

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH GASTRONOMY TOURISM

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Introduction and aims

The main aim of this chapter is to present gastronomy tourism as a tool for local development by focusing on it from the perspective of cultural heritage and the planning of sustainable and responsible tourism.

Poulain (2002) states that the act of eating is one of the essential parts of a trip; it is a daily act that provides us with a first contact with the native culture of the visited place and its people. In recent years, many tourist destination managers have seen food as an element that can help to differentiate the destination and provide authenticity in a context of cuisine becoming increasingly globalized and homogenized (Blakey 2012; Richards 2012).

Cultural heritage allows us to interpret tradition and build a link between history and territory, time and space (Aulet et al. 2017). Gastronomy is the result of the history of a region or territory; through what we eat we can understand the life of the local community. “We are what we eat”, in the words of a popular saying. The first part of this chapter will therefore explore the relationship between the concepts of gastronomy, heritage and local communities.

The second part will focus on how gastronomy tourism can help the development of local communities, based on a review of the academic literature. As a resource for tourism, gastronomy allows contact with local culture based on experience and the senses (Grande Ibarra 2001) and opens the door to involving different agents in the tourism sector. Elements that can be incorporated within what gastronomy has to offer can be grouped into three areas (Espeitx 2004): places for interpreting gastronomy (for learning), places for consuming gastronomy (for buying) and places for eating gastronomy (for tasting). The local community should be involved in all three spheres in order to develop sustainable gastronomy tourism.

If planned appropriately, gastronomy tourism can bring significant benefits to the regions where it is developed, “benefitting small farmers and food artisans, with ancient

crafts and traditions, recipes and products recovered (or their loss avoided)”(Aulet and Majo 2016).

The chapter will finish with a case study based on the development of gastronomy tourism in Catalonia, analysing how it has helped small farmers and producers. Primary sources were used for this case study since the authors actively participated as experts in producing the gastronomy plan and fieldwork was also conducted to collect information regarding the “*Benvinguts a Pagès*” initiative.

Gastronomy as heritage, local communities and recipes

The word gastronomy seems to have become fashionable in recent years, appearing in many different media. The number of publications and studies that address this field from different perspectives has also grown. Before looking at the relationship between gastronomy and the heritage of local communities, however, we believe it appropriate to define what is meant by gastronomy in the context of this study.

Etymologically, the word gastronomy originates from the Greek *gastros* (stomach) and *gnomos* (knowledge), referring to a knowledge of what is eaten from different perspectives: cooking, nutritional values, possibilities of combinations between products, etc. However, we must differentiate between the concepts of eating and gastronomy.

Eating consists in obtaining, preparing and ingesting food. Contemporary society is characterized by having a great interest in food, referring to two clearly differentiated spheres or areas, nutrition on the one hand and food production on the other; that is, health and economics (Contreras 1995).

The biological need for food is expressed socially and also receives a cultural response: “Converted into a need, it transforms the omnivor into a selective being that satisfies this need differently depending on certain sociocultural variables”(Millán 2000).

Gastronomy, according to the Academy of the Catalan Language, is “knowledge of all that is related to cooking, the creation and composition of dishes, the art of tasting and appreciating meals and drinks” (...). Gastronomy is “encompassing the enjoyment of excellent food and reflective eating and cooking” (Scarpato 2002,94).

Humans are the only creatures in the world who think and talk about food, the only ones who observe precise rules about what they eat and the way in which they do it, how to prepare food and people and places with whom or where to eat it (Contreras and Gracia 2005). Brillat-Savarin (1994) also emphasizes two ideas:

a) the aim of gastronomy is “to obtain the preservation of man by means of the best possible nourishment”

b) its object is “giving guidance, according to certain principles, to all who seek, provide, or prepare substances which may be turned into food”.

