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## **Catalogue of Good Practices of Sustainable Culinary Heritage Experiences in Mediterranean Area**

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DITHEKET - Troodos, Network Thematic Centres (Cyprus)

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## INTRODUCTION

### **MEDFEST project – concepts and objectives**

MEDFEST is tackling the challenge of diversifying traditional “sun & sea” tourist destinations with new and sustainable products based on rich and renowned culinary heritage of the Mediterranean area. Despite the potentials of Mediterranean culinary heritage there have been no transnational Mediterranean projects linking culinary heritage and sustainable local development. Culinary heritage initiatives are scattered across different initiatives in the Mediterranean area and are unconnected at policy or market levels. There are few studies, unrelated local/regional strategies, and no common principles of integrating culinary heritage and its producers into sustainable development in the Mediterranean area. Furthermore, there are no existing common practices in the Mediterranean area for integrating culinary heritage practices into sustainable tourism, although potentials and advantages of its gastronomy and culture are high and numerous. The Mediterranean area is rich with long and diverse culinary traditions that embody its rich cultural heritage. This is evident as the Mediterranean diet was added to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013. Thus, MEDFEST objectives are to create tools and instruments for designing new sustainable culinary experiences, which will be offered to visitors to:

- diversify the tourism sector in terms of products and its seasonality
- bring tourism development to the coastal hinterland, which will enhance community prosperity/quality of life
- safeguard the culinary heritage for future generations

To achieve these objectives, the MEDFEST team has produced several outputs, among which *The Catalogue of Good Practices of Sustainable Culinary Heritage Experiences in Mediterranean Area* plays a key role for providing examples and a “recipe” for integrating diverse culinary heritage practices into sustainable tourism products.

### **The Catalogue of Good Practices of Sustainable Culinary Heritage Experiences in Mediterranean Area**

One of the first steps was to gain precious insight into culinary heritage as a resource of developing sustainable tourism destinations. In doing so the MEDFEST project team performed a study which revealed:

- WHAT are sustainable culinary heritage experiences
- WHERE are they located
- HOW and WHY are they successful in promoting sustainable development

We collected and analysed 92 sustainable culinary heritage experiences in the Mediterranean area which can be found at <http://www.ub.edu/medfest/>. This selection was made based on four topics and several criteria set up at the beginning of the project (*d.3.2.1 set of criteria*):

- content of the experience
- organization / governance of the experience
- local / territorial anchoring of the experience
- embedding of the experience in local or regional strategies / policies

During the second project meeting in Barcelona in May 2017, 18 sustainable culinary heritage experiences in the Mediterranean area were recognized and chosen as good practices and are presented in this catalogue. These practices, covering various types of culinary experiences,

were further analysed through field visits and an in-depth analysis, where most pieces of information were obtained in semi-structured interviews with holders and their stakeholders. Good practices revealed how culinary experiences work, who is involved, and what “ingredients” make them successful.

The MEDFEST project team would like to share knowledge on sustainable culinary heritage experiences in the Mediterranean area with you, dear reader. In the following pages you will find the 18 selected good culinary practices with detailed explanation of several factors influencing successful Mediterranean culinary experiences. They are categorized within several types of sustainable culinary heritage experience:

- tourist sites network dedicated to food or culinary products
- service connected to food products
- professional activity linked to food highlighted through a tourist activity
- culinary event
- specific tourist site dedicated to food or culinary products

Each culinary experience is described through a story in which you will find valuable information on:

- local (territorial) anchoring and relationship to heritage
- organising and managing aspects
- relation to existing policies and strategies
- sustainability aspects
- innovative aspects
- monitoring
- stakeholders’ views

The MEDFEST project team wishes you an enjoyable reading of the inspirational stories behind good practices of sustainable culinary heritage experiences in the Mediterranean area!

