

CULINARY TOURISM - A REALITY OF OUR DAYS

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***Abstract:** Contemporary tourism has an important place in the world economy, for some countries being the key sector. The number of tourists increased annually without being clearly influenced by the economic and financial crisis (December 2007 - June 2009), reaching 1.4 billion in 2018, according to the World Tourism Organization. The development of sustainable tourism is a current concern for preserving the tourist resources and the environment for future generations. Tourists' motivations have evolved over the years. Therefore, the forms of tourism have diversified. Culinary tourism is increasingly appreciated, people being curious and eager for new culinary experiences.*

***Keywords:** tourism, gastronomy, food*

Introduction

The holiday package includes transport, accommodation, public catering, recreation, treatment. Basically, it is the complex ensemble of goods and services offered to tourists from leaving home until returning, namely throughout their holiday.

Public catering services have always been an essential part of tourism. The quality of tourist services, but also the content and attractiveness of the tourist offer depend largely on catering. Food is considered to account for 40% of the total satisfaction generated by the consumption of a tourist product.

Tourists can serve meals either in the catering facilities within the hotel complexes and the guesthouses, or in other independent facilities.

The specific features of public catering services are as follows¹:

- finding them in all important moments of tourism consumption;
- the structural diversity of these services;
- customization of the public catering service for different types of tourism;

1 Sava, Cipriana, Gestiunea activității de turism, Ed. Eurostampa, Timișoara, 2012, p.38.

- the obligation to meet the demands of domestic and foreign tourists (national/international cuisine);
- a selection element of holiday destinations.

With the discovery of local culinary products by tourists, the road to the emergence and development of culinary tourism was quite short. The main motivation for this type of tourism is traditional food or the food products of top professionals from holiday destinations. Tourists can be foodies, or just people eager for new experiences, they can be specialists in the field or not.

Culinary tourism

Food or culinary tourism does not have a distant past. It began in 2001 when Lucie Long, a professor at Ohio State University, made the term and phenomenon public.

In 2003 Erik Wolf established the organization known as the International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA), based in Oregon USA. The Association rebranded in 2012 as the World Food Travel Association after research showed that English speakers, especially Americans, misunderstood the intended meaning of "culinary tourism". However, the first name is still known and used.

Culinary tourism is considered to be "The pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, both far and near."²

"Food tourism is the act of travelling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place." - in the view of the World Food Travel Association.

"Gastronomy" is the term used to explain a culinary culture of an area and, for Europeans; it appears that the name "culinary tourism" is the most appropriate.

Montse Fernández, manager of the tourism department at Madison Market Research, believes that "culinary tourism is currently an important attraction factor in choosing a tourist destination. It is a differentiating element that complements more than motivation".³

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) sees culinary tourism as one of the most creative and dynamic segments, and its definition shows that "culinary tourism means tourists and visitors planning their excursions and trips to taste the local cuisine or to conduct activities related to gastronomy".⁴

2 Erik Wolf, Executive Director of World Food Travel Association, *Culinary tourism: a tasty economic proposition*, 2001

3 <http://evisionturism.ro/gastronomia-treilea-motiv-importanta-alege-destinatie/>

4 <http://evisionturism.ro/turismul-gastronomic-opportunitate-revitaliza-diversifica-oferta/>

The development of this type of tourism started in 2003, so 2007 was declared the year of culinary art by the professionals in the field.

It is considered that culinary tourism is a subtype of cultural tourism due to the fact that in some cultures the meal implies some rituals, and on the occasion of celebrations, special dishes are prepared. Enotourism, which has as main motivation the wine, can be considered a subtype of culinary tourism.

Culinary tourism can develop in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas it is based on the family culinary tradition and develops in harmony with agro-tourism and ecotourism. In such areas, the tourist has the chance to taste organic food, see how it is cultivated, harvested, produced and can even participate in different stages of this process. The urban environment offers different but attractive culinary experiences, related to the refinement of certain dishes, certain locations, but also specific characteristics. Tourists can try out in urban agglomerations the food prepared by renowned chefs in luxury venues, prepared by locals on the street or in small restaurants.

Tourists can travel either in an organized way, in groups, or on their own, individually. These can be:

- professionals in gastronomy;
- non-professionals.

Non-professionals are gourmet tourists or just eager to taste new flavours. Some choose a destination, others come randomly there, and others simply enjoy local cuisine.

Following a study in 2016, a series of results on the habits and the importance of food in the tourist product were obtained. Interestingly, 81% of respondents learn about the food and beverages specific to the travel destination, and so many say that by consuming them they can better understand local culture. Changes in eating behaviour also correspond to the age of the tourists, the generation they belong to, the education they have. Those interviewed admitted that they spend more on food while on holiday than at home and that the culinary experience weighs much in the appreciation of a tourist destination (Fig.1).