At the same time, gastronomy can be understood as a cultural value that is awarded to food or how to prepare it so as to identify it with a territory or social group (Calabuig i Tomas and Ministrall i Masgrau 1994). According to Peruchó (1999), “gastronomy is an art that gives us pleasure; but a lonely pleasure is a sad and boring pleasure, which tells us that we have to share it. We have to share, for the sake of greater satisfaction”. From this we can deduce that gastronomy is also a “social art”; this author adds that “cuisine is a product of the idiosyncrasies of peoples [...] cuisine came with civilization; then it followed its great currents”.

We can therefore state that gastronomy is a social practice. Fischler (1985) posits that the cultural and symbolic dimension of food is accentuated in cuisine; it is not only a question of ingredients but of classifications and rules that bring order and sense. We might say that food is socialized and becomes the bearer of meaning, and linked to this meaning are aspects related to ritual, symbolic and social functions, which are in turn linked to material and intangible aspects (Schlüter 2003).

The cultural characteristics of food and its rituals generate possibilities for creating heritage. For Contreras (2007), the process of creating heritage extends to the most ignored aspects of everyday life, including cooking and eating.

The concept of cultural heritage can be very broad, it being complex and difficult to define and having changed much over time. Knowledge related to the idea of heritage was first developed during the Ancien Régime, but the need to preserve it was never considered paramount because it was a family, and therefore private, asset that was inherited. This meant that its owners could freely dispose of it, meaning that throughout history there have been episodes of heritage being destroyed (Bady 1998). In fact, it was

not until the 19th century that awareness arose of the need to protect and conserve it, linked to the idea of monumental and tangible heritage.

Discourse relating to heritage is largely based on official and technical documents produced by international organizations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS. By way of example, the 1972 World Heritage Convention set out the foundations for defining cultural and natural heritage and established its basic categories. These official documents selected certain heritage assets considered more relevant than others when considering certain criteria. These criteria or guidelines have also changed, as pointed out by Vecco (2010:324) “the selection criteria of cultural heritage have also changed: while initially the historic and artistic values were the only parameters, other additional ones have now been added: the cultural value, its value of identity and the capacity of the object to interact with memory”.

One of the first mentions of intangible heritage and the need to protect it appeared at the World Conference on Cultural Policies organized by UNESCO in Mexico in 1982. UNESCO understands the cultural heritage of a people to be that which “comprises the works of its artists, its architects, its musicians, its writers, its grandparents, but also those anonymous creations that arise from the soul of the people and the set of values that give meaning to life. It includes material and immaterial works that express the creativity of this people, its languages, rituals, beliefs, places and historical monuments, literature, art, archives and libraries” (UNESCO 1982).

From that moment on, many authors have explored the relationships between tangible and intangible heritage as two sides of the same coin. “Intangible heritage permeates every aspect of the life of the individual and is present in all the assets that comprise cultural heritage: monuments, objects, landscapes and places. All these elements, products of human creativity, and therefore cultural facts, are inherited, transmitted, modified and optimized from individual to individual and from generation to generation” (Carrera 2003:1).

A clear demonstration that gastronomy has also entered into this field is the fact that in 2010 French cuisine was included on the list of UNESCO’s intangible heritage, it being the first culinary tradition. This trend continued with the inclusion of the Mediterranean diet and traditional Mexican cuisine, among others. As Aulet et al. (2016:138) point out, “UNESCO does not include specific recipes; rather, it recognizes the importance of an

identifying rite, a group of knowledge, traditions, and symbols related to the act of preparing and eating a food”.

In line with this idea, one could say that a social structure and part of the identity of a group can be identified through its eating habits. Fischler (1995) stated that cuisines tend to have a national and regional dimension that, beyond the basic ingredients, also includes a set of rules, uses, practices, symbolic representations and social, moral, religious, hygienic and health values. Authors such as Fieldhouse (1986), Cabrera Serrano (2005) and Laborde and Medina (2005) refer to the concept of national cuisines, meaning those elements related to gastronomy and food that are considered to be characteristic of or specific to a particular country or region and that therefore constitute an aspect of its identity as a group.

