



## ROMANIAN GASTRONOMY BETWEEN TRADITIONALISM COMMERCE, BUSINESS AND RURAL TOURISM

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**Abstract** *Tourism from its beginnings until today has experienced a continuous development and tourist motivations have diversified. Gastronomy in recent years tends to become the main reason for tourist traveling to a particular destination other than the basic residence. Experiences lived in different regions of the world lead to the development of culinary tourism. Specific cuisine of an area or country is easiest preserved in rural areas, therefore the association between culinary tourism and the rural tourism is normal. In Romania there is potential for development of culinary tourism, there are still old recipes and dishes that are well preserved. The development and implementation of culinary tourism based on the structures of rural tourism and agrotourism establishments in our country is possible. The resulting benefits would be economic, social and cultural.*

**Key words:**

Motivation,  
gastronomy, culinary  
tourism, rural tourism,  
business

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### 1. Introduction

The action to visit different areas or attractive landscapes only for one's pleasure and for specified periods of time defines tourism. Its evolution on a worldwide level has been and continues to be increasing, even if negative factors have acted on it.

Tourists are people who travel in order to satisfy their pleasures, outside their home for a preset time and are not paid, thus their totality constitute tourism demand. Tourism demand variations are influenced by the chosen form of tourism, socio-professional category, and the amounts of money available, the trip characteristics, tourist motivations and preferences. Tourist's motivations are subjective and personal, influenced by psychological and environmental impulses. The main motivation is the one which influences the buying decision of a tourism product and its consumption. In the tourist scientific research we find different levels of the pyramid of human motivation proposed by Maslow A. namely <sup>1</sup>:

- social motivation, which is found in man's need to search and to integrate into a group;
- cognitive motivation, which identifies the need for knowledge;
- the motivation of correlation between knowledge, feeling and action which contributes to the integration of the individual's personality;
- rest and comfort motivation;

- Aesthetic motivation.

The desire of knowledge combined with the comfort desire lead to the choice of tourist destinations about local cuisine. Some countries have developed a reputation in the culinary arts.

The top gastronomic tourism destinations are as follows:

- France;
- Italy;
- Spain;
- New York;
- Texas;
- Mexico;
- Brazil;
- Peru;
- Thailand;
- China.

From this ranking we can observe that in the tourist preferences we can find countries from Europe, America and Asia. The refinement and variety of food products trigger the development of culinary tourism.

Culinary tourism has emerged as a form of tourism in 2001, it had a rapid development reaching to a share of up to 9-10% of the general tourism.

Its purpose is to educate, inspire and provide a chance to explore new areas of quality food and wine for tourists. Visitors can learn about the history of food preparation techniques, specific local gastronomy and food trends.

Meanwhile, the president of the International Association of Culinary Tourism (ICTA), Erik Wolf believes that:

- almost 100% the tourist goes out to have lunch or dinner;
- dinner remains one of the top three favorite activities of tourists;
- the higher the bill is, the more likely that the customers are tourists;
- There is a great correlation between the tourists interested in wine / gastronomy and museums, shows, shopping;
- culinary tourists devote a great period of time to their leisure time;
- the interest in this type of tourism is spread all across the age groups;
- gastronomy is the only art form that involves all the senses;
- these tourists can be considered explorers;
- culinary highlights are available throughout the year;
- the local cuisine is the first decision maker.

Through culinary tourism the traveler is looking for some unique and memorable culinary experiences, either in restaurants and exclusive wineries, or in places known only to locals.

As manifestations of this form of tourism we can mention:

- Culinary tourism circuits;
- Culinary festivals;
- Agricultural fairs;
- The period for gathering the crops;
- Agrotourism.

Culinary tourism circuits can be themed, dedicated to a single culinary product or focused on a region.

Food festivals are those that annually attract many tourists, being a success. The most famous and popular food festivals in the world are:

- White Truffle – Italy;
- Conch Festival – Turk and Caicos islands from the Caribbean;
- Coma Coffe festival – Hawaii;
- Festival del Mar – Anguilla island from the Caribbean;
- Trelawny Yam Festival – Jamaica;
- Mondial de la Bière – Montreal;
- American Cheese Society Grand Tasting – USA;
- International Mango Festival – India;
- Sonoma County Harvest Fair – California;
- Salone del Gusto – Spain.

Agricultural fairs and participation in crop raises takes place in rural areas, and tourists are attracted and they can enroll in the events that take place there.

Agrotourism is by definition linked to culinary tourism, offering traditional cuisine, food made from products that are made in their own household, these products being what gourmand tourists are looking for.

Following a study carried out by the OMT it was found that over 88% of respondents see in cooking the strategic element that can define the destination brand and image, and over 67% believe that their country has its own gourmet brand, and the most important for the establishment of a tourism product are gastro-economic events (79%), gastronomic routes (62%), cooking classes and workshops (62%), visits to markets and local producers (53%).

Taking into account the current trend, culinary tourism can bring significant benefits to a region or country and can be a tool for the economic development of the community.

## 2. Culinary tourism in Romania

Romania is located in South-Central Europe, north of the Balkan Peninsula, on the northwest shore of the Black Sea, on the Lower course of the Danube, between 43°37'07" and 48°15'06" latitude north and 20°15'44" and 29°41'24" east longitude.

During its evolution our cuisine has been influenced by the Greeks, Turks, Russians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Serbs, Germans and Austrians all contributing to the formation of the traditional Romanian specialties.

