

World Tourism Organization

UNWTO



FLAVOURS OF THE SILK ROAD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOOD, CULTURE & TOURISM GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD TOURISM BAKU- AZERBAIJAN, 6-7 SEPT 2012

CONCLUSIONS & HIGHLIGHTS

What is Food Tourism?

For many of the world's billions of tourists, gastronomy has become a central part of the tourism experience, whether they are returning to familiar destinations to enjoy tried and tested recipes or travelling further afield in search of new and special cuisine.

As we shift towards a more globalised world, consumers are increasingly seeking authentic experiences. Food is an essential expression of local culture and identity, and there remains significant potential for destinations along the Silk Road to enhance their tourism offering by focusing on promoting and enhancing their national cuisine.

Food tourism refers to an experiential trip to a gastronomic region which includes any tourism activity related to food, such as visits to food producers, gastronomic festivals, food fairs or farmers' markets.

Gastronomy in the tourism context includes a mix of products, services and activities that underline the uniqueness and tradition of a place, the typical products and recipes of a region and the talent and creativity of those who prepare them.

Products, being the basis of food tourism, should have a story and be linked with a region or culture.

Facts from the Silk Road:

Azerbaijan's destination marketing relies heavily on its strong gastronomic heritage, which dates back to ancient times. The use of fresh, local and organic products for the preparation of centuries-old recipes helps this destination keep traditions alive and ensures authenticity.

More info: tourism.az

Georgia has one of the oldest, continuous, unbroken traditions of wine making in the world dating back over 8,000 years. 35% of its international visitors now visit just to taste its food and wine. More info: georgia.travel

The Value of Food Tourism

Food tourism is a local phenomenon of universal scope that:

- Acts as a gateway into local culture, creativity and landscapes
- Comprises approximately 30% of tourist expenditure globally
- Has a positive impact on local economies, employment and heritage
- Creates unique opportunities for destination marketing and is a strategic element in defining the brand image of a destination, according to 88.2% of the respondents of UNWTO's *Global Report on Food Tourism* survey
- Can revitalize and diversify tourism by engaging many stakeholders and enhancing inter-sectorial cooperation



Turkish celebrity chef Musa Dagdeviren shares his expertise with local Azeri chefs at the 'Flavours of the Silk Road' Conference 2012

Enhancing Food Tourism Products and Experiences

Gastronomy is fast becoming a major influence on destination choice, and quality gastronomy produces a lasting memory for the tourist. Recommended actions for enhancing the quality of food tourism products and experiences include:

- Developing a competitive offering based on local identity and authenticity
- Protecting and recognizing local products through labeling and provenance
- Ensuring professionalism of human resources through the value chain and transferring food knowledge
- Guaranteeing food safety by supplying food without the incurrence of health hazards
- Linking products and regions through developing gastronomic touring routes
- Giving new life to individual destinations by developing markets, cooperatives, festivals, landmarks, or any events relating to gastronomy

Facts from the Silk Road:

In recognition of the importance and uniqueness of its national cuisine, rituals and etiquette, **Kazakhstan** has developed the 'Dastarkhan tour' - 'a gastronomic tour that takes in the best restaurants and wine-distilleries of the country. These tours also incorporate Kazakhstan's natural heritage, and tourists have the chance to learn traditional methods of cooking and fishing in lakes.

More info: visitkazakhstan.kz

Raising the Profile of Destination Brands through Food Tourism

Many destinations are now placing food tourism as a focus for their marketing strategies. Suggested actions for marketing and promoting food tourism include:

- Launching new models of public and private cooperation for promoting a strong and coherent image internationally
- Collaborating with chefs and local producers for the preservation of gastronomic knowledge and the promotion of the destination
- Taking a pro-active approach to image-building across all major channels of media, tourist guides, food blogs and social networks
- Developing food and beverage exports and a network of good quality restaurants abroad
- Being honest and accurate with marketing, to set realistic expectations. The level of a tourist's satisfaction with a destination depends largely on the product's performance compared to the tourist's expectations

Facts from the Silk Road:

The popularity of dramas and pop music in the **Republic of Korea** has led to growing interest in the country's food and Korea has grasped this opportunity by building a global image of its cuisine as being uniquely healthy and medicinal. Korea has produced a series of culinary guidebooks including a 'Michelin Red Guide Korea'. Korea has also bid to have *kimchi* UNESCO World Heritage listed.

More info: visitkorea.or.kr

Taking a Sustainable Approach

Strategies for developing food tourism should always be underpinned by sustainability principles and practices, including:

- Diminishing the food environmental footprint by using local and seasonal products
- Using socially responsible products and supporting small and local entrepreneurs
- Investing in agro-tourism initiatives that provide a unique opportunity for visitors to take part in local farming activities first-hand and gain an appreciation for the landscapes and biodiversity of the destination. Building agro-tourism initiatives through collaboration between tourism ministries, agriculture ministries, NGOs and local businesses helps inject investment back into local communities, sustainable tourism and agriculture practices.

Facts from the Silk Road:

Data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) shows that 900 million people worldwide are currently affected by chronic hunger. Most states of **Central Asia** have made progress in reducing the number of malnourished people however there is still much work to be done with regard to agricultural reforms. According to FAO, the empowerment of women in the agriculture sector would increase farm production, improve access to food and reduce the number of hungry people by 12-17 per cent.

More info: fao.org

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