported it to Japan. That's how it started.



Foto: Matjaž Vertuš

Dejali ste že, da na Japonskem takrat nihče ni poznal Slovenije, kaj šele slovenskih vin. Kako ste se lotili prodaje?

Vzorci sva nosila v pokušino posameznim restavracijam, barom in klubom. Seveda ni bilo preprosto, ponekod so bili pripravljene vzeti nekaj steklenic, nič več. Prirejala sva predstavitve slovenskih vin, kjer sva 20, 30 ljudem poskušala ta vina približati, in počasi se je ta trud začel tudi poznati. To je vsekakor misijonarsko delo (smeh, op. p.).

You already said that in Japan at that time nobody knew Slovenia, let alone Slovenian wines. How did you deal with sales?

We carried samples in the tasting of individual restaurants, bar and clubs. Of course it was not easy, in some places they were ready to take some bottles, nothing more. We organized presentations of Slovenian wines, where we tried to bring this wine to 20, 30 people, and slowly this effort began to be known. This is definitely missionary work (laughter, op. P.).

Pa je Japonce takrat, konec devetdesetih let, zanimalo vino – katerokoli vino?

V tistih časih je vino veljalo za posebnost. V restavracijah so ljudje začeli spoznavati francoska vina, v nočnih klubih so postali priljubljeni dragi šampanjci, nekateri so poznali še italijanska in španska vina, to pa je bilo tudi vse. Nato so trg začela osvajati vina iz Novega sveta, ki so bila uspešna predvsem zaradi nizkih cen. Ker so vina postala cenovno dostopnejša, jih je začelo piti več ljudi, pa čeprav niso imeli pojma, ali je to dobro ali slabo vino. Tudi na velikih političnih in gospodarskih dogodkih se je pilo ceneno vino. Težava je bila v tem, da so ta cenena vina na Japonsko uvažala pivovarska podjetja, ki jim ni bilo v interesu, da bi bila na japonskem trgu dostopna kakovostna vina, saj bi potem manj ljudi pilo pivo.

Midva s slovenskimi vini nisva mogla konkurirati tem velikim igralcem, ne prestižnim vinskih imenom ne velikim količinam cenenejšega vina. Edina možnost je bila, da sva nagovorila vsakega kupca posebej, govorila z lastniki restavracij, sommelieri, kuharji in jih enega po enega osvojila. To je edini način, kako kupcem v tujini pojasniti vrednost vaših vin, od kod prihajajo in kako so pridelana. Slovenska vina so butična in takšni so tudi kupci. Takšen način prodaje seveda terja veliko časa in truda, a druge poti ni.

Was the Japanese then, at the end of the nineties, interested in wine - any wine?

At that time, wine was considered a specialty. In restaurants, people began to get to know French wines, nightclubs became popular for champagnes, some also knew Italian and Spanish wines, and that was all. Then the market began to win wines from the New World, which were successful mainly due to low prices. As wines became more affordable, more people began to drink, even though they had no idea whether this was a good or bad wine. Even at the great political and economic events a cheap wine was served.

The problem was that these cheap wines were imported into Japan by brewery companies who were not in the interest of having quality wines available in the Japanese market, since then fewer people would drink beer.

With Slovenian wines, we could not compete with these great players, not the prestigious wine names, and not the large quantities of cheap wine. The only option was to talk each customer individually, talk to the owners of restaurants, sommeliers, chefs and won them one by one. This is the only way to explain to your customers overseas the value of your wines, where they come from and how they are produced. Slovenian wines are boutique and such are also buyers.

Of course this type of sales requires a lot of time and effort, but there is no other way.



Foto: Matjaž Vertuš

So slovenska vina primerna za spajanje z japonsko kuhinjo?

V nekaterih restavracijah to počnejo zelo uspešno. Ena najinih največjih zgodb o uspehu je sodelovanje z gojiščem ostrig v bližini mesta Ise. To gojišče ima tudi svojo restavracijo, kjer je lastnik ob ostrigah ponujal francoski chablis, a s to kombinacijo ni bil nikoli povsem zadovoljen. Nato pa sva mu prinesla Marofov chardonnay in ga tako navdušila, da je nemudoma presedlal nanj.

Pred petimi leti smo tam priredili jesensko praznovanje, ker se tamkajšnja sezona ostrig in trgatve v Sloveniji začnejo ob približno istem času. Od takrat ga prirejamo vsako leto, uradno ga je podprl celo guverner tamkajšnje prefekture

Are Slovenian wines suitable for joining Japanese cuisine?

