



## The Famous Dealu Mare – Wine Route

Camelia Slave<sup>1</sup>

Carmen Mihaela Man<sup>2</sup>

Received: July 1, 2022

Accepted: July 22, 2022

Published: December 30, 2022

### Keywords:

Wine;  
Wine route;  
Vineyards;  
Maps



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission.

**Abstract:** *Wine tourism in the local vineyards is a new notion today. This tourism is starting to become an alternative to the late autumn holidays - you visit wineries, cellars, churches, everything is concentrated on a distance of only 60 kilometers.*

*In the middle of the road between Bucharest and Brasov, on the border between Prahova and Buzau counties lies the homeland of red wine – “Dealu Mare”/ “Big Hill” vineyards. It has thousands of hectares of vineyards, eight famous wineries, and mansions that belonged to the old boyar families, some renovated and recently entered the tourist circuit, others in ruins, but just as spectacular. There are also 17<sup>th</sup>-century monasteries and themed museums that recreate the atmosphere of the houses in the area.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Controlled wines with a designation of origin (CDO) “DEALU MARE” are the products obtained only in the perimeter of the “DEALU MARE” vineyard, geographically delimited. Dealu Mare vineyard represents the most cohesive wine massif in Romania. It has eight wine centers: Dealu Mare-Boldești, Dealu Mare-Valea Călugărească, Dealu Mare-Urlați, Dealu Mare-Ceptura, Dealu Mare-Tohani, Dealu Mare-Breaza, Dealu Mare-Merei and Dealu Mare-Zorești.

The controlled designation of origin “DEALU MARE” is attributed to wines obtained from grapes produced in the area delimited for this name. “DEALU MARE” wines owe their qualities and characteristics to the geographical environment, with its natural and human factors. They are obtained from grapes that come exclusively from the delimited area, from the varieties nominated belonging to the species *Vitis vinifera* and are produced in this area (Figure 1).

The “DEALU MARE” vineyard is located in the sub-Carpathian hills including hills and depressions between the Teleajen River to the west and the Buzau River to the east.

The vineyard is bounded on the north by the area of high hills and forests, and in the south partly by a corresponding limit for the Valea Călugărească wine center with the Ploiești national road -Buzău and which, starting from Urlați to Buzău, retreats to the slope foot at a distance of 2-3 km north of the road (Boboc et al, 2015).

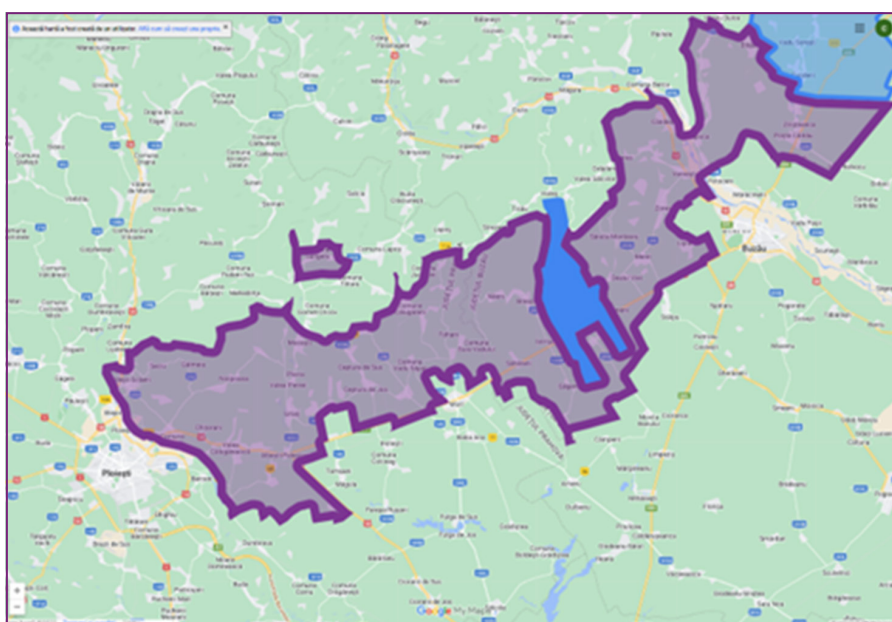
“DEALU MARE” vineyard is located between the north parallels 44°59 ‘ - 45°32’ and 26°02 ‘ - 27°00’ east longitude.