**TYPE 1**

**TOURIST SITES NETWORK DEDICATED TO FOOD OR CULINARY PRODUCTS**

## BRKINI FRUIT ROUTE FESTIVAL



A view of the Brkini landscape with apple trees in the foreground (image credit: Miha Pavšek)

*Brkini is a region in Slovenia, well known for its premium fruit production and rich tradition in fruit growing. The first records of fruit growing in Brkini date back to the 18th century. Brkini fruit growers have formed the Brkini Fruit Growers' Society, to be a voice for growers. The society paved the Brkini Fruit Route and designed The Brkini Fruit Route Festival. The culinary activities at the festival combine catering services, visit of fruit-growing farms, events featuring Brkini delicacies, and workshops for housewives, families with children, and caterers. The festival promotes networking, knowledge exchange and collaboration between fruit growers, family farms, associations, service providers, festival organisers, tourist workers and public institutions. It aims to lend a dimension of sustainable tourism to the traditional agricultural activities and to become a way of presenting and transferring local knowledge and tradition to younger generations. This culinary-based festival takes place from late September until end of October and features also cultural and sports events.*

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### Introduction

Brkini is a Slovenian region, famous mostly for its premium fruit production. Its climate, favourable for fruit growing, is affected considerably by its location in a hilly landscape, right at the divide between the Mediterranean and Continental parts of Slovenia. The beginnings of fruit-growing date back to the 18th and 19th centuries. Along with its orchard groves Brkini is particularly characterised by meadow orchards extending on terraced hills, which together paint the characteristic Brkini landscape. Nowadays Brkini fruit growers are connected by and within the Brkini Fruit Growers' Society, and together they paved the Brkini Fruit Road. About 100 fruit growers have planted a total of 120 ha of apple, pear, plum, hazelnut, sour cherry, and cherry orchards. They are also renowned for their production of various brandies, juices, vinegars, and dried fruit. The Brkini Fruit Road Festival is the central festival of the Brkini Fruit Road as well as the broader Brkini region. The Festival takes place from late September to the end October and includes many cultural, sports, and culinary events and workshops. It also includes tourist and fruit farms, which offer many typical homemade dishes and let you to try your own hand in picking fruit.



*Photo 1: Typical view from a village in Brkini (image credit: Miha Pavšek)*

	<p>The festival was the result of a joint organisation by the municipalities of Divača, Hrpelje-Kozina, Pivka, and Ilirska Bistrica, the Brkini Fruit Growers' Society, the Society for Development of Rural Areas between Snežnik and Nanos, the Nova Gorica Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Sežana Regional Chamber of Craft and Small Business.</p>
<p><b>Culinary experience</b></p>	<p>The Festival offers a combination of catering services, activities on fruit-growing farms, events featuring Brkini delicacies, and workshops for housewives, children (families), and caterers.</p> <p>The organisation starts off with the meeting of organisers from all Brkini municipalities and professionals from the Institute of Agriculture and Forestry, who draw up the festival's course of events. Then they also include service providers and fruit farms and organise workshops. The festival aims to raise awareness among Brkini inhabitants about the significance of networking, while familiarizing visitors with the Brkini Fruit Road as well.</p> <p>The festival's organisation was first initiated at a meeting of caterers and service providers in the Municipality of Hrpelje-Kozina, who are only just becoming aware of the importance of such connections. From there onwards, the following year the idea about the festival spread to the municipalities of Divača, Pivka, and Ilirska Bistrica. Festival coordinators then sought the cooperation of local service providers, fruit growers, tourist farms, and associations.</p> <p>Making connections and promoting a common narrative are among the reasons for holding the festival, which have stayed the same since the beginning and are gaining in importance.</p> <p>The festival promotes networking, knowledge, and collaboration of providers, tourist workers, public institutions, thus lending a tourist dimension to the traditionally agricultural activities. It provides a concrete way of establishing contacts, which many stakeholders relate to. They want to particularly involve fruit-growing family farms and develop their tourist potentials.</p> <p>The coordinators' main motivation is to present the potentials and unique characteristics of Brkini at a broader scale, as they believe that the region deserves more attention and visibility.</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>The first records of fruit-growing in Brkini date back to the 18th century. This means that these lands boast a rich tradition in fruit growing, which left an indelible mark on the landscape. Festival organizers are well aware of this and strive to develop sustainable tourism, as well as search for new ways of presenting and transferring knowledge and tradition to younger generations. The Brkini natural and cultural</p> <div data-bbox="895 1503 1497 1951" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><i>Photo 2: Apple trees are an important part of the rural landscape in Brkini. In the background is the village of Ostrožno Brdo (image credit: Miha Pavšek)</i></p>

