



## 2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: **ASPARAGUS FROM A LOCAL FARM – A PRESTIGIOUS GIFT TO TERRITORY!**

Destination Name: *(include any state, province or region)*

MIREN KRAS

Country: SLOVENIA

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Position: CEO, GENERAL MANAGER

Nomination Category: *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

*Please find detailed information for the categories below in the Top 100 training module 'Good Practice Story'.*

- Localizing the destination supply chain
- Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Tourism Reset & Recovery

*Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module "Good Practice Story".*

*Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact [top100@greendestinations.org](mailto:top100@greendestinations.org)*

# DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

*Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.*

## Issues faced

### 1. Negative effects of globalization:

- low prices of imported products lead to CLOSURE OF SMALL DOMESTIC FARMS, and
- interruption of LOCAL SUPPLY CHAINS
- UNHEALTHY FOOD (changing the genetic design of shifts for higher yields and greater resistance of crops to environmental influences)
- LARGE CARBON FOOTPRINT of intercontinental transport.

2. With the abandonment of farms and the migration of the population from the countryside to the city, there is a DEGRADATION OF THE LANDSCAPE and the EXTINCTION OF VILLAGES and a LACK OF HEALTHY FOOD.

3. This also seriously threatening the FUTURE OF RURAL TOURISM, which builds its story on the specifics of the territory, on home-grown food, cuisine from fresh, indigenous, healthy seasonal produce.

4. Miren Kras, which is more than 90% under the protection of Natura 2000 due to its exceptional biodiversity, is well known by the Goriška Garden, where the best vegetables grow. Among them, the healing WHITE ASPARAGUS, which are the FLAGSHIP of the destination. In addition to the traditional asparagus plates in inns, this noble vegetable has been honored since 1972 with the largest annual event - the Asparagus Festival. It takes place every third weekend in May and was visited by over 30,000 locals and guests in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. All this is conditioned by the production of first-class asparagus on TWO FARMS, the Mozetič Farm with 5 hectares of plantations and the Ušaj Farm, which with 7 hectares of plantations is also the largest producer of asparagus in Slovenia. Due to the growing import of asparagus from abroad and severe pressure to reduce prices, Kmetija Mozetič abandoned its asparagus production two years ago. With this, the Slovenian market lost over 30 tons of top-quality domestic asparagus in the season. In the last two years, due to the deteriorating economic situation, the Ušaj Farm has also been considering abandoning asparagus production.

6. With the loss of local producers in the destination Miren Kras and the region, in addition to



other negative socio-economic effects, we would also lose our PARADE HORSE- so DMMO Turizem Miren-Kostanjevica took a decisive approach to solving this burning issues.

#### Methods, steps and tools applied

Municipality Miren-Kostanjevica placed tourism among the main development priorities in the vision and development strategy until 2025. Tourism Miren-Kostanjevica has thus placed asparagus among the top products and has allocated 8% of the annual operating budget in the 4-year working program .

In the beginning of 2019, Miren-Kostanjevica Tourism, DMMO of the destination Miren Kras, established a working group of representatives of the Municipality, all caterers from the destination, asparagus producers and representatives of local associations, agricultural experts and media representatives.

The group has prepared an action plan on the first Workshop, to warn the public and the local people about the advantages and benefits of locally grown asparagus with the right promotional approaches, which should result in higher demand for both primary local products and dishes with asparagus in restaurants, better knowledge of quality and healing properties of these special vegetables and the creation of preferences in demand for home-grown asparagus over imported, regardless of the price.

The main goals of the action plan were: to position asparagus, especially white asparagus or “belushi”, as an indigenous seasonal food that is highly medicinal and at the same time at the very top of culinary specialties. Consequently, increase demand, production and sales at reasonable prices, raise the recognizability of the chefs and their restaurants, and promote Miren Kras as one of the most sustainable tourist destinations in the world. And last but not least, the highest goal was/is to preserve the Ušaj Farm that grows home-grown asparagus.

#### STEPS

1. As part of the Asparagus Festival in 2019, we prepared a top culinary show – a cooking show, where renowned enogastronomic experts, politicians and famous Slovenian personalities evaluated asparagus dishes prepared by chefs who come from the wider region and abroad. We presented asparagus dishes in combination with wines from the territory of



Brda, the Karst region and the Vipava Valley, and even a combination of asparagus with chocolate, in cooperation with one of the largest tourist destinations in Slovenia - Radovljica. Best plates and caterers were rewarded.

2. At the same time, we designed 2 mascots, a bird – destination symbol and “Beluško” – a white asparagus-shaped mascot, for better promotion and education of the youngest. In the lower grades of primary schools, we started organizing playful workshops, in which we introduce to children the benefits of healthy locally grown food and sustainable green development.