<sup>1</sup> University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, 59 Mărăști Blvd, Bucharest, Romania

<sup>2</sup> University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, 59 Mărăști Blvd, Bucharest, Romania

The route reconstructs a small section of the old wine road used by the Romans 2.000 years ago, which crossed the continent from east to west, from the Black Sea to the Atlantic Ocean - Bordeaux region. In Prahova it crosses the localities of Mizil, Tohani, Ceptura, Urlați, Jercălăi, Valea Călugărească, Vărbila, Bucov, Seciu, Boldești-Scăieni, Zamfira, Plopeni, Băicoi, Floresti and Filipeștii de Pădure. By far the best known in Romania is the “DEALU MARE” vineyard, which extends over the territories of two counties and includes the wine centers Tohani, Ceptura and Valea Călugărească, in Prahova, and Pietroasele and Săhăteni, in Buzău. Feteasca Neagră, queen of the southern slope of the Istria hill, where most of the vineyards in Prahova stretch, is located on the same latitude as the Bordeaux region, offering exceptional climatic conditions, especially for the grape varieties from which the red wine is produced (Boboc et al, 2015).

From an administrative point of view, the vineyard is located on the territory of Prahova and Buzau counties.



**Figure 1.** Dealu Mare geographical area

The existence of vineyards in this territory is confirmed by archaeological excavations, remains and toponymy that testify to the presence of vineyards since ancient times. Inside the large viticultural space that the vineyard forms, the following are delimited wine centers: Boldești, Valea Călugărească, Urlați-Ceptura, Tohani, Breaza-Buzău, Merei and Zorești.

The first written documents about the existence of the vine culture in this part of the country date from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. From these documents, it appears that Ceptura, Valea Călugărească, Valea Mantei and Valea Popii were localities known and appreciated for the quality of the wines they were producing.

The most famous wine center, which emerges from documents of the “DEALU MARE” vineyard was “Cepturi”, later “Cepturi”, today Ceptura. Probably the vineyards of the Old Ceptures contained a viticultural area much larger than the one that belongs today to Ceptura village. In the past, the vineyard was harmoniously represented by the culture of a few varieties, distributed in a well-established proportion and produced a high-quality wine. Journey to the heart of the vineyards in the sunniest land of Romania, “DEALU MARE”.

## 2. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the north, Prahova County borders Brasov County. The northern limit of the county starts from Omu peak (2505 m), passes through Diham peak, crosses Prahova valley and Azuga brook, reaches Paltinul peak (1900 m) from Gârbovei mountains, and then descends to Predeluș pass (1298 m). The northern limit continues through the Grohotis Mountains, crossing the ridge of Mount Ciucaș and descending towards the Tătaru Mountains.

According to NIS (National Institute of Statistics) data, Prahove country has a surface of 268.993 hectares. The agricultural area of the county is divided as follows: arable 142.872 hectares, natural pastures (69.167 hectares), natural meadows (39.464 hectares), vineyards (8175 hectares) and orchards (9.315 hectares) (<https://insse.ro/cms/>).

*Borders.* To the east, Prahova county borders Buzău county and its eastern limit crossing all forms of relief up to the plain starting with the course of the Siriu Mare brook and up to Boldești Grădiștea locality. The western limit, towards Dâmbovița county, starts from Omu peak (2505 m) and follows the eastern peak of the Bucegi Mountains, passing by Babele chalet, then descends under Păduchiosu Mountain and to the peak that separates Provița from Cricovul Dulce river, in order to reach the plain until the confluence of Cricovul Dulce with the Ialomița river. The southern limit of the county crosses the plain in the west-east direction and separates Prahova county from Ilfov county, in order to later follow the course of the Ialomița and Prahova rivers to the eastern limit near Boldești Gradiștea village.

