



## **HONEY HOUSE KASTRIOTI**

In the picturesque mountain village of Ogdunan in Përmet, surrounded by stunning natural beauty, stands the Bee Park, where Ogduni honey is crafted alongside honey rakia, bee milk, honey vinegar, and propolis ointments known for their healing properties.

This remarkable venture is the work of a passionate Përmet native who, despite the challenges, has established a thriving “kingdom” over 670 meters above sea level, built on hard work, dedication, and love for his craft.

For honey enthusiasts and those curious about the art of honey extraction and propolis preparation for winter, August is the perfect time to visit. During this season, you can not only taste these exceptional products but also enjoy a guided tour of the area led by the beekeeper himself, Kastro, offering a unique and enriching experience.



## **DI PRO BIO**

Përmet, often called the city of roses and wine, is also renowned for its exquisite sweet preserves, lovingly referred to by locals as the “queen” of their region. The area is home to skilled artisans, including Entela, who has turned this craft into a family tradition, a thriving business, and a platform for empowering local women. The art of crafting these preserves has been passed down through generations, preserving a unique technique for processing fruits such as walnuts, figs, eggplants, oranges, and more. Among the most beloved products is the walnut preserve, a favorite of both local customers and international visitors. This traditional delicacy has deep roots in Përmet’s culture and holds a place of honor during family celebrations.

Entela’s workshop stays true to traditional methods, ensuring each product retains its authentic taste and exceptional quality. Her mission is to make these preserves a compelling reason for people to visit Përmet. For those eager to dive deeper, Di Pro Bio offers an immersive culinary experience, allowing tourists to participate in the preparation of these iconic products, adding a hands-on element to their visit.



## **BEDUNICA HONEY**

Bedunica Honey is a rare treasure crafted by bees in the Gostivisht area of Përmet, nestled within the stunning Hotova National Park. In this pristine region, beehives are carefully placed near the bedunica shrubs and flowers to ensure the production of pure, organic honey. This unique flower blooms in mid-August, with honey collection beginning in October.

The honey is distinguished by its vibrant hues, ranging from yellow to green when fresh, and its bold, distinctive aroma. Revered as a late-season delicacy, Bedunica Honey is celebrated not only for its exquisite taste but also for its health-boosting properties. Its unmatched quality and deep ties to the authenticity of the region have earned it certification under the TSG and GI quality standards, signifying its origin and excellence.

If you find yourself in the Përmet area, don't miss the opportunity to savor this extraordinary honey, produced by the bees of Sali Farm. Visitors are also invited to experience the magic of honey harvesting and learn the unique techniques used to preserve its exceptional quality.



## **ALTIN MESHINI SMALL DAIRY PROCESSING UNIT**

A visit to "Tek Bunkeri," the most iconic dairy in the area, offers a unique experience at one of the region's pioneering milk collection points. Here, fresh milk from small local farmers is transformed into a variety of products, including sheep, goat, and cow cheeses, butter, and the distinctive shakulli sauce. Situated just outside Këlcyrë, this facility was once a communist-era bunker built for defense. Today, it has been reimagined as a popular destination, where visitors can taste its exceptional dairy products and take home the authentic flavours of the region's lush pastures and livestock.



## **MARSELA KORVESHI**

### **PRESERVED WINTER GOODS**

Southeastern Albania is celebrated for its tradition of preparing zahire, a variety of preserved foods crafted by local homemakers to sustain families through the region's long winters. These provisions include petkat (homemade pasta), dromkat (small handmade pasta pieces), sweet trahana, and sour trahana. Typically enjoyed at breakfast, these dishes also make for a hearty dinner option.

The village of Polena is a shining example of this tradition, with artisans like Marsela Korveshi leading the way. A skilled pioneer in her craft, Marsela was raised in a family where preparing zahire is more than a necessity—it is a seasonal ritual. Every step, from harvesting the finest ingredients to processing and storing them in cloth or dry conditions, is meticulously carried out to preserve their nutritional value and flavor.

Polena is also renowned for its lakror, a two-layer pie baked under an iron dome (saç) and filled with seasonal greens. The village celebrates this beloved dish with an annual event, the "Lakror Festival," held every August. Visitors are invited not only to enjoy the rich flavors of lakror but also to participate in hands-on workshops where they can learn the secrets of its preparation from the hospitable homemakers of the region, making for a truly immersive culinary experience.



## **BOBOSHTICA RAKI**

Boboshtica is a village known for its rich culinary traditions and its famous mulberry raki, "Rakia of Boboshtica." Here, most families are involved in producing mulberry raki, with many households owning their own distillation pot to make raki for guests. In this region, raki production is not just a way of life but a passion passed down through generations.

Koço is one of the producers of Boboshtica's raki, welcoming tourists to his small workshop where the raki is distilled in a copper pot over 100 years old, inherited from his great-grandfather. The distillation of Boboshtica raki follows a traditional method using a tin-lined copper pot placed over steady embers to maintain a consistent temperature. This technique, still practiced by Koço, is accompanied by warm conversations and toasts with raki. Visitors will also hear fascinating stories from the village elders, including tales about the mulberry trees, as most households typically have 3-7 trees. These small, sweet, and aromatic fruits are harvested during the summer season. This cherished tradition is celebrated with the Rakia Festival in Boboshtica, held annually during the raki distillation season.



