

# GASTRONOMY AS A TOOL FOR REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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The theoretical basis of gastronomic tourism are reconsidered. The development of gastronomic tourism and the most popular tourist products in the Lubelskie Voivodeship and the Brest region are analyzed. Recommendations for the development of gastronomic tourism in Brest region based on the Polish experience are given.

**Keywords:** gastronomic tourism; traditional dishes; festival; route.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century more and more tourists are looking for new experiences. Today, travelers are becoming more sophisticated, have necessary resources to travel a lot and use tourism as a tool to escape from routine. When deciding to visit a destination and try its local food, tourists are searching for an experience when all their senses are engaged. And in this quest the gastronomic experience plays an increasingly prominent role. (UNWTO, 2012). Recent research has indicated that up to 40% of international travelers are motivated to some extent by gastronomy and food in their choice of destination (Getz, 2013).

In recent years, gastronomic tourism has been growing steadily and now it is one of the most dynamic and creative tourism sectors. However, studies on this type of tourism began to be conducted not so long ago.

The first definition of gastronomic tourism was provided by American researcher Long (1998) from University Bowling Green w Ohio. But as a new trend gastronomy tourism has been widely discussing since 2001, when Erik Wolf, founder and president of the International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA), now WFTA, introduced a document on food tourism.

There are a number of definitions that define this type of tourism. But all definitions are united by two aspects – food and drinks as a motive for visiting a place and the desire of a tourist to get impressions, to open the destination through food and cooking traditions.

However, the motive and desire of tourists to try food and drinks or to take part in the process can be different and allow to define several types of gastronomic tourism. Based on the motivations in relationship with gastronomy, Quan and Wang (2004) presented a conceptual model of the tourist experience in which the tourist, when gastronomy can be defined as a primary or secondary motivation. (Galvez et al., 2017).

As for types of tourist products the following can be offered to tourists (Orłowski & Woźniczko., 2015; UNWTO, 2011):

- Participation in presentations and tastings of traditional regional or national dishes;
- Visit to museums related to food and food traditions, and thematic exhibitions representing culinary heritage;
- Visiting of open-air museums, where objects related to food production are presented (mill, bakery, dairy farm, slaughterhouse), participation in folklore events on culinary themes;
- Visiting of tourist culinary routes;

- Visiting of famous restaurants where a famous chef works or unusual dishes are prepared;
- Participation in festivals, holidays, events and culinary contests which promote culinary heritage;
- Excursions to factories, where tourists can see the production process;
- Participation in gastronomy training and courses;
- Stays at farmsteads offering regional cuisine;
- Searching for specific ingredients of local, regional and national dishes that are a further inspiration to prepare previously known or to create new dishes in your own kitchen after returning from a culinary journey.

According to the information from gastronomic tourism organizations, affiliated members of UNWTO, attractions such as gastronomic routes, theme festivals, master classes, visits to food fairs and local markets are more popular among tourists; food museums and various presentations are less popular. (UNWTO, 2017).

For a more detailed study of gastronomic tourism as a tool for regional socio-economic development, the author chose the Lubelskie Voivodeship in Poland. For detailed analysis of gastronomic tourism development in Belarus the Brest region was chosen.

Bordering Ukraine and Belarus, Lubelskie Voivodeship is located in Eastern Poland. In the development of tourism, cuisine plays an important role as a kind of regional product.

According to the Report of the Lublin Regional Tourist Observatory of 2015, culinary tourism is one of the priority areas for tourism development in the region. This is due to the interest of tourists in local products and the fact that the Lublin Province stands out from other Polish regions due to its agricultural function shaped over the centuries. Food and agricultural products from this region are perceived as healthy, ecological and based on tradition. (Skowronek, 2019).

It is the local government of the voivodeship that was the first in Poland to notice and take action geared towards building the image and the recognition of culinary products originating in the region.

A lot of work is being done in the region to preserve and promote recipes of regional dishes. The Marshal Office of the Lubelskie Voivodeship is actively involved in this. A large number of books have been published describing the traditions and recipes of Lublin cuisine, catalogs of traditional products.

It needs to be pointed out that around 200 products and dishes (*Lublin cider*, *kartacze*, gallimaufry soup, *kutia*, *balabuchy* pie) have been entered into the List of Traditional Products kept by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and *cebularz lubelski* (Lublin onion cake) was registered as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) (Skowronek & Brzezińska-Wójcik & Stasiak, 2019).

Based on the regional gastronomic image and widespread dissemination of information about local cuisine, the author has analyzed tourist offers based on the gastronomic heritage: information was collected at tourist fairs, in tourist center in Lublin, and Google requests.