The relief in Prahova County is very varied starting from the mountains, hills and plains arranged in a vast amphitheater. Moreover, there is the proportionality of landforms: 26.2% mountains, 36.5% hills, and 37.3% plains. The main mountains in the county are: Bucegi Mountains, Gârbova Mountains (Baiului), Grohotiș Mountains, Ciucaș Mountains and Tătaru Mountains.

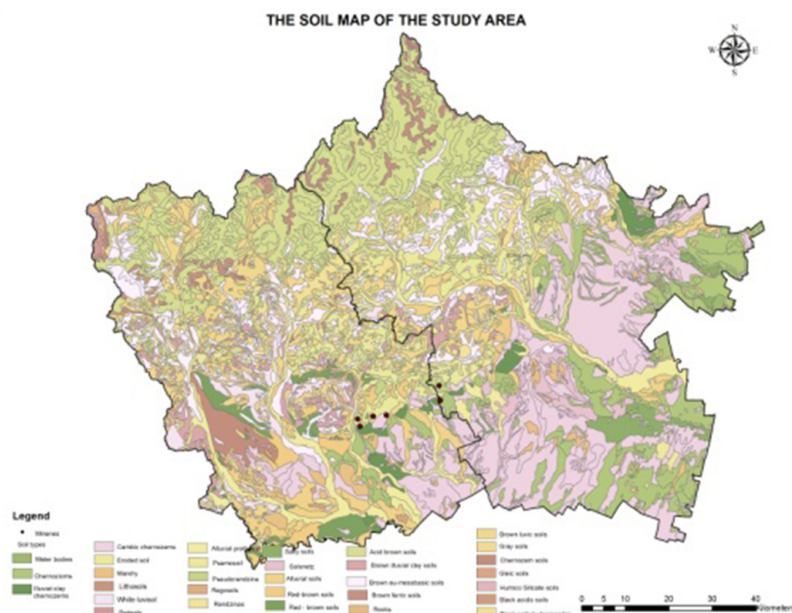
The hills are an intermediate step between the mountains and the plain. The heights of these hills vary between 800-900 m and 300-400 m. The most important hills are: Talei, Gurga, Sultanu-Teisu, Campinitei, Cosminele, Bughei, Priporului, Salcia, Ciortea, Iștrita, Bucovelul and Tintea.

In the southern part of the county, there is a plain with a height that varies between 70 - 200 meters. It can be mentioned as the high plain of Cricovul Dulce, the Ploieștilor Plain, the Vlasiei Plain and the Gherghiței Plain. The alluvium brought by the waters of Cricov Sărat and Prahova contributed to the formation of these plains.

From a geomorphological point of view, it is part of the great unit of the subcarpathian region, in which the vineyards occupy the hills' slopes and their depressions. The wine massif stretches over a length of about 65 km and has a width ranging from 3 to 12 km.

*The natural setting.* The lithology is represented by successions of gravel, sand and clay, of which sediments are solidified.

The Soil Map of Romania at 1: 200000 was presented in digital format including analytical data and a digital elevation model (DEM) with a resolution of 30 m; the map presented was created using the ArcGIS 10.5 Program. Figure 2 shows the “DEALU MARE” area. It includes the two counties: Prahova and Buzau ([www.geo-spatial.org](http://www.geo-spatial.org), <http://www.opengis.org>).