	<p>heritage thus complements or underlies the festival's activities (e.g. including visits to the Dimnice cave and the church with Tone Kralj's frescoes in the events under the Plum Festival, workshops, and cultural events).</p> <p>Due to the Festival's lack of a long tradition, the organisers as well as service providers work hard to present their services and products, which they promote through common promotional material.</p>
<b>Organising and managing experience</b>	<p>The festival's driving force is fruit-growing farms, particularly family farms, i.e. families that, in fact, live off the farm and its activities. The festival coordinator started to connect stakeholders and invited them to an introductory lecture, where the idea underlying the festival was presented. Interested parties were first sought among the members of the Brkini Fruit Growers' Society, who were motivated primarily by the common, free promotion of their activities. Farmers gladly accepted this idea, but not without scepticism; nevertheless, they are aware of the significance of connections and common market appearance. Indeed, as the festival is still gaining traction and renown, the level of participants' trust in the festival's efficacy is the biggest obstacle; we are facing this challenge bravely. In the future they plan to apply for funds that will allow farmers to formulate a new tourist product to be launched on the market.</p>
<b>Policy and strategies</b>	<p>The festival has no underlying special strategies or policy documents, there is also no particular support by the Slovenian Tourist Organisation or other state institutions. Each year the participants sign cooperation agreements. Thus the festival entirely depends on the local community, while it also contributes to the local development of the region. Regional tourist development is mainly in the interest of the municipalities in the region, so the main organizers are local tourist information centres, while the Municipality of Hrpelje-Kozina, which was the first to begin forging these connections, is the main coordinator of all stakeholders.</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>The Brkini Fruit Road connects four municipalities and joins, under the Festival, events and service providers from all four local communities. The Festival includes the Winter Savory Festival, Chestnut Picnic, Plum Festival, Farmers' Market, Flavours of Pivka Lakes, Running through the Dimnice Cave, the Vremška Dolina Valley Hike, and Mushroom Festival. Organisers are trying to take a sustainable approach to the festival. Thus they encourage the development of the local economy and the innovation of service providers, and strive to conserve the traditional landscape. They are also in the process of developing tourist products, which are not yet included into tourist packages.</p>
<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>Innovation is among the main considerations of the Brkini Fruit Road. Organisers are trying to include local specificities and products and present them in an innovative way. Festival events offer "new types of activities", such as family experiences on fruit-growing farms, taking part in farm work, apple picking, workshops on how to make products from herbs, cooking workshops, special children's workshops, and more. Such approaches are used to attract those visitors searching for something new. In the future they want to further develop this approach and build on the festival's visibility.</p>

<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The Brkini Fruit Road Festival is only starting to emerge on the Brkini tourist map. The Festival's performance is thus measured through increased visitor turnout, as well as in the level of trust and interest of local service providers. This is the biggest obstacle, which they are working hard to overcome, sparing no elbow grease. They are trying to involve both high-quality providers as well as new guests, who will gladly keep coming back to the region, so great effort is being devoted to promotional activities. This is also the main motive of everyone involved, as common promotion could significantly contribute to respecting visitors' wishes and thus building a special tourist experience.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Tine Babuder, Turistično društvo Dimnice Slivje tourist society (Plum Festival)</i></b></p> <p>The society's involvement started at the initiative of the Municipality of Hrpelje-Kozina, with which they have a good track record of cooperation. They decided to take part as their festival, the Plum Festival, and village are united by the theme of fruit. The village of Slivje (famous for its plums, 'sliva' is Slovene for 'plum') also boasts its share of fruit growers (plums, apples, pears, etc.) and products (jams, juices, dried apples, etc.). Under the Festival, they hold workshops on making plum dumplings and the Plum Festival, which helps to promote the society and the village, and bring more visitors to Slivje.</p> <p><b><i>Iztok Race, Tourist farm Pri Friščevih</i></b></p> <p>Organisers also sought the involvement of various stakeholders. Their main motivation for getting involved in creating the Brkini Fruit Road Festival is the free promotion of their activities. They are a spot, i.e. a station, on the Brkini Fruit Road (also outside Festival dates), where visitors can spend a night, have lunch, or buy homemade products (teas, jams, canned vegetables, syrups, etc.).</p> <p>Every year the stakeholders sign cooperation agreements, while they are not committed to adhere to any political documents or strategies. Also, neither the national tourist organisation nor the ministry is involved in the organisation. The festival's overall organisation is the brainchild of four municipalities, Hrpelje-Kozina, Divača, Ilirska Bistrica, and Pivka, while the festival is coordinated by TIC Hrpelje-Kozina. The municipalities themselves take care (financially) of the Festival's promotion and organisation.</p> <p>The festival boosts networking between service providers and their joint market activities, contributing to the preservation and development of the local economy. The Festival also considerably affects the development of regional tourist services. Their goal for the future is to continue working on the visibility of the Brkini Fruit Road and its Festival, as well as developing a new tourist product.</p>

