

## GASTRONOMIC TOURISM – A WAY OF TOURISM IN GROWTH

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**Abstract:** *The expansion and crucial factors of culinary tourism are dealt with. Gastronomic tourism, in itself a niche market, is the topic of study. The development of this category of tourism is greatly influenced by the eating culture. Society trends and mass media change the consumer habits as well. Extended travelling, eating outside home, the process of globalisation and growth of multiculturalism promote the need for higher quality of food, for healthier and more varied diet. Eating culture must therefore also include a value-added category of creativity, not merely emphasize the functional value of food. A new set of consumers, who also take pleasure in food and beverage, and wish to gain new knowledge about dishes, participate in the preparation or witness various competitions in food preparation, are surfacing. The assumptions are made, that this is just the beginning of the gastronomic tourism - because the huge media influence, the desire for healthy living, environmental awareness and cosmopolitanism are among the major drivers which will ensure its growth and advancement.*

**Keywords:** *Gastronomic tourism, Tourism, Culinary, Culinary tourism, Food tourism*

### **Introduction**

According to the specialized literature (Quan and Wang 2004: 298), gastronomic tourism is an emerging phenomenon that is being developed as a new tourism product, due to the fact that over a third of tourist spending is devoted to food. Therefore, the cuisine of the destination is an aspect of utmost importance in the quality of the holiday experience. It tells the story of a destination's history, culture, and people. Over the last decade, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) have leveraged the rise of mainstream interest in food to open new consumer markets and drive business to a wider range of regional travel suppliers working in the food and beverage (F&B) sector, DMOs are creating major promotional campaigns and events revolving

specifically around their food and beverage experiences, designed with multiple storylines targeting different market segments.

Eating is essential for human survival, tourism presents an important part of everyday life – it is the *modus vivendi* of the modern man. These two inevitabilities lead to the conclusion that eating outside home is becoming part of human habits. At the same time standards in all areas of life are being risen. The development of culture constantly increases and multiplies different human needs, many of them being luxurious and hedonistic. The food tourism industry comprises nearly 20 sub-sectors.



Figure 1: World’s food tourism industry

Therefore we can speak of the gastronomic tourism industry when people travelling, put simply, seek “good food and beverages”- such that will not only satiate basic needs, but also give pleasure. This is a type of tourism, which comprises an individual's activities, whose main motive is linked to the culture of food and the tasting of traditional local specialties (food and beverage), specific for a certain region or country.

According to *The International Culinary Tourism Association*, a culinary tourism grows exponentially every year. It certainly is compatible with the "eco-tourism", "slow food tourism", "sustainable tourism" and "sustainable agriculture". Bertalaníč (2005: 14) notes that

the culinary explorers, are tourists of all age groups who are interested in cultural events, museums, film festivals and performances, as well as shopping and outdoor activities. Culinary art is the only art that speaks to all of the five senses. From the perspective of culinary service provider an interesting fact states that the higher the account, the greater the probability that the customers are tourists.

## **GASTRONOMY AND GASTRONOMIC TOURISM**

The 2013 “American Culinary Traveler Report,” published by Mandala Research, showed that the percentage of U.S. leisure travellers who travel to learn about and enjoy unique dining experiences grew from 40% to 51% between 2006 and 2013. The report estimates that 39 million U.S. leisure travellers choose a destination based on the availability of culinary activities, while another 35 million seek out culinary activities after a destination is decided upon (Shankman, 2015).

Gastronomic tourism may also be a significant contributor to processes of localization as a response to increased global competition. For example, outsider interest in local produce may serve to stimulate local awareness and interest, and assist not only in diversification, and maintenance of genetic diversity and heirloom varieties, but may also encourage community pride and reinforcement of local identity and culture. In addition, the development and promotion of regional food products have also become part of a process of the protection of geographical places through intellectual property law. The commercial reification of place identity in international trade agreements for wine and food also helps reinforce the place branding and marketing processes that are integral to contemporary tourism.

With growing international interest in slow food and sustainable agriculture, gastronomic tourism can be seen as an eco-tourism at its best helps promote environmental stewardship and locally controlled cultural preservation. Food tourism can range from self-styled informal visits to local farmers markets in New Zealand, to a 2-week formal cooking class in Paris. Thailand offers a plethora of small cooking schools where tourists (or locals) can take one day classes in basics such as Pad Thai, or regional specialties involving fish, coconut milk, and special blends of spices.

