



## Food and nutrition as tourist phenomenon

Full-time Professor Pere Aslimoski, Assistant Professor Sase Gerasimoski<sup>b\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Bitola, Faculty of tourism and hospitality, Marshal Tito Str., bb, Ohrid, 6000, Macedonia

<sup>b</sup>University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Bitola, Faculty for security, Idrizovo, bb p.o. box 103, Skopje, 1000, Macedonia

---

### Abstract

Food and nutrition are inevitable content of everyday humane life. In their essence, they constitute a vital part of the tourism offer in tourist destinations, being a mixture of biological, socio-cultural and tourist aspect. Each tourist has a biological need, as every human being, to satisfy its need for food, but the way in which this is done depends not only from the socio-cultural features of the cuisine and hospitality of the tourist destination, but also from the specific ways in which the food is prepared and served to the tourists, which make food and nutrition a distinct tourist phenomenon.

This paper deals with the importance of the three aspects of food and nutrition viewed through the lenses of tourism and with the variety of tourist understandings and practices of numerous kinds of tourism arising from relation of food and nutrition and tourism in Republic of Macedonia and worldwide.

© 2012 Published by Elsevier B.V. Selection and/or peer review under responsibility of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality

Key words: food, eating-out, tourism, culture.

---

\*Pere Aslimoski, Phd ; Sase Gerasimoski, PhD Tel.: 0038970352521  
E-mail address: [pereftu@hotmail.com](mailto:pereftu@hotmail.com) [sgerasimoski@yahoo.com](mailto:sgerasimoski@yahoo.com)

## **1. Introduction**

There's no doubt that food and nutrition represent the most visible and necessary human reality and that there's no tourism without them, not only in terms of the bare biological need for eating, but in socio-cultural and tourist terms as well. Rapid development of tourism in the era of globalization has accentuated the importance of food and nutrition offer as a contribution to diversity and richness of experiences the tourists are looking for. Many of them treat the food and nutrition as one of their main motives, if not the only motive for some of them, for tourist trip and stay. Thus, different kinds of tourism based on food and nutrition have arose in recent years, such as wine tourism, food tourism, culinary tourism as food and nutrition based tourism, as well as cultural, ethno tourism, event tourism etc., where food and nutrition represent an important part.

There are immense possibilities for development of tourism based on food and nutrition, especially using the socio-cultural and tourist peculiarities of a tourist destination. Namely, nowadays tourists are very curious and most of them would like to experiment with tastes and scents that recipient tourist cuisine can offer. That is certainly, to some extent, the echo of globalization, but, it's quite true that the search for different, unusual and tasty food has been an important part of decision for tourist trip and stay since the advent of tourism as modern phenomenon. The only difference nowadays is that this need and quest have accelerated and surely are a force that could drive or deter the tourist movements. Here, we are trying to brighten the tourist aspect of food and nutrition, also having in mind that this is inseparable from biological and socio-cultural aspects which are complementary to tourist one. If one goes wrong, than it could affect the whole tourist offer based on food and nutrition, thus braking the expectations founded on stories of well-arranged tourist propaganda. Food and nutrition are something that affects the senses of tourists that are felt much stronger and more longer than any other tourist experience.

## **2. The distinctiveness of food and nutrition as tourist phenomenon**

Food and nutrition adjoin to the biological need and to the socio-cultural character of the food. Indeed, the hospitality, which as an activity is one of the most salient constituent parts of tourism, wholly refers to the process of providing services for accommodation and food to guests. If the very need for food and nutrition is of pure biological origin for the tourist as well as for every human or living being, while the desire to consume food characteristic of the climate and culture where tourist stays is a socio-cultural phenomenon, then, offering and serving the guest with food in a specific way and in a specific ambient that the place and the object offer, make the food and nutrition a tourist phenomenon. In actual fact, speaking of food and nutrition as tourist phenomenon, we can say that they sublime in itself biological, socio-cultural and tourist aspect of food and nutrition in one whole. Food and nutrition obtain character of tourist phenomenon when they are related to a specific kind of food or familiar kind of food, but prepared in a special manner and served to guest, having in mind the entire special ambient of the space of a given tourist destination (the view, the climate, the spirit of the place etc.) which is inimitable and unique only for that tourist place. Therefore, tourists will often say that drinking coffee in Venice, Paris, Dubrovnik or Ohrid is not the same as drinking coffee on some other, tourist unrecognizable place. During their stay and long after that, the tourists always remember the food and nutrition that made special impression in some tourist destination, since the food, irrespective of other tourist motives and values, influence to all senses, including the senses of scent and taste through which the guest remembers the stay in certain tourist destination very long time.