Written by: Manca Volk Bahun

## FESTIVOL



People at Mazzini square in Trevi during FESTIVOL (image credit: Andrea Luccioli)

*Umbrian towns of Trevi, Spello, Assisi, Foligno, Giano dell'Umbria, Campello sul Clitunno and many others are part of the network of Frantoi Aperti which organizes events to promote locally produced olive oil and tourism in rural villages. The municipality of Trevi teamed up with local Associations of olive oil and black celery producers to establish FESTIVOL as part of Frantoi Aperti events. The festival is focused on DOP certified olive oil and black celery produce. Since olive oil is not a culinary product that can stand alone, its pairing with other products is mandatory. The best way to eat black celery is in "pinzimonio" by dipping it in extra virgin olive oil. Hence the combination of these two products is represented at FESTIVOL. The main objectives of the event are to attract visitors during low tourist season, to strengthen the local cooperation, with the involvement of volunteers and local associations, and to get important recognition, e.g. the DOP certification for the black celery. The cooperation had led to other types of joint initiatives focused on local produce, local identity and tradition. FESTIVOL is more than a culinary event and is seen by the organizers and by the involved stakeholders foremost as a cultural event. The cultural value of local olive oil is shown and reinforced through lectures on healthy diet, production techniques and traditions related to olive oil. During FESTIVOL, workshops, seminars and other kinds of activities are organized to increase the awareness level of visitors about the added value of these products. Participants can learn how to use extra virgin olive oil and black celery in local recipes.*

### Contact

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### Introduction

Frantoi Aperti in Umbria is a regional event network organized by the Association Strada dell'Olio e.v. di Oliva Dop Umbria that promotes the production of DOP extra virgin olive oil and tourism in rural villages (where the mills that participate at the event are located). In 2017 Frantoi Aperti reached its XX edition. Many Umbrian towns (Trevi, Spello, Assisi, Foligno, Giano dell'Umbria, Campello sul Clitunno and others) organize, throughout October and November, an event focused on olive oil with the aim of promoting this local agricultural resource (sometimes combined with other products) and the tourism attractors present in their community. In the case of FESTIVOL it is the combination of DOP olive oil with black celery.

### Culinary experience

FESTIVOL, which in 2016 reached its 10th edition, joined Frantoi Aperti after its creation. The format was developed through a bottom up approach under the initiative of the municipality together with the local Associations of olive oil and black celery producers (and also based on the experience developed

with the local feast dedicated to black celery, which reached its 52nd edition). The combination and consequent valorisation of two local products is due to the fact that olive oil is not a culinary product that can stand alone (such as wine, for example). Olive oil is a condiment and for this reason, its pairing with other products is mandatory. On the same level, the best way to eat black celery is in “pinzimonio” by dipping it in extra virgin olive oil. Hence the combination of these two products, which are the ones that best represent Trevi. The goal of the event has not changed over time: attracting tourists during the low season is still the main objective of the



*Photo 1: A round table about healthy properties of extra virgin olive oil (image credit: Andrea Luccioli)*

event (olives are collected in October and November, while black celery naturally grows in October only). But an important effort is continuously aimed at improving the quality of the event: in particular, through the strengthening of local cooperation, with the involvement of volunteers and local associations (which work, for example, to safeguard the town’s medieval historical traditions l’ente Palio dei Terzieri, il Piano, il Castello and il Matiggia), but also to get important recognition (such as the DOP certification for the black celery). The cooperation established a shared vision with local stakeholders about the goals to be reached for the territory allowing the creation of other joint initiatives such as Pic&Nic (which still focuses on olive oil, local identity, and traditions).

**Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage**

There is a very close connection between the production of extra virgin olive oil and black celery in terms of cultural heritage, local economic activities, and the organized event. During FESTIVOL, workshops, seminars and other kinds of activities are organized to increase the awareness level of visitors (the majority of whom are not from Umbria) about the added value of these products. The cultural value of local olive oil, which is the focus of the event, is shown and reinforced with a variety of topics/aspects: healthy diet, the production techniques (especially the proper balance between innovation and tradition), and also the preservation of the local landscape. Rather than merely a culinary event, FESTIVOL is seen (by the organizers and by the involved stakeholders) as a cultural event. The valorisation of local landscape has a relevant role for the Trevi municipality in the promoted events (it has been already inserted in the National Registry of Rural Historic Landscapes managed by the Italian Agricultural Ministry and will apply to be recognized as UNESCO World Heritage).

During FESTIVOL local lifestyle is widely appreciated and valorised. Participants can learn about and experience (taste) how to use extra virgin olive oil and black celery, local recipes are prepared by all local restaurants and traditions are explained and (when possible) recreated.

Families with children (interested in sustainable vacations and healthy lifestyles) can be considered the target group of the event (which foresees educational and fun activities for kids).

	<p>There are two main obstacles to overcome: the insufficient economic resources for the organization of the event and the perception that DOP extra virgin olive oil is too expensive. To deal with the first one, an important action to involve volunteers (citizens of Trevi, mostly young people) during the organization of the event has been made by the organizer. Thanks to the participation of volunteers, it has been possible to successfully continue the event. With reference to the price of DOP extra virgin olive oil, much has been done to explain the reasons for the price: the difficulty comes from the fact that it is not simple to taste the difference between high quality and just average quality olive oil. Therefore, the challenge resides in increasing the knowledge level of consumers about the benefit for people's health coming from the consumption of high quality products. An important effort is constantly made by the organizer and local associations of producers to better communicate these aspects. It is for this reason that, since the very beginning, when the event was planned and developed, communication and marketing experts and actors with experience in the valorisation of local cultural heritage (especially the local organization Pro Trevi) have been involved in the planning of FESTIVOL.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>Cooperation between the Trevi municipality and the involved local stakeholders is formalized every year with a memorandum of understanding. For the Association of Olive Oil Producers, the main benefit is not the direct sale of their products during the event. Their main benefit is the increased level of awareness of people about the value of the DOP extra virgin olive oil: this means spreading the culture of extra virgin olive oil to have this product seen as a sound investment for consumers' health and lifestyle. Without olive oil producers there would be no event: several mills are directly involved in the event to allow the tasting and spreading of correct information and knowledge. For the Association of Black Celery Producers, the most important advantage produced by the event is in the widespread recognition of the uniqueness of this kind of agricultural product and its value for the municipality also as cultural heritage. Especially important is the valorisation of the area where the black celery is cultivated, known as "canapine" (lands near the Clitunno river). This area is clay-rich and in the past it was used for the cultivation of hemp. The land gives this product unique organoleptic features which are explained, together with the agricultural practices used, to people during the event. The valorisation of this agricultural product is the main benefit while the diversification of the activities ("things to do" for visitors) during FESTIVOL is the main contribution given by the producers. Another added value is the demonstration of the authenticity of agricultural practices and techniques, which preserve a link with the local tradition. An important stakeholder involved is Pro Trevi. The</p> <div data-bbox="933 1066 1485 1453" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><i>Photo 2: Extra virgin olive oil ready for testing (image credit: Andrea Luccioli)</i></p>