In the US and Europe, some farmers are offering “on the farm” meals that are open to travellers.

As with eco-tourism, travellers interested in gastronomic tourism should keep their critical eyes open, as some tour providers are not truly committed to the highest environmental standards of the industry. Visitors are advised to beware of experiences that offer foods such as veal, shrimp, or fish that are not sustainably harvested.

The Japanese national tourist organizations internet sites describe them as “national culinary heritage” and it is under UNESCO protection. The site (National Japan Tourism Organisation) states the example: Traditional Dishes of Japan were once known in the west either in the form of "sukiyaki" or the more exotic "sushi," Japanese cuisine has in recent years become much more familiar and appreciated around the world. Many visitors to Japan will have already sampled the pleasures of raw fish or batter-fried shrimp. But few first-time visitors to Japan are prepared for the variety and sumptuousness of Japanese food, as it is traditionally prepared. Eating in Japan is an experience to be enjoyed and remembered fondly for the rest of your life.

Gastronomy is one of the elements incorporated in a new concept of cultural heritage and cultural tourism, driven by growing trends of a well-being lifestyle, authenticity, environmental protection and the need to have a high-quality experience. Tourists increasingly want foods which emphasise the heritage and culture of a place, which assist the preservation of traditional forms of agriculture and cultural heritage. Gastronomy, as a tourist resource, is appreciated not only for its own sake, but also for its ability to generate rural development. Gastronomic tourism is helping to increase rural revenue sources and improve income levels and employment of local labour (especially women). Food also holds a key place in the "think globally, act locally" debate. Some buyers are keen to support local businesses, or protect the environment by avoiding foods which have been transported long distances.

Food experiences in tourism have many important dimensions. They are often novel and contrasted to everyday eating. They often involve a contrast between globalised and localised foods and there is an important role for »authenticity« in distinguishing those foods that are presented to and consumed by tourists. There is relationship between these dimensions in tourism, since the »local« is often equated with »authentic«. The new »culinary tourists« or »foodies«, are keen to seek out distinctive food experiences and to try novel and interesting culinary offerings.

According to Richards (2012, 20), food can therefore provide the basis for the development of tourism experiences in a number of ways:

- Linking culture and tourism
- Developing the meal experience
- Producing distinctive foods
- Developing the critical infrastructure for food production and consumption
- Supporting local culture.

Tourists are increasingly aware of the economic, health and environmental benefits, obtained from appealing, quality and locally grown food. At the same time they want to taste authentic local flavours. Therefore a wide variety of culinary festivals, markets and other similar events are becoming a growing trend.

*The World Food Travel Association* uses the term Food Tourism for “pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable cuisine and beverages coming from near or far (irrespective of the place of residence of the visitor\tourist)”. According to this definition, it doesn't matter whether you're looking for that second part of the adventures in the hometown or in another country.

One of the principles of a gastronomic tourism is also awareness-building, teaching and inspiring of tourists to explore the local environment and learn about local food, beverages, ways of preparing food and history of food in a specific environment. Among the most frequently included in culinary tourist packages are: tasting dishes, spices, wine, beer, bakery products, cooking, baking, visiting chefs and famous restaurants, visiting wine cellars, visiting tourist fairs (or competitions) and learn about the history of certain types of food. Different forms of cognition of regional cuisine, however, are not provided solely by tourist organisations, but also by different schools, associations or other local institutions.

## THE TRENDS DRIVING GASTRONOMIC TOURISM

Mass media world today is unconceivable without culinary shows, chefs, culinary competitions, and culinary travelogues. A new culinary world has been created, which greatly affect the lives and behaviour of consumers, among other things, also the development of culinary tourism. The survey, carried out by the *Barcelona Field Studies Centre*, has detected five reasons for the revolution as well as in tourism.

### **Trend 1: Trading up**

All across world, growing affluence of the populations has a profound impact on consumer spending. Consumers spend a higher proportion of their income on prepared food, gourmet products, eating out and food items with some form of health or ethical benefits. For discretionary purchases, consumers have traded up where the product is aspiration or traded down when the product is only function.