Most results on the Internet on the request about gastronomic tourism in Lubelskie Voivodeship were connected with restaurants, cafes operating in Lublin. According to tripadvisor.com, 105 restaurants in Lublin offer Polish cuisine. Most of them are specializing in European cuisine. However, there are interesting examples of including local dishes in the menu. For example, Trybunalska City Pub offers Lublin-style pizza in the shape of Lublin “cebularz”, with caramelized onions and poppy seeds.

However, there were also tourist offers from farmstead owners, which offered tastings of national dishes and master classes, master classes in cities which are popular among tourists (Nalenczow, Kazimierz Dolny).

One of the examples is a farmstead "Pod Jabłonią" (<https://www.podjablonia.pl/>). In "Pod Jabłonią" you can try regional specialties that have received the Local Product Certificate. The hostess is a member of the Regional Association for Renewal and Development "WokółBystrej". The hostess's original recipe is 'CelejowskieTalarki'. On the farm, you can also try certified local products, i.e.

The most famous culinary event in the Lubelskie Voivodeship is the European Festival of Taste. European Festival of Taste it is currently the largest event of this type in Poland. It is organized by the KresowaAkademiaSmaku Association. The festival takes place from 4 to 9 days at different places in the center of Lublin. The Festival focuses on multiculturalism and the culinary heritage of the Lublin region. Workshops, lectures, lectures and concerts of well-known and popular music bands are available (10th European Festival of Taste, 2018). The Festival has the Taste Zone where many restaurateurs and craftsmen from all over the world offer their products: sausages, cheeses, fruit products, bread, spices, wines, liqueurs, shashliks and many others. About 100,000 people visit the festival every year (lublin112, 2019).

Each year, the festival presents a new theme related to cuisines of different nationalities. In past years, these were Italy, Lithuania, Armenia, etc.

The festival has its own website <https://europejskifestiwalsmaku.pl/> in Polish. It is very modern and contains not only the festival program, but also other information about dishes, history, performers and etc. The festival also has webpages in social media networks and is usually good promoted in Poland media.

Another gastronomic tourism product is culinary trail „Tail of Tastes of the The Land of Loess Gorges” (SzlakSmakówKrainyLessowychWąwozów), which is in the western part of the Lublin region. The trail stretches from Puławy through Kazimierz Dolny, Nałęczów and Poniatowa to Opole Lubelski.

The trail was created in 2008 and controlled by Local Tourist Organization "Land of Loess Gorges". It is the member of the "Polish Culinary Routes" Product Consortium, which was initiated by the Polish Tourist Organization (KrainaLessowychWąwozów, 2016; MetryczkaSzlakuKulinarnego)

The offer of the "Trail of Tastes of the Land of Loess Gorges" is related to the regional culinary heritage, traditions related to the way dishes are served, and unique recipes. The trail unites various objects: hotels, spa resort, restaurant, tavern, cafe, farmstead, vineyard and food producers. They have unique offers: interestingly served fish and meat, eat, kluskii pierogi (type of dumplings), kajmak, tinctures, local wine, ammonia cookies and rose jam. (<https://www.polska.travel/>) According to information on the official website 9 objects work on the trail.

The website is the main promotion tool of the trail. The trail is also promoted through tastings during promotional events (tourist fairs, events organized in the land of Loess Gorges). Information about the trail in Polish can be easily found on the Internet.

But there are also some negative moments. For example, on the Internet there is no information about the trail in foreign languages. It is also difficult to find the information about this tourist product in social media, while today it is very perspective promotion tool.

The third example of tourist product can be Restaurant and Hotel Owner's Cluster. The cluster was founded in 2006 in the frame of the project "Restaurant owner's cluster, a pillar promotion of the Lubelszczyzna region" and coordinated by Amelia Scibior, the director of the Association "Restaurant and Hotel Owner's Cluster".

The cluster's activity focuses on the education and promotion of the gastronomy and hotel sector and on popularizing the knowledge regarding Lubelskie Voivodeship cuisine. (PolskaAgencjaRozwojuPrzedsiębiorczości, 2011). The cluster consists of 74 members, among them are 35 hotels, 30 organizations that provide catering services (restaurants, cafes, bars, etc.) and 9 product suppliers from all Lubelskie Voivodeship.

Cluster does not act as a tourist product, but acts as managing organization that helps to its members in promotion and participate actively in preserving and promotion of regional culinary heritage.

Brest region is one of the most popular tourist areas in Belarus. The reasons for that are common borders with Poland and Ukraine, Bialowiezha Forest from UNESCO Heritage List, the Brest Fortress, visa-free entry for foreign tourists to some districts of the region.