**Figure 2.** The soil map of the Dealu Mare vineyard

*The soils.* Within the vineyard, there is a great diversity of soils, due to the turmoil that the region has suffered and the phenomenon of erosion, which occurs frequently. The western part of the “DEALU MARE” massif presents soils formed on red clays, marls and in lower proportion on fine reddish sands. Alternations between clay layers and sand, inclined in the direction of the slope, cause landslides, and in the vineyard that is a frequent process. These soils, with a high content of iron oxides, are very suitable for the cultivation of varieties of red wines. The soils in the eastern part of the massif are based on Sarmatian limestones, clays, sandstones and dacitic tuffs, deposits of fine sands alternating with gravel formed from fragments of crystalline rocks, lehmuri and löess. As a genetic type, reddish-brown eroded forest soils predominate in the west, while in the east rendzines, pseudorendzines and, solidified sandy soils on a small area. In some centers skeletal soils are found, with the mother rock at a shallow depth and with a carbonate calcium into high content, which favors the production of aromatic wines. At the crossing to the plain there are chernozem soils, and in the north brown forest soils. Due to erosion processes, soil fertility is low (Irimia et al 2013), (Lobeanu et al, 1991).

Feteasca Neagră is known for its dark ruby color, slightly spicy taste with berry aroma. Cabernet Sauvignon wines can also be tasted in wineries in this area, with pepper and dark chocolate aroma, Tămâioasa Românească, golden-white wine, with lemon aromas, sophisticated Pinot Noir, aggressive Merlot, known for its strength, having 14% alcohol content.

In the wineries area Tohani, Ceptura and Valea Călugărească can be found wines from the Burgundy Mare, Bășicată, Riesling Italian, Pinot Gris, Sauvignon, Fetească Regală and Muscat Ottonel.

The Tohani Wineries are about 500 hectares of vineyards, here you can taste and buy wines from the varieties Fetească Neagră, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, various special blends (red wines), Busuioacă de Bohotin (rosé wine), Fetească Albă, Fetească Regală, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Chardonnay, Tămâioasă Românească, Shiraz, various special blends. There are wines from the 50s in the cellar, they cannot be tasted, but there is access to the wines from the 80s.



The young winery Budureasca, founded in 2013, covers a huge area of over 5.000 square meters. The winery is buried on three sides just to ensure a constant temperature for the wines. Five of the top ranges in the field can be tasted in the two special rooms. In addition to the tasting, assistance or help from an oenologist is possible. Tourists can take an outdoor tour of the winery and vineyard, as well as an indoor tour with access to the tank room and the barrel room.

The Urlati Domains are located on the same latitude as the famous wine-growing areas of Tuscany and Bordeaux. The domains are recognized for the quality of the wines from Fetească Albă, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscat Ottonel, Riesling, but also Fetească Neagră and Cabernet Sauvignon. You can also try wine wormwood of Urlați, Pelin Frizzante de Urlați (white, rosé) and Pelin de Urlați (white, rosé, red). Basilescu Winery, with a century-old tradition, is located in the city of Urlați and can be visited for wine tasting from top ranges such as Golem, Angels of Little Paris, Eclipse and Autentique. The oldest wines in the winery are from 2013. Urlățeanu Mansion, built in 1922 in the city of Urlați, was taken over at the end of the 90s by Halewood Winery. It is the first wine center that offered tourists the opportunity to visit a functional winery. The oldest wine that can be found in the winery is Cherry Tree Hill. (Irimia et al, 2013)

Rotenberg wineries, artisanal wines producer, are known for their wine produced exclusively by the traditional method, without any industrialization trace. Located between the village of Ceptura and Fântânele, the wineries are served by a vineyard that covers 18 hectares, mainly with Merlot. Here you can taste wine exclusively from the Merlot variety and buy the following wines: Merlot Emeriturs, Merlot Ceptura, Notorius Blanc de Merlot, Notorius Merlot, Notorius Rose, Menestrel Blanc de Merlot, Menestrel Merlot, Menestrel Rose, Rapsod Merlot, Rapsod Rose, but also some from the Owner's Reserve range (Merlot Emeriturs, Primus Ceptura). The oldest wine that can be found in the winery is the 2006 Rotenberg Classic.

The Serve winery, founded in the 1990s by Count Guy de Poix, is located in the village of Ceptura, and here were produced the first Romanian Cuvée and the first Romanian dry rose at the premiere in Romania. Tourists arriving at Ceptura can visit the vineyard, the winery, can participate in the tasting - the wines available are from the Knight's Wine, Terra Romana and Cuvée ranges - all these services being offered by a winery specialist. The oldest wine that can be found in the winery is produced in 1999.

