

No. 10	The <i>pazinski cukerančić</i> initiative	Croatia	Istria	Pazin
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Categories of cultural heritage

Professional craftspeople	Knowledge transfer	Presentation of crafts	Network for preservation of crafts	Local community building	Crafts within tourism
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Description

Pazinski cukerančić pastry is a hallmark of Istrian celebrations (namely weddings, it is a traditional Istrian wedding pastry), and as such, an important symbol for the community. Efforts to preserve and valorise the pastry have also safeguarded the intangible cultural fabric of Istria. One of these efforts is its recognition in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which underscores its importance as a living tradition, celebrated in regional gastronomy festivals and family events alike. The initiative to register *pazinski cukerančić* in the Croatian Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage began in 2015 and culminated in its official recognition in 2017. This effort was spearheaded by Davorka Šajina, in collaboration with the Local Action Group (LAG) Central Istria, the Ethnographic Museum of Istria, and the City of Pazin. The pastry being a part of a broader heritage of Istrian culinary practices that reflect regional identity and historical continuity, the initiative sought to preserve a dying tradition, ensure that the skills and knowledge required to make *pazinski cukerančić* are not lost, as well as celebrate regional identity and highlight the pastry as a symbol of central Istria's unique cultural heritage, and further protect the traditional recipe and the diverse methods of preparation passed down through generations. Positioning *pazinski cukerančić* as a flagship product for Istria also strengthens the region's identity and appeal in broader contexts.

Types of handicrafts

Pottery Knitting Weaving Woodworking	Embroidery Leatherworking Herbalism Culinary craft	Candle making Glassblowing Copper engraving Quilting Jewellery making	Basket weaving Stonemasonry Blacksmithing Traditional agriculture practice
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Craft touchpoints - where to find?

Workshop of an artisan (directly from the craftsman) Handicraft Centre of more than one local artisan Regular local market Local festival	Shop selling local artisans' products Local tourism agency / souvenir shop Web-shops Social media accounts
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What can we learn?

Heritage preservation / valorisation practice	What do they expose with their practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The heritage preservation and valorization practices of <i>pazinski cukerančić</i> expose multiple layers of cultural, social, and historical significance, which are integral to its identity as intangible cultural heritage. The pastry is mostly present in the Pazin area of the Croatian Istria region. Historically, it has been a central feature of wedding celebrations, symbolizing communal bonds and the sharing of resources. Its preparation often meant social cooperation, with mostly women in local communities coming together to bake large quantities for weddings, religious holidays, and other milestones Purpose of the initiative is to preserve a handicraft, connected to the pastry, as well as the tradition connected to it, thus ensuring that the skills and knowledge are passed down. This way, community cooperation is fostered, and the community can represent itself outward via promotion of its cultural tourism content.
Success factors	Achievements and strengths that make this case inspiring for other attempts in the DR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking care of a protected skill that will prevent it from falling into oblivion. The initiative of registering the pastry is meaningful for the local community because after the official registration all the associates included in the process of the registration are actually obliged to carry out protection measures, that is to encourage the preservation and promotion of the <i>pazinski cukerančići</i> and to share the art of its' preparation to younger generations. Community based and centred approach - the working group, consisting of local individuals, experts (like Davorka Šajina and Alida Vadanjel) and organizations began to meet in April 2015 and since then many activities have been conducted – research of available literature in collaboration with the Ethnographic Museum of Istria, field research to gather as much

		<p>information as possible about the recipe and participation in numerous festivals and events, promotional activities and events, as well as workshops (for example, Alida Vadanjel organizes workshops at Cukerijera, Lindarski križ, Davorka Šajina at Agroturizam Ograde).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furthermore, the locals are working on further developing and promoting the pastry. One of LAG Central Istria and their collaborators' goals is to improve the quality of production and ensure wider recognition of this sweet specialty, not only in Croatia, but also on the European and world markets. This initiative or improving the quality of production and expanding recognition aims to preserve and promote cukerančići, emphasizing the importance of tradition and innovation. Through these efforts, the pastry was also developed into a commercial product, where pastries are prepared according to the traditional recipe, packaged in a design that symbolizes the pastry's authenticity (Lastik studio). • Efforts for preservation and valorisation of the pastry have been documented in many news articles (i.e. Hello Istria), on TV programmes (i.e. Slatka kuharica programme on HRT, the Croatian national TV), as well as other video articles and contents.
<p>Local community involvement</p>	<p>Fundamental values that help to connect the target groups for the social prosperity of the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The preparation of this pastry is communal in itself, since the pastry is traditionally prepared for celebrations (weddings, Christenings etc.) by a group of women. Efforts to preserve this symbol of Istrian culture have also centred on the local community working together. The protection of the pastry was initiated by LAG Central Istria on the idea of its member Davorka Šajina. Soon others joined in – The City of Pazin, Alida Vadanjel, Davor Šišović, Association of artisans Pazin, Ethnographic Museum of Istria, Reginex Ltd., and a working group was established. • Local community is involved in every aspect, namely keeping the tradition alive. The preparation of pazinski cukerančić is a family tradition, often passed from grandparents to grandchildren. Community members of various age groups participate in workshops organized by craftswomen like Davorka Šajina and Alida Vadanjel. These events nurture mutual respect and shared experiences, strengthening intergenerational connections. • The collaborative approach—linking bakers, farmers, and local authorities—demonstrates the importance of collective effort in preserving cultural heritage. The production process involves local farmers, wine producers, and