This is another point of connection with the idea of heritage; that is, heritage helps to build identity and gastronomy is one of its components, a sign of its belonging. Gastronomy is represented through what might be considered rituals (in the production of food and the time and means of its consumption). One of the purposes of rituals is for the human group to express and rediscover its self-defining belonging, whether by marking differences with those outside the group (separation rituals) or by congregating and bringing together the diverse and dispersed members of the same human group (integration rituals) (Maldonado 1983). Social structures develop relationships between their members in order to increase internal social cohesion (Aulet 2007).

Authors such Caplan (1997), Nunes dos Santos (2007) and Cherry et al. (2011) state that food serves as a marker of belonging. Since time immemorial, gastronomy has been one of the links that has led us to feel part of a particular place, society or culture. Rebato Ochoa (2009) speaks of the existence of a number of gustatory indicators that delimit the culinary importance of a particular territory and comprise a cuisine's identity (garlic in Mediterranean cuisine, for example). Thus, we can conclude that how we eat, how we make and obtain products, and how they are prepared and consumed or cooked are all related to local resources, have the characteristics of the physical environment and are linked to a specific socioeconomic context.

Economic globalization has also affected the cultural sphere (Castells 2001; Entrena Duran 2008). In this context, there has been a reclaiming of local identities emphasizing those elements that delimit the cultural identity of a country or region. In the field of

gastronomy, this entails highlighting local products. As mentioned by Brillat-Savarin (1994:52) “gastronomy, in fact, is the motive force behind farmers, winegrowers, fishermen, and huntsmen, not to mention the great family of cooks, under whatever title they may disguise their employment as preparers of food”.

Gastronomy, tourism and local development

One element that has characterized globalization, among others, is the continued growth of the tourism industry (César Dachary and Arnaiz Burne 2004), producing a phenomenon that some authors referred to as the globalization/localization of supply and demand (Carvalho and Moquete Guzmán 2011). In an increasingly global and homogeneous world, tourism enhances the identity of destinations by creating differentiated products and reinvincating the value of the local as authentic (Nash 1992; Wang 1999; Chhabra et al. 2003), some of them also refer to the importance of gastronomy (Cohen and Avieli. N. 2004).

Food heritage has become the focus of tourists’ attention in recent years (Hjalager and Richards 2002), not only because it is a biological necessity for tourists but, above all, because it is an extremely valuable way of accessing the culture and history of the visited country (Poulain 2002). Gastronomy has become a decisive factor in planning and conducting the trip. Fields (2002) pointed out that different motivations can be identified in relation to gastronomy (physical, cultural, interpersonal, and those related to status/prestige). Physical motivations are those which arise out of people’s need to eat; cultural motivations are those that focus on the need to know more about a particular geographical or cultural area; interpersonal motivations are the response to the social function of gastronomy as an element of interrelating with other people; and motivations related to status and prestige are those that derive from seeking social distinction.

Gastronomy products and services are becoming an essential element in the enrichment of tourist destinations, making them one of the main identifying and differentiating elements of a place (Montoya 2003). At the 1st World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism, the WTO pointed out that gastronomy tourism is an element of cultural preservation and must be shaped around the quality and authenticity of the product and the territory (UNWTO 2015).

Gastronomy tourism can be defined as that practiced by people who on their travels carry out activities based on tangible and intangible gastronomic cultural heritage, in places other than those of their habitual environment, for a consecutive period of time of less than one year, with the purpose of consuming and enjoying gastronomic products, services, experiences or inspirations as a priority and in a complementary manner (Hjalager and Richards 2002; Schlüter 2003; Armesto López and Gómez Martín 2004; Montecinos 2012). Henderson (2009) pointed out that gastronomy tourism happens in places where tourists can consume gastronomy, such as restaurants, and that the gastronomy tourism experience can even happen in the context of conventional stores, food festivals, hotel and restaurant schools and in places that seek to attract visitors through their gastronomy.