To attract tourists to the visa-free zone in the Brest region, much attention is paid to the development of various types of tourism - excursion, environmental, health, business, etc. Also, the local authorities of the Brest region in the media are now actively declaring the development of gastronomic tourism.

Gastronomic trips include tasting local dishes, products or participating in the cooking process. Belarusian cuisine has its own unique dishes and products, cooking methods which can be different in the south and north of the country.

Although the Brest region is located in a unique region - Polesie, which is rich in traditions and culinary heritage, the gastronomic image of the region is still not clear. The information about dishes and products specific to this territory is not wide spread; these dishes are not widely cooked in local restaurants.

The regional center Brest is the most visited place in the region by tourists. There is the list of restaurants specialized in Belarusian cuisine on the website of Brest Regional Executive Committee, among them 5 restaurants in Brest (<http://brest-region.gov.by>). But only about one of them information in foreign language is available. There is also no information center in the city where any tourist can get information including information about restaurants with national cuisine. Therefore, when visiting a city, a tourist who wants to try local cuisine is faced the problem of trying Belarusian cuisine.

Gastronomic tourism in Brest region is closely connected with agroecotourism. Farmsteads offer the majority of services and entertainment related to gastronomy. In 2018, 310 farmsteads are operated in Brest region. Almost all of them are offering catering, but 17 of them specialize in the gastronomic topic according to the list of services on the most visited farmstead catalogs ([gastinia.by](http://gastinia.by), [belkraj.by](http://belkraj.by)).

Based on objects' location, three centers of gastronomic tourism can be distinguished. These centers can be recognized by three tourism products of various types - gastronomic festival in Motol, the culinary route "VodardBelavezhzha" and the tourist cluster "MukhavetskaKumora".

Motol is considered the culinary capital of Brest region and was founded in 1422. This place was of the most flourishing settlements in Polesie in the 16th century. Motol is also known for its casings and weaving and local sausages. The village can be considered an example of the effective development

of business initiative, 20 private unitary enterprises and about 70 individual entrepreneurs successfully work.

Among tourists products based on gastronomic heritage there is Motol art museum where different interactive programs are offered for visitors. The museum is also known for its ceremony “Wedding loaf” which is candidate for UNESCO Intangible Heritage List.

But the most popular Motol tourist product is festival “Motolskieprysmaki” (Motol delicacies). It is the first international culinary festival conducted since 2008 once every two years. The festival goal is revision and popularization of Belarusian cuisine, development and strengthening of international cooperation. Organizers are Ivanovo Regional Executive Committee and Motol rural council. The festival gives an opportunity to get acquainted with the unique Polesie culinary traditions, taste famous Motol sausages, pies and dishes. Old games, folk rites and performances are also organized. Foreign delegations often come to participate in the festival. For example, representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia and Afrika came to the festival to introduce their cuisine in 2019.

But despite the 11-year experience (in 2019 it was the 10<sup>th</sup> festival) event potential is not realized fully. Despite the fact that festival became popular as culinary festival, in the last festival program the half of events were not connected with food. At the same time most festival visitors note that the culinary events were well organized. There were many dishes presented, the tourist could know the recipe of each presented dish. But because of a big number of non-gastronomic events, the culinary part became less noticeable. And unique festival began to turn into one of many folk festivals in the country.

Among negative aspects of the festival, visitors also named lack of photo zones, difficulties in buying products because of crowds, a small number of points for sale of local products, etc (Павловский, 2019; Сулова, 2019).

There are also problems in promoting the festival on the Internet. The festival does not have its own site, there is a small group “Motalskiyaprysmaki” in VKontakte, information about the festival is published on the museum’s Facebook page, but these pages are not active enough. Information about the festival with the program and useful information for tourists is often published during one week before the event (Гетман, 2019). Information can be found on the Internet, but there is no PR campaign that would help to attract more tourists

It is possible to conclude that the festival is undoubtedly a very atmospheric event, and attracts with its soulfulness and authenticity. However, taking into consideration the level of competition today and increasing demands of tourists it is not known how long this atmosphere without a well-thought-out image and PR campaign can be main motive for the arrival of tourists.

Another successful example of the using gastronomic heritage are the programs of the “MukhovetskaKumora” in Kobrin and Zhabinka districts. The cluster was created in November 2012 in the frame of the USAID / UNDP project “Local Entrepreneurship and Economic Development” (kumora.by). Now “MuhovetskaKumora” is one of the most popular tourist clusters in Belarus, which participates in tourism fairs and organizes various events, provides tourist programs for groups of tourists from 20 to 50 people. At the moment, the cluster consists of about 25 members, among them are farmstead owners, as well as tourist centers, craftsmen, historical reconstruction, folk groups, media representatives and other active people.