In some restaurants this is very successful. One of our greatest success stories is cooperation with the oyster farm near the city of Ise. This farm also has its own restaurant where the owner offered the French chablis on oysters, but this combination was never completely satisfied with this combination. Then we brought Marof's chardonnay to him, so he was so impressed that he immediately passed on to him.

Five years ago we organized an autumn celebration there, because the oysters and harvest season in Slovenia started at about the same time. Since then, we have been organizing it every year, officially supported even by the governor of the local prefectures

Slovenije ne promovirata le prek vin, ki jih uvažata na Japonsko, ampak na obisk v Slovenijo pogosto pripeljeta tudi sonarodnjake.

Da, to so ljubitelji vina, gostinci, sommelieri ... Lastnik omenjenega gojišča ostrig je v Slovenijo z nama prvič prišel pred tremi leti, ker si je želel obiskati klet Marof, potem ko ga je tako navdušilo njihovo vino. No, letos je bil tukaj že tretjič, ker se je popolnoma zaljubil v te kraje.

V Slovenijo sva pripeljala tudi mladega sommeliera, ki dela za naju in ki je nato šest mesecev preživel pri vinarjih, ki jih zastopamo, da bi razumel, kako so ta vina pridelana. Sommelier pač ni le natakar, ki toči vino, ampak mora vedeti, kje in kako je bilo vino pridelano. No, ta sommelier zdaj na Japonskem predstavlja vina, ki jih uvažamo tja, in restavracije so dejansko pripravljene plačati, da pride k njim, njihovim gostom priporoča slovenska vina in jim razlaga o njih.

Slovenia is not only promoting wine through wines imported into Japan, but also by visiting countries in Slovenia.

Yes, they are wine lovers, caterers, sommelieri ... The owner of this oyster media came to Slovenia with us for the first time three years ago because he wanted to visit the cellar Marof, after he was so impressed by his wine. Well, this is the third time this year, because he fell in love with these places.

We also brought to Slovenia a young sommelier who works for us and who spent six months with the winemakers we represent in order to understand how these wines are produced.

Sommelier is not just a waiter who runs wine, but he must know where and how the wine was produced. Well, this sommelier now in Japan presents wines that we import there, and restaurants are actually willing to pay to come to them, recommend their Slovenian wines to them and explain wine to them.



Japonski premier Šinzo Abe (desno) s sommelierem, ki mu je ponudil Ščurkovo vino in ga z njim navdušil. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (right) with the sommelier, who offered him the delicious wine and impressed him. Foto: osebni arhiv

Odličen primer, kako ta sommelier promovira slovenska vina, se je zgodil v eni najprestižnejših restavracij v Tokiu, ko je tam lani obedoval japonski premier **Šinzo Abe**. S sabo je prinesel steklenico romanee-contija (modri pinot iz burgundske kleti Romanee-Conti, eno najbolj cenjenih in najdražjih vin na svetu, op. p.), da bi ga spili ob večerji. Ko pa so

steklenico odprli, so ugotovili, da ima vino napako, vonj po zamašku. Kaj zdaj? Premier je mojemu sommelieru dejal, naj sam predlaga kakšno vino, in ta je nemudoma prinesel Ščurkov Up (zvrst merlota in cabernet sauvignona iz briške kleti Ščurek, op. p.). Premierju je bilo vino zelo všeč, celo tako zelo, da se je fotografiral s steklenico.

Letos bomo na enak način v posel vpeljali še enega sommeliera, ki smo mu že začeli "prati možgane" in ga s francoskih preusmerjati na slovenska vina.

An excellent example of how this sommelier promotes Slovenian wines has taken place in one of the most prestigious restaurants in Tokyo, when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was there last year. He brought a bottle of romanee-contia (blue pinot from the Romanee-Conti, one of the most respected and most expensive wines in the world, op. P.) To bring him to dinner. But when the bottle was opened, they found that the wine had a defect, a smell of a stopper. Now what? The Prime Minister said to my sommelier himself to propose a wine, and he immediately brought it to Ščurkov Up (the species merlot and cabernet sauvignon from the Brčko basement Ščurek, op. P.). The prime minister liked the wine very much, even so much, that he took a picture of a bottle.

This year, in the same way, we will introduce another sommelier in the same business, which we have already begun to "follow the brain" and direct it from the French to Slovenian wines.