		<p>small dairies, that creates a network of collaborations that supports local livelihoods and ensures authenticity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craftswomen collaborate with tourism agencies, schools, and local authorities, fostering partnerships that connect cultural heritage with education, tourism, and local governance. The registration process has also been fruitful for small businesses, such as Agriturizam Ograde and Antica providing economic opportunities for families while promoting heritage.
<p>Link to professional network</p>	<p>Reflecting on its strategic position in the region; making the most of networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initiative to preserve and promote pazinski cukerančić leverages its strategic position in central Istria, utilizing professional networks to amplify its reach and impact. There is a wide network of collaborators. Firstly, there are individuals artisans, knowledge-carriers and transferers. Then there are other local individuals or operations, such as local farmers, that provide ingredients for the recipe. Then there are the local organizations, such as LAG Central Istria and the Association of artisans, tourism organisations, such as the Pazin Tourism Board, and featuring cukerančići in events such as the Day of Pazin and traditional festivals, but also collaborations with the City of Pazin, as well as the Ethnographic Museum of Istria. • Additionally to local and regional networks, the initiative brings in national organizations as well. The inclusion of pazinski cukerančić in the Register of Cultural Goods of the Republic of Croatia (Republic of Croatia Ministry of Culture and Media) connects it to broader national heritage preservation efforts. The initiative also aims to promote cukerančić on the European and world markets, leveraging platforms such as cultural festivals, culinary competitions, and trade fairs.
<p>Communication</p>	<p>The use of social networks to disseminate and promote their mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The promotion of pazinski cukerančić relies on effective communication strategies, including the use of social networks and digital platforms. However, since there is no set organisation or individual artisan that deals exclusively with the pazinski cukerančić, there is varied use of social networks regarding this initiative. • Mostly, there are singular posts, news articles, blogposts or reportages that cover a specific topic or news, share a recipe, connected to the pastry. (see Hello Istria, Taste Atlas, Instagram pages of central_istria, visitistria, delicious.istrian.restaurants, antica.torte.i.kolaci, antica.cukerijera, for example)
<p>Sustainability factor</p>	<p>Operations and maintenance that drive the practice forward;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sustainability of the initiative is in its integration of traditional craftsmanship with

	<p>opportunities for financial sustainability</p>	<p>modern business practices, ensuring both cultural preservation and economic viability. Workshops and demonstrations, led by skilled artisans like Davorka Šajina and Alida Vadanjel, provide hands-on education, these events generate revenue through participation fees and product sales, the increased demand for cukerančići during festive seasons, has created opportunities for local producers to scale up operations and explore diversified offerings, such as variations of the pastry or new presentation formats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability is further supported by collaboration between local agritourism ventures, bakeries, and cultural events. These partnerships enhance visibility and drive sales, especially when paired with strategic marketing efforts. The incorporation of high-quality, locally sourced ingredients adds value to the product. • Local Action Group Central Istria has been key in providing resources for driving the initiative further. For their efforts, they have been recognized as a partner in the COMMHERITOUR project. As part of the project, pazinski cukerančić was chosen as one of the three elements of Istrian heritage that will be highlighted in the project. For example, one the latest projects meetings or workshops was carried out in Antica pastry shop (Alida Vadanjel), which has been recognized as an innovative place for the promotion and presentation of pazinski cukerančić. • Inclusion in the Register also opens doors to potential funding through cultural preservation grants on a national or even international levels.
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What makes it a best practice?

The *pazinski cukerančić* initiative's route to success is a model of cultural heritage protection, reactivation, and valorisation, stemming from a combination of traditional practices, strategic partnerships, and governmental support, with a clear focus on the long-term preservation and promotion of this Istrian sweet. The main action of the initiative was the process of inscribing the *cukerančić* into the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Croatia, which has provided the necessary legal framework to protect and raise the profile of this traditional pastry. The initiative benefitted from a combination of local and national backing. On the municipal level, local authorities in Pazin and the surrounding Istrian communities actively support the initiative by incorporating it into local cultural and tourism strategies. The collaboration between the producers and the local government is fundamental in fostering both the economic and cultural dimensions of the project. This relationship facilitated local festivals, workshops, and promotional campaigns that highlighted the *cukerančić*.

One of the most effective strategies for reactivating and preserving the pastry was its integration into tourism through agritourism businesses. Artisans like Davorka Šajina and Alida Vadanjel, both of whom are key figures in the initiative, leveraged agritourism as a platform for showcasing traditional food preparation. They not only preserved the craft but also expanded it by offering workshops and hands-on experiences for both domestic and international tourists. This model blended the economic sustainability of local businesses with the cultural mission of heritage preservation and establishment of the continued production and innovation around the recipe.

Another success factor is the emphasis on quality, using exclusively local ingredients, such as Malvasia wine and homegrown flour, which elevated the *cukerančić* and tied it more closely to the Istrian region.

Another important aspect of the practice is knowledge transmission, namely the workshops and demonstrations, promotional events etc., ensuring that the knowledge and skills necessary to create this pastry are passed down and not lost. Overall, the combination of recognition, government and municipal support, integration into the tourism sector, community involvement, and high-quality production has made the *pazinski cukerančić* initiative a success. By balancing heritage preservation with economic and social engagement, the initiative provides a model for other traditional crafts seeking protection and revitalization in a modern context.

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