Food and nutrition are inevitable constituent parts of tourist destination offer and as such are important values and motives for tourist trip and stay. But, sometimes, dependent on guests preferences, accentuated tourist propaganda for food and nutrition from tour-operators or tourist agencies or dependent on the specific offer of the tourist destination, they can represent autonomous and strong incentive and

value that will boost tourist trip and stay. In such a case, we are talking about a special kind of tourism which becomes more and more actual in the last decade, and that is the “culinary tourism”, also named as gastronomy tourism, primarily referred to traditional cuisines of tourist destinations. Also, the term “food tourism”, or tourism based on food and nutrition is commonly used almost as synonymous with culinary tourism, although they are not the same. In addition, we’ll also mention the “wine tourism” as a sub kind of food tourism. Food is one of the main or main and autonomous incentive for tourist trip and stay in these kinds and sub kinds of tourism and it makes the basis for the tourist offer in a tourist destination. In some developed tourist destinations, like Mexico, Australia, France, Italy, Spain, Canada, U.S.A. or alike, the so called “culinary tours” are also offered to culinary tourists as special interest tourists. Thus, those culinary tours include:

- Cooking school holidays, where guests not only taste the local specialties, but directly participate in their preparation together with the chefs;
- Dining in famous local restaurants with renown chefs, buying local food from domestic malls, shops and food-markets;
- Visiting the food producers that produce special kind of food characteristic for certain culture, region of tourist destination (e.g. coffee plantation tours, tea plantation tours, chocolate lovers tours, the ubiquitous wine tours and the like).

Many tourismologists see the culinary tourism as a sub kind of cultural tourism, regarding the fact that it comprises consuming food in a socio-cultural setting of the host-state, as well as a way of nutrition typical for that culture. Investment funds are financial institutions or institutional investors, who collect funds from their depositors, then place them in the short or long term investment, concerning in financial or in different forms. Through the traditional food and traditional way of its preparation, serving and consummation, the cultural tourism, actually, represents keeping, affirmation and valorization of its own culinary heritage as an important part of the entire cultural heritage in the domestic tourist place. Besides that, through the culinary tourism tourists are getting acquainted with many other elements of tangible and intangible culture of that people. Thus, for example, eating in traditional restaurant that serves traditional or national food, the tourists can hear domestic music, attend the presentation of domestic folklore, see the art-works which usually adorning the internal walls of these objects, get acquainted with part of the ethnography and objects for domestic usage which are also frequent motive of the interior of those restaurants, all the way to the architecture of the climate, regarding the fact that mostly, those restaurants are built in the spirit of the architecture characteristic of that climate. It is of special interest the relation of all kinds and sub kinds of event, ambient, rural and ethno-tourism with culinary tourism, since the fact that the main or significant subject of interest, incentive and value of all them are food and nutrition. Speaking of event tourism including cultural manifestations (carnivals, masquerades, concerts, fashion shows or alike), sport manifestations (tournaments, championships, single matches), economic manifestations (fairs and alike), the food has always been one of the most important, if not the central element in tourist offer. There are manifestations associated with culinary tourism, such as various beer festivals (Oktoberfest being the most renown in the world, taking place in Munich-Germany, as well as the Prilep Pivofest in Republic of Macedonia), festivals of certain kinds of food, like wine, brandy, grill, noodles, chocolate festivals etc.

At the end of this part, let’s say few words about the influence of postmodernism and globalization on development of culinary tourism. First, we can affirm that postmodernism, as well as in the other spheres of social life, also when we talk about food and nutrition, stimulates variety, difference, unconventionality and it seems that together with globalization contribute towards keeping, affirmation and development of local cuisines, i.e., the cuisines, food and nutrition that belong to a tourist places of smaller people. Of course, that this is much more a result of the local influences within the process of globalization, which is more suited to be called glocalization, and that those influences stimulate difference (heterogeneity) of