Some ways to practice culinary tourism are:

- culinary routes;
- culinary events - like festivals (for the culinary specificity of an area or for a single traditional meal), agricultural fairs;
- courses and cooking workshops;
- visits to producers - farms, wine cellars, chocolate factories, beer factories, food manufactures, etc
- brunches.



Fig. 1 Realities of culinary tourism – food-related behaviour of tourists

Source: World Food Travel Association

<https://www.worldfoodtravel.org/cpages/what-is-food-tourism>

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The culinary route "is an itinerary with origin, geographical dimension and specific structural configuration linking destinations, products, attractions, services and activities based on production, creation, transformation, evolution, conservation, safeguarding, consumption, use, joy, pleasure in a healthy way of the world's sustainable, natural, immaterial, mixed, and all related to the food system of mankind. Travel can be made by various means of transport and even on foot in a group or individually only if it respects the proper communication and indication." ⁵

Types of culinary routes can be classified according to several criteria (Table 1).

5 Montecinos, A. T., Planificación del Turismo Gastronómico Sostenible: servicios, rutas, productos y destinos, Ed. CEGAHO, Mexic, 2012, p.101

Table 1 Types of culinary routes

Criterion	Type of route
- territory of route	- local; - national; - regional; - continental; - intercontinental;
- area	- urban; - rural;
- organization	- guided group; - individual;
- setting	- land; - sea; - mixed;
- route- configuration	- linear; - circular; - network;
- segment of the population it addressed	- for professionals; - for students; - for amateurs;
- duration	- short (several hours); - medium; - long.

Food festivals are constantly expanding, and through them people discover or rediscover food and authentic culinary dishes.

Modern food festivals are generally characterized by the predominance of economic interests, but they promote culinary dishes and multiculturalism. Most often they last 2-3 days, but there are others that last for 14-21 days. These annual events can celebrate a special ingredient, unique dishes or culinary cultures, and usually there is an orgiastic consumption accompanied by popular, traditional music shows.

At international level there are many such festivals, some of them occupying an important place in the tourists' calendar (Table 2).

Table 2 Food Festivals around the World

Festival name	Type of festival	Country	Location/period
Oktoberfest	Beer - food and beverages	Germany	Munich/September
Asti's Festival of Festivals	Food and wine	Italy	Asti/September
Puerto Vallarta International Gourmet Festival	Culinary art display- professionals invited	Mexico	Puerto Vallarta/ November
Caxton Street Seafood and Wine Festival	Food and wine	Australia	Brisbane/June
Lagos Seafood Festival	Food	Nigeria	Lagos/November
Leskovac Grill Festival	Food	Serbia	Leskovac/September

From the particularities of culinary tourism we mention:

- tourists cover all age groups;
- it includes both sexes;
- it includes all ethnic groups;
- tourists are educated people;
- it covers different income levels;
- it does not show seasonality.

The development of culinary tourism can bring the following benefits:

- community awareness of tourism in general;
- maintaining gastronomy and local culinary traditions;
- revitalization of local traditions and culture;
- strengthening cultural identity;
- modernization of the general infrastructure;
- increasing the number of tourists in the culinary destinations;
- raising the living standards of the locals;
- decrease in the number of unemployed;
- reducing labour exodus in those locations;
- development of the local economy;
- ensuring environmental protection and preservation.

Worldwide, there is currently a number of well-known culinary tourist destinations that attract a growing number of tourists every year (Table 3).

Table 3 Culinary destinations in Europe

Culinary specialities	Cities	Country
Tapas, Gazpacho, Paella, Tortilla Española, Jamón, Churros Con Chocolate, Patatas Bravas, Chorizo, Sangria	Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona, Malaga	Spain
Pizza, Pasta, Risotto, Minestrone, Lasagna, Prosciutto, Parmigiano, Ossobuco alla Milanese, Gelato, Tiramisu, Cannoli, Panna Cotta, Panettone	Napoli, Bologna, Catania, Florence, Rome, Torino, Milan	Italy
Ratatouille, Coq au vin, Beef bourguignon, Cassoulet, Salade niçoise, Roquefort, Camembert, Gruyère, Croissant, Macaron, Eclair, Crème brûlée, Soufflé, Vin, Pastis, Champagne	Bordeaux, Lyon, Nice, Paris	France
Mosselen-friet, Gegratineerde Witloof, Carbonade flamande, Boudin, Stoemp, Gaufre, Chocolate, Beer	Brussels	Belgium
Porridge, Haggis, Tunnock's Tea Cake, Tablet, Whisky	Glasgow	Scotland
Bratwurst, Sauerkraut, Spätzle, Brezel, Apfelkuchen, Beer	Munich	Germany
Karjalanpiirakka, Mustikkapiirakka, Kalakukko, Korvapuusti, Salmiakki, Poronkäristys	Helsinki	Finland
Fish And Chips, Bangers And Mash, Full English Breakfast, Sunday Roast, Toad In The Hole, Steak And Kidney Pie, Cottage Pie, Shepherd's Pie, Scones, Spotted Dick, Pudding	London	England
Köttbullar, Gravlax, Toast Skagen, Janssons frestelse, Raggmunk, Kroppkakor, Kanelbullar, Snaps, Glögg	Stockholm	Sweden