The mascots have also become a trademark of promotion at major events in Slovenia, where we organize cooking shows with asparagus (e.g. Chocolate Festival in Radovljica, May Day event in Opatje selo, where our story was even supported by Slovenian President Borut Pahor).

3. By connecting prominent representatives of the profession and major destinations, we achieved great public interest and a large attendance at the event. What is more, we achieved publication of articles about the event and promotion of asparagus and their healing and culinary usefulness in all major national, both informational and professional media.

4. By using the slogan IZ NARAVE NA KROŽNIK (FROM NATURE TO A PLATE), we encouraged the purchase of asparagus from a local provider to all involved caterers, thus connecting the food chain. In addition, we highlighted the impact of each individual on the preservation of the local farm!

5. In 2020, in the year of the pandemic, which prevented the organization of the traditional Asparagus Festival, we invited caterers from the entire territory where asparagus grows – from Brda, Vipava Valley and Karst region, to participate in problem solving. We invited them to write down their best recipes for asparagus dishes, and so the first organized collection of recipes with asparagus was created, following the tips of the greatest chefs. The book Asparagus-beluši summarizes 31 recipes for asparagus dishes, according to the tips of the well-known master chefs of the region, the history of asparagus in 4 languages, the economic significance of asparagus in the past and today, its healing properties and general use in cooking, and presents both the producers and master chefs.

6. The publication of the booklet was accompanied by the recording of a VIDEO in which the mayor of the municipality Miren-Kostanjevica prepares an asparagus dish under the mentorship of chef Tomaž Kavčič from Gostilna pri Lojzetu, the owner of a Michelin star. The project was extremely popular, over 5,000 copies of the recipe book were sold, the website [www.mirenkras.si](http://www.mirenkras.si), the asparagus tab and the video were viewed by over 50,000



visitors in one month, which is a great success for our small Slovenia.

7. We recorded an interesting article in cooperation with agricultural experts, on the production and versatile use of asparagus, which was broadcast on TV Slovenia in the most watched Sunday agricultural show.

8. We invited the Minister of Agriculture to our destination and obtained her assurance that she would pay more attention to the issue of maintaining small farms and find sources of financial incentives in the future EU perspective.

9. In 2021, still limited by health protection measures, we continued the activities of the planned promotion of asparagus for their "survival" with the VIRTUAL PROMOTION OF ASPARAGUS, named Zgodbe iz lonca ("STORIES from the POT ")! Through the social media of Miren Krasa we extended the target group to the younger generation as well. Five well-known Slovenian comedians were pleased to participate in the campaign with a noble mission, and they decisively helped to raise interest of the campaign. The campaign Zgodbe iz lonca... brez konca! (Stories from the Pot ... with no end!) which included the prize game, filled social networks Facebook and Instagram Miren Kras for 6 weeks.

10. Through VIDEOS which included fun scenarios between our caterers and VIP guests, who were invited to dinner, we offered support to local asparagus growers and caterers who had their doors closed for almost a year during the pandemic. We brought to the public a fresh and humorous invitation to buy asparagus, to cook according to the recipes of the best master chefs, and visit local restaurants, where chefs, including Michelin star Tomaž Kavčič, maintain a positive attitude and diligently train their cooking skills, so that when restarting tourism, guests will be able to be pampered with excellent asparagus dishes!

Tools:

1. Workshops
2. Promotion plan in line with objectives and budget
3. Good overall identity and a clear communication message.
4. Celebrities
5. Mascots
6. Selection of best communication channels (professional shows on TV and radio, advertisements in the media, posters, banners, social networks, celebrities).
7. Traditional events, upgraded with cooking shows.
8. Recipe book
9. 5x video
10. Ministry of Agriculture.

What was the good practice implemented? Click to add your text

### Key success factors

W1. Innovative, resonant and therefore very successful approach

2. Clear vision and objectives, defined actors and tasks, financial resources provided and deadlines.

3. Involved stakeholders from all interested areas and representatives of all decision-making levels: public administration, politics, professional institutions in the field of agriculture and tourism, tourism stakeholders, producers, media.

4. Commitment to a common goal and excellent vertical and horizontal cooperation of all partners.

5. A well-designed project, a clear, substantive and visually complete message and successful promotion through correctly selected communication channels.

6. Top quality asparagus crops and excellence of master chefs.

What helped you tackle the issues? Click to add your text

### Lessons learned

At the start of the project, we encountered the skepticism of local caterers who did not feel responsible for helping a local asparagus grower.