food and nutrition which benefits tourism at all and cultural and culinary tourism specifically. But, we shouldn't forget the homogenizing and standardizing influence of globalization to food and nutrition. Namely, the advent of global brands in nutrition can be a threat not only to cultural and culinary heterogeneity and can impoverish local tourist offer, but also it hides in itself many health risks related to this kind of nutrition which is industrially unhealthy in its essence, unlike the local food which is much more healthy and natural. Within the fight for cheap resources for the fast-food industry, much of the unclean technologies of the food-producing industry has been transferred to a less developed countries very often, but the final product contains abundance of chemicals and GMF that is being transferred through the global trade network to every point of the globe, that will say to the country that initiated the production of food and transfer of that ecologically unacceptable technology for food-producing. That represents, as the renown German sociologist Ulrich Bek says "the boomerang effect of risks", characteristic of globalized society. Most part of the risks related to food and nutrition are not only globalized, but manufactured, latent (hidden) and are more and more less predictable as well. General tendency present among tourists in the era of globalization is to consume as healthy an natural food as possible, that is to say, a food that is consisted of minimum healthy risks and locally produced organic food from ecologically clean area is a warranty for that. This is due to the fact that this food does not need entire chemical industry to be produced and to be appealing for each tourist, without any risks included. In this sense, consuming healthy local food is not only unusual everyday change in the way the tourist feed and not only represents their curiosity and search for variety of tastes, but also it could be a kind of escape or salvation from detrimental and long-lasting consummation of unhealthy industrially produced food from the countries that produces it (let's just recall that all major healthy risks and great catastrophes related to food and nutrition originate exactly from the industrially most developed countries of the West, such as BSE, Escherichia Coli, swine flu etc.)

## **2.Food, nutrition and tourism in the Republic of Macedonia**

Food and nutrition in Republic of Macedonia are part of its cultural and gastronomic heritage created and layered with centuries. The Macedonian cuisine abounds with influences in food and nutrition from numerous cultures and civilizations that crossed this territory and inhabited it, so, there comes the richness in tastes. This rich offer of domestic food and nutrition, named also as traditional or national food, represents outstandingly good basis for development of cultural tourism and even for the autonomous development of culinary tourism.

Traditional nutrition of the population of Macedonia abounds with cereals, fruit, vegetable and meat in reasonable quantities. This makes Macedonian traditional food very healthy, organic and with a high dietary value. With its original taste that arises from the uniqueness of the climate, as well as the unique way of preparation of food and nutrition itself, traditional Macedonian cuisine fits the contemporary world tendencies for consuming healthy food in a best possible way, as much as it meets the basic requests of cultural and culinary tourists for whom traditional food is one of the most important and for the culinary tourists, the most important segment of tourist offer. Moreover, great advantage within the development of these kinds of tourism surely represents hospitality by which Macedonia has been recognizable throughout the world and that has a long tradition. Since the earliest patriarchal communities the Macedonians has been cultivating hospitality as one of the most significant traits of their collective character and identity. Even etymologically, "the word guest (*гостин*, in Macedonian) originates from the Old-Slavonic word, *гостѣ*, meaning the one that will come home or the one that has to be honored with best disposable food and with best room for sleeping if he stays overnight. This was also associated with the very old beliefs that the guest is an incarnated ancestor of the family, so, that's why he was revered as ritual and very important person".

The kind of food and the way of its consummation in Macedonia, as it is the case everywhere around the world, were and are tightly related with the socio-cultural changes throughout the history. Thus, if among

the Slavs, for example, the use of bread in nutrition is prevalent (the word bread according to many author is a synonymous with the word nutrition among the Macedonians), then, with the coming of Turks the food gains oriental traits (the meals are more fried and spicy, while processed sugar, so called *„шеќерем„*, dominates among the deserts). “From the XIX-th century onwards the influences of the Western cuisines that last and are very strong even today are more noticeable”. The richness of food and special way of nutrition among the population in Macedonia is witnessed through very relevant data and accounts that travel writers that cruised Macedonia throughout the centuries guided by various motives left to us as invaluable written heritage. One of these travel writers who give very extensive and picturesque accounts of food and nutrition in Macedonia is for sure the Turkish travel writer Evlija Chelebi (Chelebija). During his trip to Macedonia in the second half of the XVII-the century, he especially highlights the abundance and the taste of the Ohrid fruit and cites that “there were 24 sorts of apples and peaches, as well as 9 sorts of widely known Ohrid *„dunja,-,quince„*”. The same travel writer also writes about the winter customs of mutual visiting that was widespread among the Ohrid people, where food, i.e., meals played significant role. “For that occasion, the meals that were presented during one visit mustn’t repeat on the other visit”. In contemporary tourism, especially cultural, culinary and food tourism, each country insist on affirmation and valorization of these and opportunities alike these that Macedonia possesses and which draw huge interest among the foreign tourists, especially among the tourists that visit the country for the first time.