	<p>only benefit for this Association is that thanks to FESTIVOL (and to other fairs, events, and so on) it can fulfil its mission of contributing to municipality's tourism promotion. Pro Trevi is actively involved in the organization of the event: it contributes various kinds of organizational needs (such as by being responsible for the tasting of bread with oil) and with the volunteer work of its members.</p> <p>The success of an event similar to FESTIVOL (which can also be considered as advice given to someone who would like to start a similar event) is in the creation of a format through a participative method. The local community (producers, owners of small shops and restaurants but also citizens with their active involvement) is the main protagonist of this kind of an event: extra virgin olive oil and black celery become attractive resources to the eyes of visitors by seeing their use and effect in the lives of the local residents. And, of course, planning, a solid budget (to fulfil the never-ending communication needs) is necessary from the very beginning.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>FESTIVOL is in line with the strategies implemented by Umbria Region for rural and tourism development and for the promotion of food and wine products. Every year the municipality participates in the regional call (financed by the Regional Rural Development Plan) to organize the event. Without this financing FESTIVOL would not take place. There are institutional agreements with Umbria Region and several patronages by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, by the Ministry of Agriculture. Especially in 2017 there was a strong synergy with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage since the year was dedicated to the promotion of villages. Partnerships are established with the National Association Città dell'Olio and with Borghi più Belli d'Italia (the former being the association that promotes the municipalities where extra virgin olive oil is produced and the latter the one that valorises the most beautiful ones). FESTIVOL attracts tourists in Umbria during low season and has positive effects on the realization of high quality (Slow Food Presidium) typical products twinning with different Italian regions. This action is accomplished to promote the combination of extra virgin olive oil with other products and to enhance the network of agro-food cultivations that preserve biodiversity and local authenticity. FESTIVOL is promoted by the network of Frantoi Aperti (also through the sale of tourism packages), thanks to dedicated communication campaigns through traditional and new media (especially apps). The use of the new media is a mandatory condition in the new calls (launched by Umbria Region) aimed at financing this kind of an event. However, there is still space for improving cooperation with local travel agencies to increase the sale of tourism packages focused on the event. It is relevant to mention that Trevi achieved the EMAS certification, a volunteer process that aims at rationalizing and improving the management of the environmental aspects the municipality is responsible for.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>The concept of sustainability is part of FESTIVOL's format. Environmental sustainability is ensured by using only recyclable and/or reusable utensils. Recycling is implemented, and only recycled paper is used to print the necessary promotion materials. Moreover, thanks to the attention paid to the olive groves (also through Pic&amp;Nic) active actions aimed at promoting</p>

	<p>and safeguarding the local (and unique) landscape are successfully accomplished.</p> <p>Economic sustainability is also a key aspect, since tourism packages (especially targeting families in neighbouring regions such as Marche, Tuscany and Lazio) are created and promoted through Frantoi Aperti.</p> <p>Based on the active involvement of young volunteers a constant exchange of experience and knowledge with older generation is ensured. This exchange positively contributes to the continuity of the event and the preservation of its value for the local community.</p> <p>Finally, the sustainability of FESTIVOL is also facilitated by the fact that it takes place at the end of October, which is a month of intense celebration (Ottobre trevano) when different events take place in the territory. FESTIVOL takes advantage of the local cooperation and synergies already activated with local stakeholders.</p>
<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>The most innovative aspect of the event is the combination of the promotion of agricultural local products with the cultural valorisation of Trevi as a local community with unique history and traditions. During FESTIVOL private historical houses (in general closed throughout the year) are kept open and they actually host tastings and other activities. People have the opportunity to increase their knowledge about extra virgin olive oil and at the same time learn about the past of the families that contributed to the history and growth of Trevi. The event coordinator and other stakeholders see FESTIVOL as a cultural event based on culinary traditions. In the future, FESTIVOL will most likely offer new activities to its visitors, perhaps more involving and with a more intense use of new technologies, but its format based on the promotion of olive oil and black celery as access keys to local culture and tradition will remain the same.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The success of the event is evaluated based upon the number of maps of the historical center given away, on the number of articles published in magazines/newspapers and on the number of people staying (spending the night) in Trevi. However, it is basically impossible to provide estimates since the event is open to the public. The event can be improved by strengthening the communication activities (also through a video tutorial to increase people's interest for the event) and by maximizing the use of social networks. Also, the improvement of the cooperation with local tourism operators for the promotion of the event is an important issue to work on.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Franco Spellani, current member and former President of PRO TREVI</i></b>  Pro Trevi has been involved since the very beginning in FESTIVOL, especially in its organizational matters and promotion. The goal of Pro TREVI, which is a grassroots association, is the promotion of the territory and its resources and extra virgin olive oil is one the most important parts of this. FESTIVOL is a valuable and sustainable leverage since it allows to promote Trevi and to increase the awareness level and knowledge of people about good quality agro-food products and healthy lifestyle.</p> <p><b><i>Angelo Mattioli, President of the Association of Black Celery Producers</i></b></p>

The Association participates in FESTIVOL based on the natural match between black celery and extra virgin olive oil. Known as “pinzimonio” (oil dip), it provides the best representation of Trevi’s culinary resources. The Association is present with its stands selling black celery during the event, to inform visitors about local gastronomical practices and traditions. FESTIVOL is a valuable event to share knowledge and the value of healthy products and lifestyle.

