

Orchard in the Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park

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WWF-Bulgaria, the “Friends of Vratsa Balkan” club and the K-express restaurant chain have launched the campaign “The Culinary Secrets of Nature – 3” to raise funds for the restoration of endangered Bulgarian apple varieties – “Petrovka”, “Aivania” and “Buhavitsa”. In the compiled list of local varieties threatened with extinction, which are supported under Measure 10 “Agri-environment and climate”, the three apple varieties are also included.

The initiative to restore endangered apple varieties that are traditional for Bulgaria is part of the third edition of “The Culinary Secrets of Nature”, which this year is aimed at raising funds for a pressing issue in recent times – the abandonment and reduction of orchards.

The funds will be collected through the sale of dishes prepared according to traditional recipes from the area of the Vratsa Balkan Nature Park in K-express retail outlets in the period **from 4 to 30 April**. 10% of the revenue from dishes with the special label “The Culinary Secrets of Nature” will

go towards the planting and development of a model orchard with endangered varieties on the territory of the nature park. The project will also be co-financed by the Government of Switzerland through the fund for reforms related to civil society (“For the Balkan and the People”).

In recent years, both in Bulgaria and throughout Europe, demographic and social factors have led to the abandonment of many traditional orchards, which in the past were cultivated in a sustainable manner. This reduces varietal diversity and deprives us of valuable fruit tree species representing a specific gene pool.

About the orchard:

In the village of Milanovo, Staro Selo hamlet, in Vratsa Balkan Nature Park, there is a model orchard gathering old fruit tree varieties. More than 20 old local varieties of apples, pears and quinces are grown there. Representatives of the local non-governmental organization “Friends of Vratsa Balkan” Club take care of its maintenance and enrichment. The ecosystem they are tending requires a great deal of work in order to preserve the gene pool of the site. With the funds collected from the campaign, they will purchase additional trees of endangered local varieties so that the orchard can expand and one day become a gene bank for old varieties. Fencing and maintenance are also needed for the orchard.

“Friends of Vratsa Balkan” Club

The “Friends of Vratsa Balkan” Club is a non-governmental organization that carries out volunteer activities, charitable campaigns and educational tours on the territory of Vratsa Balkan Nature Park.

Addresses of K-express retail outlets where you can support the campaign can be found at www.k-express.bg. On the website you can also place an online order for the city of Sofia. The dishes prepared according to refined recipes can be found in the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas, Pernik and Blagoevgrad – in the K-express restaurants in Business Park “Sofia” and The Mall, Sofia, and at the culinary counters with the K-express brand in Kaufland and Halite.