Kako pa izbirate vinarje oziroma kleti, ki jih zastopate na Japonskem?

Vino je pomembno, toda še bolj pomembni so ljudje, ki ga pridelujejo. V poslu nista pomembna le marketing in promocija, temveč tudi etika in zaupanje. V nekatere slovenske vinarje sem iz različnih razlogov izgubil zaupanje in zato z njimi ne morem več sodelovati. Po drugi strani pa smo s temi, s katerimi sodelujem, razvili resnično pristen odnos.

How do you choose winemakers or cellars that you represent in Japan?

Wine is important, but even more important are the people who are cultivating it. In business, marketing and promotion are not only important, but also ethics and trust. In some Slovene winemakers, I lost confidence for various reasons and therefore I can no longer cooperate with them. On the other hand, with those with whom I cooperate, I have developed a truly genuine attitude.

Ob vinih ste pot na Japonsko utrli tudi slovenski hrani, po več kot sedmih letih je vendarle sklenjen dogovor o prodaji slovenskih suhomesnatih izdelkov prašičjega izvora na Japonsko. Zakaj je trajalo tako dolgo?

Uvoz mesnih izdelkov je v večini sveta strogo nadzorovan, razlogov je več: od skrbi za varno hrano do ščitenja domačih proizvajalcev. Zato je potrebnega veliko dela, tudi diplomatskega.

In addition to the wines, you have also made the way to Slovenian food, and after more than seven years an agreement was reached on the sale of Slovenian dried meat products to Japan. Why did it take so long?

Imports of meat products are strictly controlled in most parts of the world; the reasons are several: from the concern for safe food to the protection of domestic producers. Therefore, a lot of work is required, including diplomatic.



Foto: Matjaž Vertuš

Kateri mesni izdelek pa vas je prepričal, da ste se odločili razširiti posel tudi na to področje?

Za vstop na trg potrebuješ nekaj drugačnega, edinstvenega in visoko kakovostnega. Če ponudiš neki standarden, že znan in razširjen izdelek, se lahko bojuješ le z nizko ceno, tega pa nismo hoteli.

Zame je nekaj drugačnega in edinstvenega prekmurska šunka, ta mora biti po mojem mnenju zastavonoša pri prodoru slovenskih suhomesnatih izdelkov na japonski trg. Ko bomo odprli vrata, pa se bo zagotovo pojavilo povpraševanje tudi po drugih in drugačnih mesnih izdelkih. Enako je bilo z vini – z Batičem pa tudi z Movio smo utrli pot na vzhod, da so lahko sledili še drugi.

Which meat product, however, has convinced you that you have decided to expand the business to this area too?

To enter the market, you need something different, unique and of high quality. If you offer a standard, already known and expanded product, you can fight only at a low price, but we did not want to.

For me, there is something different and unique Prekmurje ham, which, in my opinion, should be a sticking point for the penetration of Slovenian cured meat products into the Japanese market. When we open the door, however, there will certainly be a demand for other and different meat products.

The same was true with wines - with Batič and also with Movio, we paved the way to the east, so that others could follow.



Foto: Matjaž Vertuš

V Sloveniji se tako dobro počutite, da ste si že pred leti tukaj kupili stanovanje – zakaj ravno v Murski Soboti?

Razlogov je bilo več, denimo bližina dunajskega letališča. Presodilo pa je nekaj drugega. Sva iz velemesta, Murska Sobota pa je majhna in to je tako zelo prijetno. Življenje je sproščeno, ljudje ne hitijo in v tem času – to stanovanje imava že kakšnih 15 let – sva tukaj spletla ogromno prijateljstev.

In Slovenia you feel so well that you bought an apartment here years ago - why exactly in Murska Sobota?

There were several reasons, such as the vicinity of Vienna Airport. But it judged something else. We are from the city center, but Murska Sobota is small and it is so very pleasant. Life is relaxed, people do not rush and in this time - we have this apartment for some 15 years - we have built huge friendships here.

Ste se v tem času naučili tudi kaj slovenščine?

Malo, super malo (v slovenščini, op. p.). Nekaj malega razumem, toda Slovenci imate očitno še posebej razvite možgane, ker ste razvili resnično zapleten jezik.

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Did you learn some Slovene at this time?

Little, very little (in English, op. P.). I understand a little, but Slovenes have obviously especially developed brains because you have developed a truly complex language.