The National Tourism Development Strategy 2009 – 2013 adopted by the Government of Republic of Macedonia, states that its aim is providing framework for tourism development and determination of priorities for tourism development that could be of use to potential investors and subjects already working in tourism. Within the same document, there are some kinds of tourism where food and nutrition have important place, as wine, rural and cultural tourism, but culinary (gastronomy) tourism and food tourism which exist worldwide as special kinds of tourism with segmented tourist clientele, are not even mentioned.

It is of tremendous importance for domestic tourist potential, especially for the development of culinary tourism, to know the requests, needs and preferences of foreign, as well as of domestic tourists. This could be seen as whole potential for development of tourism since there’s no tourist that doesn’t consume food in tourist facilities on one, and since it is a real chance for the development of culinary tourism on the other hand. One recent research carried out in Republic of Macedonia has shown that Macedonians are people that practice nutrition outside home, that is mostly in the restaurants, and they are doing that very frequently, several times in a week. If we want to look at the preferences and tastes of the foreign tourists concerning the food and nutrition, it’ll be enough to take a look at the Internet pages and forums, or to open the books of impressions in tourist facilities, or to simply ask the tourists what they like the most in Macedonia. They will promptly and unavoidably enumerate great food and wine as something that made immense and long-lasting impression.

Speaking about the development of culinary (gastronomy) and food tourism, Republic of Macedonia could take advantage of the following possibilities:

- Culinary (gastronomy) and food tourism could develop throughout the entire year, with special emphasis being given to the seasonal character of some fresh sorts of food (fruit and vegetable);
- Macedonian food and nutrition is very diversified in terms of the differences in climate from one place or region to other, as well as in terms of differences in food and nutrition conditioned by different ethnicities and confessions;
- Within the Republic of Macedonia, culinary (gastronomy) and food tourism can successfully develop together with rural, cultural, ethno and wine tourism;
- Macedonia possesses traditional hospitality and excellent chefs who know how to prepare traditional food that is especially wanted by foreign tourists;

- In many places, urban or rural, there are opportunities for developing different kinds of manifestational tourism related with food and nutrition, where tourist can also participate (preparation of food and beverages) on different types of fairs, festivals and so on.

#### 4. Conclusion

Food and nutrition are unavoidable aspect of human life. Concerning tourism, food and travel can be viewed as biological need, socio-cultural as well as tourist phenomenon. Globalization and postmodernism have influenced the development of international tourism considerably, not only in the extent, but also in variety of tourist offer and kinds of tourism. Thus, culinary (gastronomy) tourism and food tourism emerge as special interest tourisms which are developing fast and have its tourism clientele that considers food and nutrition as the most important or the only item of the tourist offer.

The Republic of Macedonia is also in the inception phase of development of tourism based on food and nutrition, although there is cultural and wine tourism that are real opportunity for tourist development as a whole.

#### References

- Bek U. (2001), *Rizično društvo*, Beograd: Filip Višnjić
- Герасимоски С. (2010), Културније вредносѝи и ризикой̄ во современой̄ ой̄шѝесѝво со ѝосебен осврѝи на македонској̄ ой̄шѝесѝво**, (unpublished doctoral thesis-from the author's archive): **Ској̄је**
- Емин И. (2007), Евлија Челеби за Македонија, Ској̄је: Слово**
- Caballero-Quijano C. (2002), *Cultural Tourism and Culinary Heritage*, in Proceedings of the First International Seminar on Culture: A Driving Force for Urban Tourism-Application of Experiences to Countries in Transition, Institute for International Relations, Zagreb, pp. 63-67
- Коцевски Ј. (2010), Социо-културни асѝекѝии на исхранаѝа надвор од домоѝи**, (unpublished doctoral thesis-from the author's archive): **Охрид**
- Shenoy S. S. (2005), *Food Tourism And The Culinary Tourist*, A Thesis Presented to the Graduate School of Clemson University
- Flannery J. et all. (2009), *National Tourism Development Strategy 2009 – 2013*, Government of the Republic of Macedonia, pp. 38-42; 49-51
- Halkier B. (2001), "Risk and food: environmental concerns and consumer practices", *International Journal of Food Science and Technology*, 2001, 36, p. 802
- Целакоски Н. (1997), Култураѝа и ѝуризмой̄, Охрид: Факулѝетѝ за ѝуризам и уѝосѝиѝелсѝво**
- Целакоски Н., Коруноски С. (1999), Културно наследсѝво, Книѝа ѝрва, Охрид: Факулѝетѝ за ѝуризам и уѝосѝиѝелсѝво, сс. 153-154**