### **Trend 2: Demographics and Household Change**

An ageing population and changing life styles have driven demand for increased eating out and food tourism opportunities. Groups that provide growing markets for food tourism are summarised in the table below.

### **Trend 3: Rejection of 'MacDonaldisation'**

Tourists have increasingly rejected the industrial 'fordist' model of low cost mass production of food, searching out local, fresh and good quality cuisine that reflects the authenticity of the destination. The end of the 'MacDonaldisation' of food culture has seen *Starbucks* fail in Australia as the brand is perceived as bland and lacking individuality.

### **Trend 4: Growth of the Multi-Cultured Consumer**

Multiculturalism has become an everyday concept in the daily life of the consumer, driven by immigration, globalisation, the internet, the expansion in specialist and minority TV channels and the relentless growth in international tourism. What were once exotic foods have become foods of first choice and today curry is the United Kingdom's favourite dish.

### **Trend 5: The Role of the Celebrity Chef and Media**

The emergence of the niche food programmes, TV channels and magazines means the food celebrity and expert has been created. The celebrity chef shapes tourism products in a way that is often referred to as the 'Delia effect' after the media chef Delia Smith, whose 1998 television programme 'How to Cook' resulted in an extra 1.3 million eggs being sold in Britain each day of the series. The phenomena of

Gordon Ramsey with 'Hells Kitchen' and the 'F word' or Jamie Oliver's campaign for good wholesome school dinners all drives our interest in good quality food.

Slovenia is located at the intersection of Alpine, Mediterranean, Pannonian culture and cuisine, making it also the influence from the Balkans, which is often overlooked in public discourse, but visits to Balkan restaurants and comments of foreign guests confirm this fact. All of these affect the very diversity of the cuisine in a very small space. If we add the various wine-growing landscapes and the production of domestic juices, marmalades, jams, and so on, we can say that Slovenia has a good starting point for the development of gastronomic tourism.

## **GASTRONOMIC TOURISM MARKETING**

Although there is no empirical evidence about the existence of a large segment of culinary tourists and how much this affects tourists destinations of gastronomy experience, (based on existing experience and observations), it could certainly be stated, that the cuisine is a part of the tourist offer, which is becoming a very important part of the tourist product. This leads to an explosion in the popularity of cuisine and culinary experiences, media exposure of chefs in a multitude of culinary shows, which have become a cultural phenomenon and the hosts of the show global media stars.

Culinary tourism is still largely a part of domestic tourism. In general, it cannot be asserted that food and drink are the main motivator for choosing the travel destination. At the same time, however, it is a considerable and important motivator for a segment of tourists to choose the destination. However, there are various culinary events that become a motivator for tourist arrivals.

Studies show that the average culinary tourist is demographically similar to the culture tourist. He is more knowledgeable, aged between 30 and 50 years old. The largest outbound countries are the United Kingdom, the Benelux countries, Germany, Italy, France, the Scandinavian countries and the United States. In Europe, the culinary tourism is the most widespread in Spain Italy, France, in Asia this is Japan, India and Thailand. There are also quite a few culinary tour operators in the world offering culinary packages.

Gastronomic tourism is clearly in a growth phase, often combined with compatible categories of tourism, such as culture, sport, etc., so a

wider range of consumers get interested. Many companies, such as *Jadranka Yachting* or sailing magazine *Playboy*, offer "gourmet" events, where, in addition to sailing, a visit the most famous "taverns" on the Croatian Adriatic is included.

## THE GASTRONOMIC TOURISM GROWTH AND THE IMPACT OF POP CULTURE

A special culinary evening at *Grand Tabor Laško* restaurant with two Slovenian celebrity chefs Marko Pavčnik and Igor Jagodic is just one example of the development of culinary culture in Slovenia. In a speech to this special culinary event both chefs were presented – all their previous references and successes, and then a menu with selected wines was offered. This dinner is actually a social event that connects people, and promotes not only restaurants, but also the region itself (Pavus, 2014).