***Roberto Venturini, President of the Association of Extra Virgin Olive Oil Producers and council member of the Trevi municipality***

FESTIVOL is a key event for local extra virgin olive oil producers since it allows to increase the knowledge and visibility level of the product they produce. People have the opportunity to learn about all the characteristics and benefits of this product, its economic value, and its benefit for people’s health. Promoting the culture of extra virgin olive oil is FESTIVOL’s and the Association’s mission.

*Written by: Laura Ridolfi*

## CASTELNAUDARY CASSOULET ROUTE



Cassoulet dish (image credit: Le Cassoulet de Castelnaudary)

*The Castelnaudary Cassoulet is a traditional dish from South-West of France. Since visitors often arrive to the town of Castelnaudary only to learn more about this dish, the Castelnaudary Cassoulet Route was created. It offers visitors the possibility to discover the Cassoulet dish from the field to the plate. The route gives visitors the opportunity to meet producers of the components of the Castelnaudary Cassoulet: bean farmers, wine makers, potters, restaurants, canners, and duck breeders. Different actors involved in this tourist product open their doors to show their know-how and explain their job. Even though some productions can only be seen in specific seasons, visits are organized throughout the year. The Route also features cooking workshops, a discovery day with a visit to potteries, a meal in one of the Route restaurant, and the visit of a farm producing the Castelnaudary bean. Moreover, farmers producing the Castelnaudary bean have applied for a PGI label, and the Municipality registered the name “Castelnaudary Cassoulet Route” at the French National Institute of Industrial Property. A local saying goes: “There is the Father (Castelnaudary), the Son (Toulouse) and the Holy spirit (Carcassonne)”. Although there is another route, the Cassoulets Route, in Carcassonne, Castelnaudary, Toulouse, and Carcassonne claim the “paternity” of Cassoulet.*

### Contact

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### Introduction

The Castelnaudary Cassoulet Route is a tourist range of services which gives the opportunity to visitors to meet the different producers of the components of the Castelnaudary Cassoulet: bean farmers, wine makers, potters, restaurants, canners, and duck breeders.

The cassoulet is a typical dish that South-West France is renowned for and is part of the French culinary heritage. It is common to assert that Cassoulet was created during the siege of Castelnaudary by the British. The inhabitants were threatened with starvation and decided to pool everything they had to feed the town's soldiers. Bacon fat, pork, beans, sausages and meat were stewed together in a large pan. After eating this meal, the Castelnaudary soldiery drove the British out of the Lauragais region. The Cassoulet that we know today appeared during the 15th century, when bean lingot (a particular variety that Christopher Columbus brought to France in 1530) was integrated to the dish, in place of traditional beans.

**Culinary experience**

The different actors involved in the Cassoulet Route open their doors to show their know-how and explain their job. Visitors must phone the producer they want to visit (they can also phone the Tourist Office). Visits are organized throughout the year. Nevertheless, some productions are very seasonal (for example, bean harvest takes place in August, the potteries are closed during this period). The experience was created after having noticed that visitors were very curious about the dish, which was justifying their coming to Castelnaudary. The Tourist Office decided to create this experience in 2007 within the framework of a top-down approach: this was the will of institutional actors (Tourist Office and Municipality) and not of local communities or private stakeholders. Some of the producers felt committed, they voluntarily proposed visits to tourists. The main goal for developing this experience in the beginning (and still nowadays) was to offer the visitors the possibility to discover the Cassoulet dish, from the field to the plate.



Photo 1: Beans field (image credit: Alice Daardelet)

**Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage**

Heritage is present everywhere in the Castelnaudary Cassoulet Route. Indeed, the dish is the result of history and the tradition of several centuries as explained above. Castelnaudary, Toulouse, and Carcassonne claim the “paternity” of Cassoulet. There is a local saying that there is the Father (Castelnaudary), the Son (Toulouse) and the Holy spirit (Carcassonne). There is even another Cassoulets Route in Carcassonne (the “s” is important to make a distinction between the two Routes). Although Castelnaudary claims the status of the world’s capital of cassoulet, the stakeholders met and concluded that this status seems to be accepted by all three cities (including Carcassonne, Toulouse). Another proof of territorial anchoring is the logo of the municipality, which contains 3 Cs, standing for Castelnaudary, Cassoulet and Channel (reference to “Canal du Midi”, UNESCO World Heritage). There is a strong productive reality in the territory as the companies located within the municipality (5 firms) sell around 200,000 tin cans per day.