This implies that this type of tourism would develop to a greater or lesser degree depending on the level of connection between the cuisine and the culture of the location (Riley 2005), since the cuisine plays a key role in the tourist's satisfaction with the experience and as part of the cultural heritage of the destination (Ignatov and Smith 2006).

Gastronomy tourism is a type that reinforces the importance of local ingredients, locals learning about and appreciating their own consumption, and the importance of culinary resources, allowing local economic development through various distribution channels. On the basis of this phenomenon, numerous important actions are being carried out in relation to the recovery, conservation and valuing of gastronomic heritage. These actions range from the sharing and disseminating of recipes, creating workshops and conserving traditional forms of agriculture to establishing designations of food quality (Armesto López and Gómez Martín 2004).

Gastronomic routes, fairs and events are important tourism products in so far as they are scenarios for establishing relationships and agreements, among other aspects that strengthen territorial ties and shape various special areas of tourism. It is for this reason that the tourism agents and resources of a destination must be articulated. According to Espeitx (2004), gastronomy tourism can take place in different interpretation, production and tasting spaces, all complementing one another. What is important is that these spaces are linked to the territory, tradition and local population and constitute a platform for the promotion of local food products and brands.

The valuing of raw materials and the different elements in the extensive value chain of the gastronomic tourism experience, such as agriculture, fishing, livestock, market culture and distribution, as well as those linked to traditional cuisine, can all be seen as forming a strategic part of the process. The inclusion of local communities, agricultural and livestock producers, cheese factories, markets, wineries, artisans, territorial interpreters and all those elements that build the identity of a place enrich the value of destinations and are key to this process (UNWTO 2016; UNWTO 2017).

‘Case Study Start’

Catalan gastronomy and its evolution

Catalonia is a region located in northeastern Spain. It has a differentiated identity forged over more than a thousand years and shaped within its own language, culture, social evolution and gastronomy. It is also included within what is known as the Mediterranean diet.

“Catalan cuisine is Mediterranean, above all, but it is a bridge cuisine from centuries of evolution and influences from peoples and cultures that have settled in the territory: Iberians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans contributed their own particular touches; then Arabs incorporated other spices, products, and recipes. The mixture was further spiced up by new products arriving from 15th-century America. As with any other, Catalan cuisine grew out of the combination of all of these influences. Therefore, today’s Catalan cuisine echoes the history of a country. It is a cuisine that has survived thanks on the one hand to domestic or popular cooking, and on the other to cultured or professional gastronomy” (Aulet et al. 2016).

As we can see, Catalan cuisine is the sum of ingredients and forms of cooking left behind by civilizations and cultures that have passed through the region. It was widely recognized in the Europe of the Middle Ages (Pujol 2009) and since the 1990s has enjoyed unprecedented worldwide recognition thanks to the international projection of chefs such as Ferran Adrià and the Roca brothers.

A further example of the recognition enjoyed by Catalan cuisine is the fact that Catalonia was designated European Region of Gastronomy (CREG) in 2016, highlighting the wealth and quality of its culinary and agri-food heritage. Its candidacy was based on three elements: the local product, the territory and the cuisine. According

to the promoters of the plan, these three ingredients are considered key in promoting the country's economy and tourism (Generalitat de Catalunya 2016). After the awarding of this distinction, a "Gastronomy Plan of Catalonia" was compiled, aimed at analysing the current situation and identifying challenges and opportunities in this respect. One of the most important elements of the plan was the Catalan Tourism Agency bringing together the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Business and Knowledge to work jointly in this sphere.

The Gastronomy Plan is structured into 9 working areas considered strategic in the promotion of Catalan gastronomy. They are: gastronomy as an economic sector; innovation; communication; training; internationalization; local and territorial development; tourism; nutrition, health and education; and identity and heritage. An analysis of the current situation has been carried out for each of these areas, and the main agents and challenges identified in order to draw up lines of action.