Two icons of popular cuisine should be mentioned at this point as well - *Michelin guides* on restaurants and the scale of the *World's 50 best restaurants* of the British magazine *Restaurant*. Both are recognized in the media all over the world as icons and institutions and are constant subjects of controversy and media targets all over the world. The restaurant ranking of the *World's 50 best restaurants*, sponsored by *Sanpellegrino&Acqua Panna*, is done by a magazine *Restaurant*, with the help of chefs, culinary journalists and other professionals. In 12 years of existence, it has already achieved the fame of *Michelin's* restaurants evaluation. It contributed to the popularity of molecular gastronomy, after choosing *ElBulli* restaurant (with chef Ferran Adria) as the best restaurant in the world for four years in a row. *ElBulli*, *Fat Duck*; *El Celler de Can Roca* and last years' winner *Noma* have all become establishments, objects of desire and a pilgrimage point for all enthusiasts of superior cuisine. The visibility and impact of this competition, among other things, contributes to the development of culinary culture, placing the food indulgence on the highest pedestal of hedonism (Vogrin, 2015).

*The Michelin Guide* is the oldest and highly internationally recognized Guide to restaurants and hotels. First issued in 1900 (the brothers Michelin), since 1926 using a star rating has been used, since the 1930s three stages are used in the assessment. Restaurants with one star are very good, worthy of attention, restaurants with two stars are worth turning off the main way, while the three stars restaurants are

considered to offer an exceptional experience and are worthy of special and separate visit. An important detail about Michelin is, that only certain countries, are evaluated, those which are regarded upon as having a superb cuisine, and at the same time are also interesting in the area of culinary guides marketing (Michelin, 2015).

The appearance of the dishes, the quality of the cuisine, the wine list, service, tidiness of the objects are among the criteria being controlled by the strict evaluators, so each year some of the awarded restaurants owners later give their stars back, because they want to do business without external pressure and control. Currently there are 27.740 three star restaurants in the world, the majority of them situated in Japan and France. Just as a curiosity - the first in the *Restaurant* rankings – Noma cannot get the third star and thus be classified among the best in *Michelin Guide*. The guides also contain places without the stars, which are recommended for a visit, but do not belong in a superb cuisine section. Michelin guides have undoubtedly contributed to the popularity of the food.

## GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN SLOVENIA

One of the Slovenian proverb declares that, “love comes through the stomach”. Nowadays the delights of Slovenian cuisine are presented all over the country. Traditional food is to be found in family-kept inns, at special food fairs and special annual rural events called “osmice”, where farmers are allowed to sell their homemade food for a limited period. So anywhere in Slovenia a tourist finds himself, there are tasty and varied dishes and quality wine. There are 24 different culinary regions and the food is influenced by neighbouring cuisines like the Mediterranean, the Pannonian plain, the Alps and the Balkans.

On its government-administrated touristic internet site, Slovenia states itself like the country of food and wine. The site is comprised of different section: Slovenian wines, food and wine delights, dishes and recipes, restaurants, inns, guesthouses, wine trails, wine cellars, culinary regions, culinary experience etc. One of the sections is designated to protected geographical indication products. Such products and their labelling is becoming of increasing importance to any national culinary image.

Although we are talking about the rise and growth of the culinary tourism, in the majority of Slovenian destinations, the same "boom" of marketing activities, which would raise the offer of culinary experiences,

is not being observed. Therefore, I will cite some examples of good practices, contributing to greater diversity and quality of tourism.

The project *Restaurant Slovenia* is one of the experiments of how to improve the tourist offer. In time we shall observe whether the project becomes really successful. The concept is based on the fresh Slovene dishes offer (at least 80%) with regional and local particularities and Slovenian wines. Two hundred year old tradition of the sales of surplus agricultural products is the authentic specialty of the coastal-Karstic region. The consumption of domestic delicacies in a pleasant family environment can be a powerful motive for the visit, not only for the usual visitors from surrounding places, but also for other tourists.



Figure 2: Logo of the project *Restaurant Slovenia*

### **Conclusion**

Eating culture is changing, people travel more, and the pace of life is always faster, more and more people eating away from home. All these factors affect the growth of the culinary tourism, which is based on the cultural tourism combined with the need to take delight in life. The art, which is experienced by all the senses, learning about the various food and beverages, learning about the numerous different ways of preparing food and beverages, attending culinary events – due to the media influence all these things are becoming mandatory parts of the tourist offers. Notwithstanding the unpredictable future, I can say that it is a culinary tourism, which still has the status of a niche and is still in the stage of deployment, it presents the best way to develop into an important branch of tourism which will continually grow.

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