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What will EU bring us?

UNION OF PROSCIUTTO, CHEESE AND OLIVES

Prosciutto, cheese and olives. These three words are enough for a person from Dalmatia, but also for any other person who has tasted these delicacies, to bring back scent of smoked, dry-cured meat, and to water their mouth at the illusion of the salty, sophisticated flavor that melts in mouth. Hard work, suffer and effort of hard working labourers, who have been searching for ideal ways of producing top quality dishes, are inwrought into this prosciutto, cheese and olives. Today we can be immeasurably grateful to them because what they created reflects Croatian culture, and is not any less valuable than architectural heritage or arts masterpieces. Besides gratitude, there's also pride. And so, this story's hero, who could be anyone whose appetite is opened on thought of prosciutto, cheese and olives, is afraid of losing this worthiness and guards it jealously.

Amount of prosciutto, cheese and olives was always reciprocal to the amount of pigs, cows and olive trees owned. Sometimes there was more, sometimes less, but, in a good household, there was always enough for the holidays and celebrations, and, in a good year, there was enough for selling. However, times change, the industrial revolution speeded up social evolution and the number of people wanting to taste our prosciutto, cheese and olives grew. Behind this phenomenon stands an ever more popular term – globalization. Eminent experts say that it's a product of human progress, and that it occurs through increased and rapid movement of products, services, technology and capital across the state borders. Without digressing, we can say that we recognize our three delicacies as products offered on a plate to people visiting our beautiful coast. The market grows, resources are limited, but, astonishingly enough, we don't lack prosciutto, cheese and olives any more. A person doesn't have to be a top detective in order to find the catch, trick, or whatever term you want to use for calling this mean for meeting demands. Fresh meat, milk and unprocessed olives are imported, and even what before was thrown away, is now used from homegrown ones.

Because of the reasons listed, our hero, a gourmet, traditionalist and prosciutto, cheese and olive lover who, due to concurrence of events, i.e. city life, doesn't produce them himself, but appreciates quality, becomes a gambler each time he goes and buys his favorite foods. He takes his chances. He bluffs by knocking on prosciutto, surveying the bottle of olives on day light, weighing cheese in order to make an impression of a person who can't be fooled. Long ago have people invented the phrase „buying a cat in a bag“ for cases in which goods can't be tasted, tried or tested before buying them and which afterwards turn out to be bad contents hidden inside a beautiful package.

In the past this was primarily applied to industrial products, and today it can be more and more applied to homemade products which, up until recently, served as a measure of excellence. So, our gambler decided to buy prosciutto, product which is in its nature a „cat in a bag“ because smoked dark skin prevents the person from seeing into the eatable part. It seemed top quality to him, and the provider promised him 5 kilograms of pure sensation for tongue and palate. As soon as he cut it at home, color seemed too light for a real Dalmatian prosciutto, and

he could tell by the scent that it wasn't dried enough. Sad and hurt, our bluffer can go on comforting himself forever with the idea that prosciutto isn't that bad and that he could get rid off the unpleasant smell of slightly rotten meat by cooking it. Still, he can't get over the fact that, during the tourist season, the same producer supplied a couple of restaurants and hotels with top quality prosciutto. He may have been bluffing during the buying process, but before it, he had prepared himself the best way he could: he decided to go with that producer after having asked a friend about the supplier of excellent prosciutto for his wedding held at a deluxe hotel.

While eating his unsuccessful investment with a lot of bread in order to hide the smell, knowing he'll have to eat it alone, because he feels bad about throwing it away and is embarrassed to offer it to guests, he can only think about how it is possible for the hotel to get excellent prosciutto, and for him to get intermediate goods. More luck? More knowledge? Meeting the standards? That's where solution has to lie! Hotel chains, as well as restaurants, are owned by foreign owners, and the ones domestically owned make the majority of their profit from cooperation with foreign tourist agencies. What they have in common are particular demands, many of which refer to sanitary and health standards that have to be respected in order for the cooperation to continue. Hotels and restaurants place the same demands on their suppliers, so the producer mentioned earlier has to respect them in order to keep a big and constant client. Just as it was in centuries before, top quality results are achieved through use of controlled raw material and investment of a lot of effort and time. Modern technology serves only for attestation of these three factors and confirmation of quality of a finished product.

Our hero got bored with bluffing and playing while paying a lot of money for what he loves. He threw away what was left of the insufficiently dry-cured, and a bit musty prosciutto and decided to wait for experiencing tasteful consequences of introducing standards of quality. He didn't have to search too long for an answer to question when they'd be introduced. They've already entered hotels and restaurants, and they came from the European Union. With Croatia's entrance to the European Union, those same standards will become mandatory for each foodstuff. At the beginning of negotiations with „Our beautiful Homeland“, EU has emphasized its dedication to achieving the highest health standards in food production in order to remove all potential risks for the consumers.

Researching the Union, our man learned that Europe expects similar improvements in Croatia in judiciary and health sector as well. He feels happy about that, but hopes that, like until now, he won't have a reason to go to court or a hospital. He's even happier about raising the level of education. He realized long ago that knowledge is power because one cannot rely on pure luck. Same as with prosciutto. They say he'll be able to travel to Paris by car without stopping, because there are no border controls between member states. If he wants to, he'll even be able to get a job there, since his qualifications will be worth equally in Europe as they are in Croatia. There's more to it and he's glad about all those things, but there's just one thing which makes him wait for the European Union like a child waits for Christmas presents. To be precise, that's a meal with three ingredients. Prosciutto, cheese and olives. Buying his favorite meal will present a pleasure for him because controlled origin and respect of high European standards will guarantee him that behind thick dark skin there will be a top quality product, unlike the kind he recently purchased – an insufficiently dried meat of unpleasant smell and taste, to put it mildly.