Even if you have the impression that you went back in time, to the mid-1980s, it is still worth a stop at the Valea Călugărească Research Institute. Here you will find passionate people, who are trying to keep what is left of the old Romanian wine industry. Being a research institute for viticulture, you will be able to discover unique, hybrid grape varieties produced by specialists. The star of the place is "aromatic black", a grape variety dedicated exclusively to red wine, already a star in the world of local viticulture, and highly appreciated in specialized competitions. This grape variety produces the only red and aromatic wine in Romania. The trade name of the wine obtained from "aromatic red" is Olivia, a wine that you cannot find in stores, but exclusively at the institute in Valea Călugărească (Matei-Radoi et al, 2011).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Vineyards represent a way of economic capitalization of the less fertile lands of hills, but also a way to protect and enhance the environment, without affecting its integrity. The white wines from the "DEALU MARE" vineyard stand out for their extractives, a balanced structure and

good acidity, imprinted by the south-eastern exposure of the slopes, but also by cultural practices, which keep production at moderate levels. The red wines obtained in “DEALU MARE” are known for their finesse, light tannins and vivid color, as is the case of the Valea Călugărească and Urlați wine centers, where the influence of soils brown-reddish, rich in happy salts is obvious. At the same time, in other famous centers such as Ceptura, Tohani, Merei, red wines are more robust, vigorous, with increased color intensity, characters imprinted with extra heliothermal resources and light-textured soils.

In this area are planted vineyards types adapted to the specific conditions of the soil and the exposure of the slope. The soil type and the slope exposure determine the “DEALU MARE” wine characteristics.

The area delimited for CDO (controlled designation of origin) “DEALU MARE” falls within the wine-growing zone C II, according to Order 645/2005 regarding the approval of the classification of the Romanian viticultural regions in the viticultural areas of the European Union. The wines produced in this area have specific characteristics and a reputation that can only be attributed to this area. Grapes are found in 100% of this geographical area. Oenological practices and treatments are carried out according to the legislation in force. The wine produced in the area delimited for the protected designation of origin “DEALU MARE” has an alcoholic strength by weight of at least 11% vol., depending on the quality of the grapes’ harvested sugar content.

## REFERENCES

- Boboc, D., Păduraru, C., Păduraru, D, (2015). *Cramele din România*, Oficiul National Al Viei Si Produselor Vitivinicole, București
- Coste, A., Postolache, D., Popescu, F. & Butiuc-Keul, A.L., (2010). *Authentication of valuable grapevine varieties from Romania through molecular markers*. Rom Biotechnol Lett. Vol. 15, No.1, 3-11, Supplement, ISSN: 2248-3942
- CichI, D.D., (2007). *Modificările termice din ecosistemul viticol: Cauze, efecte asupra viței de vie, studii*. 279p, ISBN:973-742-507-3; 978-973-742-507-2; Editura Universitaria, Craiova.
- Irimia, L.M., Patriche, C.V. & H. QuénoI, (2013). *Viticultural potential assessment and natural terroir units’ delineation using environmental criteria specific to Romanian viticulture. Case study: Urlați wine-growing center, Dealu Mare vineyard*, Symposium international “Terroirs, vigne et vin “; 14p, Iasi, Romania.
- Lobeanu, M., Macici, M., Georgescu, M., Stoian, V., (1991). *Grapevine varieties zoning in Romania*, Ceres House Publishing, Bucharest, p. 282
- Matei-Radoi, F., Brinduse, E., Nicoale, G., Tudorache, A. & Teodorescu, R.I., (2011). *Yeast biodiversity evolution over decades in Dealu Mare-Valea Calugareasca vineyard*. Rom Biotechnol Lett. Vol. 16, No.1, Supplement, ISSN: 2248-3942, pp. 113-121
- [www://geo-spatial.org](http://www://geo-spatial.org)
- <http://www.opengis.org>
- <https://insse.ro/cms/>