## PLUM RAKI

Plum raki is a spirit celebrated for its pure and natural flavor, crafted through the fermentation and distillation of plums. This timeless drink is made using traditional methods perfected over centuries, with the distillate aged for three years in oak barrels.

The villages of the Korçë region are home to vast orchards of both wild and cultivated plums, specifically grown for the production of this exceptional raki.

The locally produced plum raki is highly prized, but as plum trees are among the first to bloom, their blossoms are particularly vulnerable to late winter frosts. A successful year for plum raki is a gift of nature, when favorable weather ensures a good harvest and an outstanding spirit.

The Zami family is among those who have preserved the craft of raki-making for generations. Beyond selling their raki, they now offer unique farm experiences, inviting visitors to take part in activities such as plum picking, preparing the mash, distilling the raki, and enjoying tastings paired with fresh farm products.



## **HONEY PRODUCE BY ZANA**

Zana and her family live in the village of Turan in Korçë, where they run a thriving farming business specializing in multi-flower honey. Their honey is a favorite among local guesthouses and farm visitors. Zana's husband, an agronomist, plays a key role in managing their bee park, often relocating the hives to areas with abundant blooms and diverse vegetation to ensure top-quality honey production.

Zana is celebrated for her warm hospitality and is especially famous for her delicious fritters, considered the best in the village. They're always served with their homemade honey and seasonal jams, offering guests a true taste of the countryside.





## **PRESERVED WINTER GOODS BY IRENA**

Irena is one of the many homemakers and small-scale producers from this region. Like many of her fellow villagers, she not only makes traditional goods but also welcomes visitors into her home for hands-on experiences, teaching them the art of preparing traditional dishes and winter preserves (zahire). She primarily produces and sells her products on demand to shops and guesthouses that value and showcase these creations.



## **DESSERTS AND LIQUEURS BY ROVENA**

If you haven't yet tried dredharakë (traditional Albanian desert) or want to learn how they're made, Rovena's place is the perfect destination. She offers cooking classes where you can learn to prepare them and enjoy their baking, paired with a glass of liqueur, also crafted by Rovena herself.



## **CHICKPEA BREAD BY NESTI AT KORÇA BAZAAR**

Chickpea bread is a staple for special occasions, celebrations, and family gatherings. Homemakers take great care to ensure that this traditional treat is always part of their carefully prepared recipes. A beloved specialty of Korçë, this bread is both delicious and satisfying, adding a unique touch of flavor to any table. You can experience this delightful tradition at Nesti's stall in Korçë's renowned bazaar. Enjoy it fresh on the spot or take some with you—it pairs wonderfully with a slice of sheep's cheese as you continue exploring the local dairies.



## PËRMETI'S SAZE

Përmet is one of the most important cities in the development of urban folk music with saze ensembles. Among the most celebrated sazexhinj (traditional musicians) from the Përmet-Leskovik region are Master Medi Përmeti (1910-1930), Vangjel Leskoviku (1930-1940), and Gaqo Lena. These saze groups uphold the tradition of iso, performing as both instrumentalists and singers, blending instrumental and vocal harmonies.

In the 1950s, Master Laveri introduced significant innovations that shaped the artistic evolution of saze. His legacy lives on through the "Saze Ensemble of the City of Përmet," led by clarinetist Josif Shukollari. The ensemble performs at family celebrations and in local guesthouses, keeping the authentic sound of Përmet's saze music alive for future generations.



## **THE POLYPHONIC GROUP**

### **“ARGJIRO”**

The "Argjiro" group is celebrated as a cornerstone of southern Albanian polyphony, renowned for its exceptional artistic talent, rich intergenerational heritage, and vital role in preserving, refining, and showcasing the polyphonic song tradition of Gjirokastra. Led by the esteemed Mr. Roland Çenko, a recipient of the prestigious "Master of the Arts" title, the group remains a central figure in the National Gjirokastra Festival and participates in renowned international events.

Since 2002, "Argjiro" has been the first Albanian ensemble to secure regular bookings three times a week through various travel agencies, performing for international tourists visiting Gjirokastra's iconic museum houses, such as the Skëndulaj and Zekate homes. The group also brings its timeless performances to businesses throughout the historic district, keeping the cultural essence of the "Stone City" alive through song.

Their captivating performances have earned widespread admiration and respect, not only from the people of Gjirokastra but also from visitors from around the world, enhancing the city's reputation as a cultural treasure.



## ETNOART

Lirika Pojani, a costume designer from Korça, has spent the past 15 years reviving Albania's rich traditions and preserving its cultural heritage through the art of crafting traditional folk costumes. Her dedication and meticulous craftsmanship have earned her widespread acclaim and numerous awards. In 2018, she was recognized as Best Costume Designer at the 2nd International Skopje Folk-Fest for her exceptional creation for the "Skënderbeu" Ensemble, featured in the International Folklore Festival. She has also received accolades for designing the most beautiful costumes showcased at the Korça Carnival.

Today, Lirika has created her own "kingdom"—a museum-like atelier where she has curated significant ethnographic elements of the region, seamlessly blending tradition with modern aesthetics. For Lirika, these folk costumes represent a rare blend of elegance and beauty, serving as a living testament to Albania's cultural legacy.