The main challenges identified by experts in the field of tourism and gastronomy are:

- Closing the gap between tourists' expectations and their gastronomic experiences
- Improving tools for differentiating Catalan gastronomy as a tourist destination
- Promoting and marketing quality gastronomic products
- Improving the structures and coordination of gastronomy agents

Various initiatives have been developed in the field of gastronomic tourism in Catalonia, but here we will mention the one that has probably had the greatest impact on local communities: "*Benvinguts a Pagès*". This initiative consists in organizing a weekend (the first of June) where agri-food farms throughout Catalonia "open their doors to tourists to show off their fields, herds of animals, boats and workshops" (PRODECA. Promotorad'Exportacions Agroalimentàries 2016).

For one weekend, producers in different agri-food fields allow tourists to visit work spaces and facilities, including farms, workshops, fishing boats, etc.

Table 27.1. Companies participating in the “*Benvinguts a Pagès*” initiative by sector

Source: authors’ own work based on PRODECA data

A total of 232 companies from different agri-food sectors participated in the first edition in 2016, the predominant sector being that of drinks (mostly wineries), followed by oil. It is worth noting that these two are the most developed sectors from the point of view of tourism. Catalonia has 11 Denominations of Origin for wine, with a total of 617 registered wineries in July 2016 (Generalitat de Catalunya n.d.). Of these DOs, three are members of Wine Routes in Spain and virtually all have wine cellars with visits and offer structured tourism products and services.

The same can be said for the oil sector, which has 5 Denominations of Origin in Catalonia, with a total of 97 registered cooperatives. Although oil tourism products and services are now becoming more structured, the industry is still far from reaching the levels of organization of the wine sector.

The other visitable locations were farms, which in many cases had their first contact with the public and had to work to adapt the visit to tourists. The first edition was well received, with farms receiving 12,500 visits in one weekend, mostly from families.

The success of the first edition led to the initiative being continued in 2017, expanding the number of visitable establishments to 292, as shown in Table 27.1. In 2017, the initiative was run alongside Bio Week, which complemented and prolonged the activities of “*Benvinguts a Pagès*”. In addition to visits, some 200 restaurants joined the initiative and offered menus with local products, with discount rooms offered in some accommodation establishments and more than 150 activities including fairs, markets and guided tours all linked to the land, the product and nature. The event received 18,000 visitors and the 2018 edition is now being prepared.

Although few studies were conducted on visitors to the event, most were local or national (meaning Catalans), considering that most of the activities were offered in the Catalan language. The Catalan Tourism Agency is now working to promote the event for publics from other regions of Spain and an international public in order to expand the positive impact of the initiative.

Conclusions

Food is one of the main expenses for tourists, including on-site consumption, souvenir shopping and participation in activities. That is why tourism constitutes an exceptional platform for promoting local products and food and/or culinary brands.

Leal Londoño (2013) concludes that gastronomy tourism evolves in a more structured way and spreads faster among companies, institutions and associations in those regions that have a more mature and experienced past in other tourism products. This could be one reason why gastronomy tourism displays a high level of dynamism in Catalonia, especially in those coastal and pre-coastal regions where tourism is a mature and consolidated industry.

Gastronomy and experiences based around food have become a basic and fundamental pillar of tourism in Catalonia due to their capacity to seasonalize the industry (the agricultural calendar does not usually coincide with the high tourist season) and diversify tourism expenditure (which is not only concentrated in accommodation but in other establishments with direct access to local producers).

However, as can be observed from studies carried out during the Year of Gastronomy, despite Catalonia having a great tradition in the field of tourism, there is still a need for greater internal knowledge of gastronomy and to promote the sustainability of rural areas by adapting tourism products and services to new trends and demands. Although there are numerous initiatives that link gastronomic heritage to new activities and initiatives such as those related to the wine or oil sectors, work still needs to be done to achieve greater coordination among the agents involved.

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Abstract

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