The main reason was the higher price of local asparagus in comparison to imported ones, and caterers also preferred to purchase lower quality asparagus from the importer, who delivered the ordered quantities to the restaurant.

The presentation between the farm representative and local caterers at the first working meeting, the presentation of the farm history, followed by the presentation of demanding biodynamic production process and the dependence of a large number of families on farm income, and finally the comparison of domestic products with imported ones, was concluded by a presentation of the importance and potential of asparagus as the flagship of the destination Miren Kras.

The result of the working meeting was the realization that the close cooperation of all participants in the destination, including the locals, in the direction of the same goal – positioning asparagus, especially the white asparagus among the desired and valued seasonal crops, generates positive synergies and brings measurable benefits to all.

A common commitment was born to establish a food chain and close cooperation, which can, hand in hand with sustainable vision and quality, and with the additional support of thoughtful promotion, generate greater demand for quality locally grown asparagus and culinary specialties made by best chefs – such dishes that guests can't taste anywhere else! This, in turn, can make a decisive contribution to the survival of the local farmer and the preservation of traditional cuisine, on which is based the further development of tourism in destination Miren Kras.

### Results, achievements and recognitions



#### KEY results:

1. Preservation of Ušaj Farm, the largest producer of white asparagus in Slovenia, increase of annual production by 15% , from 30 to 40 tons in 2 years, as a result of increased demand for domestic asparagus compared to imported asparagus, despite higher price, therefore better cost coverage and creating a difference in price and thus the survival of the farm.
2. Consolidation of the local food chain.
3. Increasing demand for asparagus dishes in restaurants, adding new dishes to menus, 30% increased visits to local restaurants from JUL to SEP 2020 from all Slovenia.
4. Publication of the first recipe book for asparagus dishes ASPARAGUS-BELUŠI, in which 11 chefs from the territory contributed 31 recipes that showed the versatility of asparagus for appetizers, main dishes and desserts, translation of the book into 3 foreign languages, use for promotional and protocol purposes.
5. Placing asparagus dishes among the top culinary specialties.
6. Production of 6 timeless videos with educational and entertaining themes of asparagus, interesting for all generations, which decisively contributed to the promotion of consumption of locally grown asparagus and raising the visibility of the destination Miren Kras, Kmetija Ušaj and caterers.
7. Integration and better vertical and horizontal cooperation of all levels of stakeholders in the destination and region, including the local population.
8. Placing asparagus among the OKUSI SLOVENIJE (FLAVORS OF SLOVENIA) on the STO website.
9. Raising the quality of the traditional event – Asparagus Festival and attracting more visitors.
10. Good territory promotion
11. Raising awareness of the importance and long-term benefits of sustainable destination development and greater commitment of all stakeholders to a common vision
12. Contribution to reducing the carbon footprint in the destination and the wider EU region.
13. Contribution to raising awareness of the importance of HEALTHY, HOME-GROWN food.

In 2020 and 2021, the destination Miren Kras retained the Slovenia Green Destination-gold award,

In 2019, the destination Miren Kras was ranked among TOP 100 most sustainable destinations in the world and received the BEST of Europe 2020 award in GDD in Mali Lošinj, the good practice Tree for Cerje was ranked among the TOP 6 best practices in the world in the Earth category in 2021.

The municipality of Miren-Kostanjevica also obtained a national award, the ZLATI KAMEN (GOLDEN STONE) iso certificate, on the basis of efforts to preserve the Ušaj Farm and ensuring a high level of quality of life for the inhabitants of the municipality.

Other evidence of our sustainability orientation and clear green vision: Green Key, Green& Safe Travelers, ...



#### Additional references

Link to FOTO material + recipe book with asparagus in English on DRIVE was send by e-mail ariana.suhadolnik@gmail.com

#### VIDEO material

- Asparagus Festival: <https://www.mirenkras.si/en/events/asparagus-festival-in-orehovlje>

- video Asparagus Festival 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HT5fYqpWbE>

-video: The culinary challenge of the mayor under the mentorship of Tomaž Kavčič:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6H7pyltLq4>

- video Zgodbe iz lonca/ Stories from the pot

- broadcast in the main news program: <https://4d.rtv slo.si/arhiv/slovenska-kronika/174690801>

- broadcast in Agricultural program 2019( from 22 min 27 sec )  
<https://4d.rtv slo.si/arhiv/ljudje-in-zemlja/174695242> )

- Visit of the Minister of Agriculture <https://www.mojaobcina.si/miren-kostanjevica/novice/turizem/aleksandra-pivec-ob-dnevu-drzavnosti-na-cerju.html>