According to the information on the cluster’s website [www.kumora.by](http://www.kumora.by) many farmsteads provide catering services (Polesie cuisine), organization of culinary master classes and traditional folk festivals,

etc. The cluster has agreements with 16 tour operators from Belarus and neighboring countries. Most travel agencies during the organization of programs in the Brest region organize catering in farmsteads.

The cluster has its own website in Russian, actively promotes its programs through foreign tourist fairs. In fact, only it is the only cluster, which offers gastronomic programs on foreign exhibitions.

The website [www.kumora.by](http://www.kumora.by) is the main source of information about tourist programs. However, based on the analysis of the cluster activity and its site, it is more focused on groups of tourists than individual tourists. On the Internet it is almost impossible to find a detailed description of the gastronomic programs, prices, as well as its description in foreign languages. On the website a tourist can find only general information and photos from the workshops, but it is not known in which farmsteads they are held. Also, not all cluster members are marked on the website map and it is difficult to count all cluster members. There is also no separation of cluster members by the types of services they provide. All these aspects can create difficulties in attracting foreign and individual tourists.

The third example of gastronomic tourist product in Brest region is herbal tourist route "VodarBelavezha". The route unites 7 farmsteads located close to Bialovezha forest (farmsteads «Uglyany», «Medovaya», «TikhayaZavod'», «Kalinka-2», «Pol'skiymayontak», «Lesnaya» i «Mlynok»). There tourists can try different types of teas, honey and local dishes.

The route was created in 2017 as part of the large project "Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus," implemented by the UN Development Program and funded by the EU. The strong side of the route is the variety of services: tourists can watch birds in Uglyany, taste ecological products and honey in GoliyBorok, learn the secrets of Pushcha herbs and try to be a blacksmith in Belaya, as well as visit the farmstead in Mlynok and discover the secrets of water and cycling (Суслова, 2019).

The logo and promotional video was developed for the route as well as press tour was held. However, after the official presentation in July 2017, the route is not actively promoted and the participants of the route prefer individual promotion.

Tourist products based on gastronomic heritage from both countries have great potential and may be interesting for tourists, both local and foreign. However, the Polish experience demonstrates that for the continuous product development, control and support (both organizational and financial) from the local authorities' side is necessary. Also, a formed database of regional dishes plays a big role in increasing the number of gastronomic tourist offers and its development. In both countries there is a big number of restaurants, farmsteads, museums, etc. And such a base can help diversify the tourist offer of these objects and make them more attractive for tourists. It should also be noted that activities made by local tourist organizations and other organizations (for ex. LokalnaGrupaDziałania) make a great contribution to the promotion of tourism products and the maintenance of their activities.

As for the promotion of gastronomic tourist products, both territories have their own problems. For example, Lubelskie Voivodeship advertises its tourism products among foreign tourists rather weakly. But at the same time, Polish tourists can easily find information about these products on travel websites. And this is possible to great extent again thanks to the local authorities and tourism organizations that work on organizing information. Tourist objects offering services for example, routes and clusters members do not advertise themselves so actively. But they also show some kind of activity constantly.

In this regard, for the development of gastronomic tourism in Brest region, it is recommended to conduct a study of culinary traditions in Belarus to create a list similar to the List of Traditional Products. It is also recommended to strengthen the work of local authorities.

While in Poland local tourism organizations and local authorities play a large role in tourist products promotion. There are no branches of the National Tourism Agency in Belarus, such as local departments of Polish Tourist Organization, therefore the coordination functions and marketing activities belong only to local authorities. In Brest Oblast, it is the Department of Sport and Tourism of the Brest Regional Executive Committee.

This Department has strong links with the tourism departments of local authorities, which are usually well aware of the situation in their area. Therefore, the author recommends, with the help of local departments, to analyze existing offers based on culinary heritage. And collected information can be used to promote all tourist offers, at least through the regional resources.

For example, the regional tourism portals <https://bresttravel.by/> or <https://bezvizbrest.by/> can be used. These websites have high positions in search engines (eg Google).

The Department also publishes brochures on tourism products in Brest region. Therefore, it is also recommended to produce printed maps, small brochures for their distribution at tourist exhibitions, in accommodation facilities, museums, etc.

As for public events, such as gastronomic festivals, competitions in rural areas, local authorities are most often the main organizers. So it is recommended to pay more attention to the announcement of the event on thematic and information portals and on social networks. Moreover, advertisements should be in foreign languages, as visiting such events may be interesting for foreign tourists.

When it comes to creating new culinary products, it is proposed to conduct research to find unique dishes or products in each region and create a tourist offer based on them. It is also proposed to use existing brands in some places (strawberries, cranberries, bread).

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