Source: <https://blog.blueairweb.com/harta-gastronomica-destinatiilor-europene-descopera-cele-mai-interesante-specialitati-locale/>

In Romania there is a desire to promote culinary dishes from all culinary areas (Table 4).

Table 4 Romania's Culinary Areas

Culinary area	Characteristics	Examples of dishes
Ardeal	fat foods based on potatoes, tarragon, cream, paprika; pork, beef, mutton and poultry meat; sweetish taste;	gravy, goulash, soup, bulz (dish with roasting polenta and cheese), cake; sarmale (cabbage rolls) as big as a cabbage leaf
Banat	fat foods, nutritious and tasty, the best home-made sweets; pork, beef and poultry meat; sweetish taste;	soup with home-made noodles, paprikash, sauerkraut with sausages, stake, potato-based pastry, taşche with various stuffing, beigli with poppy or nuts, donuts, pies, cakes; sarmale (cabbage rolls) as big as the fist;
Dobrogea	light foods; the meat is mostly fish, game, mutton; sour taste;	Storceac (fish soup), fish brine, mutton sausages, lamb on the spit, stuffed carp, moussaka, baklava, sweets with raisins and Turkish delight; small sarmale (cabbage rolls);
Moldova	pork and poultry meat; cheeses and eggs; acidulous to sour taste;	soups, meatballs, polenta, „poale-n brâu” pies, dumplings; small sarmale (cabbage rolls);
Muntenia	mutton, many vegetables, pickles sour taste;	sour soup, lamb covered in clay and baked, vegetable stews, compote sweetened with honey small sarmale (cabbage rolls);
Oltenia	simple foods with many vegetables; pork and fish; acidulous taste	leek and monk's rhubarb soups, stew, sausages, chicken ciulama with polenta; small sarmale (cabbage rolls);

In Romanian cuisine, besides daily food, there are many feasts arranged according to the season and the celebrated feast.

The food festivals in Romania become increasingly popular, attracting both Romanians and foreigners.

Table 5 Food Festivals in Romania

Festival name	Type of festival	Place/month
Pomana Porcului International Festival	food	Băile Balvanyos/February
Sarmale Festival	food	Praid/September
Zaiafest	food and wine	Bucharest/May
Street Food in the Park	food	Bucharest/May
Culinary Transylvania Festival – Food Culture Festival	food	Sibiu/September
Cold cuts Festival	food	Tismana/September
Cheese and Pastrami Festival	food	Bran/September
Sausages from Pleșcoi Festival	food and beverages	Berca/October
Pancakes Festival	food	Moneasa/July
Paprikash and Wine Festival	food and wine	Buziaș/October
Răchia Festival	beverages and food	Băile Herculane/October
Taste from Bucovina	food and beverages	Suceava/ October

From the examples of food festivals presented in Table 5, one can observe the variety of Romanian gastronomy and the increased interest shown in this type of events.

This year, 2019, Sibiu County is the European Culinary Region alongside South Aegean of Greece, which means that there will be all sorts of events meant to promote gastronomy in the area. This title, obtained following the decision taken by the International Institute for Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism (IGCAT), is a first step in recognizing the value of Romanian dishes and is an opportunity for Romanian gastronomy.

Conclusions

Every individual dreams of spending his/her free time in a most enjoyable way, in a special location. Every stay will be complete if the local culinary culture is experienced.

An increasing demand has been recorded internationally for culinary tourism, which is a means of recovering traditional foods from each area. The culinary dishes give authenticity to a tourist destination, revitalize and diversify the tourist offer.

Culinary tourism is very important for rural areas, but it also makes a significant contribution to urban areas.

Romania can impose itself on the culinary tourism market in the future due to the diversity of culinary dishes and traditions, as well as of organized events.

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