After some years the present situation regarding catering and the types of cuisine offered is thus summarized:

- most restaurants have a general profile their offers being done by specialty cooks, the employers desire and the demand of the zone;
- There are several exclusivist business restaurants with master chefs who made his mark on the restaurant menu dishes by adopting food from the area of origin (they have a stable but reduced clientele that belong to the well financial social class). In Bucharest we have 5 – 6 restaurants of this type;
- fast food like places with a limited supply and where you have a limited time to stay;
- establishments with traditional Romanian cuisine are rarely seen in the Romanian gastronomic landscape;
- big cities are places with exclusivist traditional cuisine belonging to other geographical areas (Chinese, Italian, Hungarian, Mexican restaurants etc.), specialized restaurants;
- predominant venues serving alcohol;
- Other facilities such as cafes, Tea shops, ice-cream shops, cake shops, but they have a low share both numerically and financially.

A top of the most appreciated food festivals show the Romanian cuisine diversity.

Table 1. Top 10 food festival from Romania

Festival name	Location
Prejmer pancakes Festival	Prejmer - Braşov
Mangalitsa Pork Festival	Baia Mare
Virşli Festival	Corvinilor Castle - Hunedoara
"Brăduleţ cheese" Festival	Brăduleţ - Argeş
Figs Festival	Sviniţa - Mehedinţi
Trout Festival	Ciocăneşti - Suceava
"Banat Bread" Festival	Timişoara
Tămăioasa Festival	Pietroasele - Buzău
Răciturilor Festival	Valea Bistriţei - Gorj
Fishermen's Borsch Festival	Jurilovca - Tulcea

Source: [www.ghiduri-turistice.info](http://www.ghiduri-turistice.info) › DESCOPERĂ ROMÂNIA

In order for gastronomy to contribute substantially to the development of tourism we believe that the forms of culinary tourism must be folded in a first step on another form of tourism.

In the context of multiple forms of tourism we oriented towards rural tourism and its component agrotourism, as receiver for implementing the activities of culinary tourism.

Rural tourism in order to be successful must be made in a well-kept rural area, with rustic specific, but does not necessarily need work in the primary sector.

Villagers should be privileged actors and the first beneficiaries of rural tourism. Spontaneous hospitality is important, but it must be accompanied by a tourist training. To implement culinary tourism elements we must use the idea of women's as bearers of traditional cuisine.

Rural tourism is extremely flexible and responsive to any changes in the financial area and in a relatively short period of time can transform the culinary tourism into a brand of Romania.

The development of rural tourism and agrotourism in Romania can be integrated into a comprehensive EU policy required that invites all Member States to promote rural tourism. This - by protecting the environment and local cultural identity - may contribute to realizing a social contract that guarantees, in an integrated European policy for a cross-cultural and social balance between towns and countries.

The implementation of culinary tourism must take into account the creation of some major components namely:

- The development of quality culinary products;
- Create a pleasant environment;
- Bilaterally advantageous pricing policy (for the owner and client).

Choosing the optimal architecture and the area represent two essential conditions for the success of culinary tourism being known that a culinary brand may

be easier attached to a particular local tradition that preserves the specific of the culture.

The analysis has led to the development of an implementation plan for culinary tourism that should be based on rural tourism and agrotourism establishments in Romania. This plan was developed taking into account the particularities of the forms of tourism practiced in our country. We mention the fact that the state has to get involved effectively in all the actions that we specified.

An important thing that needs to be done is the passing of a tourism law that is in line with the EU legislation and the possibility of funding, partially or totally, by the state of an informational system for rural tourism and culinary tourism.

Below we present in a summary form the development plan in order to understand our concept of implementing, in the first phase, the culinary tourism on the support of rural tourism.

We also consider that this plan should contain the following:

- Information regarding public food units (firms that offer tourist services);
- characteristics of dishes and other culinary products of the region;
- characteristics of arts and crafts;
- landscape;
- area attractions;
- cultural patrimony.

The aim refers to:

- standardization and correlation of information regarding rural tourism (agrotourism) and culinary tourism;
- Identification, in the first phase, of the most famous traditional products;
- the creation of an educational system focused on training professionals cooks for the kitchen and traditional food;

- the creation of an educational system focused on the current staff training in rural tourism establishments;
- creation of a proper marketing for culinary tourism;
- the funding by the state, a major proportion of rural tourism establishments and culinary products that include a share of minimum 70%;
- the orientation and implementation of surrounding units that are engaged in culinary tourism, which are appreciated by local and foreign tourists;
- the funding by the state, partly or totally, of the economic agents from the rural area and orient them towards culinary tourism.

We believe that the adoption of this plan will result in a rapid implementation of culinary tourism in our country which will have a quantifiable economic effect quickly.

### 3. Conclusions

Romania's tourism potential is valuable, diverse, but inadequately capitalized, so the direct share of tourism in Romania's GDP was only 1.5%, placing our country far below the world average which is 5.2%.

According to the report made in 2013 by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Romania ranks on 68 of 140 countries in terms of tourism competitiveness in the world and 35th out of 42 countries surveyed in Europe. The analysis, that was the basis of the report, followed 14 indicators of competitiveness in tourism, such as legislation, environmental sustainability policies, the health and hygiene, transport infrastructure, human resources, natural and cultural.

Major deficiencies noted in the aforementioned report of WEF were:

- the absence of effective promotions of tourist destinations in Romania;
- poor marketing effectiveness to attract tourists;
- the lack of effective promotion of various forms of tourism;
- a quasi-general lack of tourism products presented attractive;
- the lack of relevant analyzes of tourism activities.

This analysis correlated with Romania being on the completely unflattering places led us to consider a

number of factors that could lead the domestic tourism in a direction likely to be achieved in a minimum time and with maximized efficiency. The conclusion we reached is that it is absolutely necessary to use gastronomy as a basic component of culinary tourism. Culinary tourism is increasingly appreciated worldwide and brings substantial income thus Romania could also implement a development plan of this kind of tourism. This is possible due to the existence of traditional products, gastronomy and agricultural festivals, agrotourism, that are made in some regions of the country.

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