Photo 2: Fête du Cassoulet de Castelnaudary is advertised at the entrance of the town of Castelnaudary (image credit: Alice Daardelet)

	<p>The Cassoulet is very visible in the area with a lot of signs. The Cassoulet Feast, which occurs each year at the end of August, attracts 50,000 visitors a year, in a municipality with 12,000 inhabitants.</p> <p>Heritage is included in the Route by different means: cooking workshops, a discovery day with the visit to potteries, a meal in one of the Route restaurant, and the visit of a farm producing the Castelnaudary bean. Moreover, farmers producing the Castelnaudary bean have applied for a PGI label, and the name “Castelnaudary Cassoulet Route” was registered by the Municipality at the French National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI) from 2007 to 2017 (the registration was not renewed then).</p> <p>The experience is clearly based on tradition. The Tourist Office also protects this heritage thanks to a charter elaborated in 2007 for local stakeholders. For example, restaurants must buy their products within the area around Castelnaudary.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>Concerning the Route stakeholders, the potters (potteries are the traditional platters in which the Cassoulet is served) and the restaurants are the most important stakeholders about the number of visitors. Potters are important because potteries are the most visited sites of the Route. Restaurants are important because visitors want to eat a good Cassoulet dish (this is what they ask for when they come to the Tourist Office). The booklet identifies 7 bean producers, 3 potteries, 14 restaurants, 7 canners (selling products), 7 winemakers, 3 duck breeders. No actor is more involved than others, but one or two people within the category (in this case, Mr Monod and Mr Orta, Mrs Guilhem, bean producer, local representative at Castelnaudary municipality) seem to be really involved. This suggests a lack of motivation of the other stakeholders, although the Route is a real opportunity for the stakeholders to communicate about what they do, and to make people come to their site. To this day, the Tourist Office and the stakeholders are not connected into an association. According to the guide speaker of Castelnaudary Tourist Office, Bethany Yates, this is a weak point of the experience. The Route would need a specific structure to be managed, and it would require having a full-time person to host the Route.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>The TDA (Tourism Departmental Agency of Aude department) provides important support to the Cassoulet Route. Generally speaking, the TDA aims at strengthening the departmental tourism through various missions. (1) assessment and advice about the tourism development strategy, (2) data collection on tourism, (3) promotion of departmental tourist range of activities in France and abroad, (4) involvement of public and private actors, (5) management of various tourist sectors.</p> <p>The TDA brings a financial and promotional support to the Cassoulet Route. It allowed to mobilize star chefs and to act in an area wider than Castelnaudary.</p> <p>The Cassoulet Route is one of the “gourmet circuit” of the Cathare Country® brand, created in 1992. Property of the General Council of Aude Department, and registered at the INPI, Cathare Country® is a territorial umbrella brand which includes 900 professionals of sectors of tourism, agriculture and wine growing, food-processing industry, craftsmen and food professionals. All these products and services answer specific specifications which guarantee</p>

	<p>quality, origin and authenticity of the know-how. Despite of this connexion, the matching between the cassoulet denomination (national reputation) and the umbrella brand (local reputation) is not easy to reach.</p> <p>When the Route was created, many documents were drawn up to clarify the project: definition of the concept, analysis of the existing tourist services, animation, tourist products, welcome quality, communication, creation of a steering committee, methodology, contract documents. Because of the lack of time, these documents were not updated and to this day, there is no real strategy for the future of the Route.</p> <p>The charter created at the beginning is still valid; it includes 6 commitments: respect of legal professional obligations, qualitative framework of sale or consumption, quality welcome for customers, promotion of tourist services by being the ambassador of the Cassoulet Route, communication about the events linked to the Cassoulet Route, and availability of the documentation bound to the Route for visitors.</p> <p>Actually, according to Mrs Fayard, the Tourist Office does not have a sales strategy: their work is to answer visitors' questions. That is why they did not wonder about the main target groups for the Cassoulet Route. They do not have enough human resources to work on this. Local communities are not directly involved in the Cassoulet Route but through other events, such as the "Piège hiking" (Piège is a small area in the west of Aude Department). For this event, people walk during the day and have different spots with local product tastings and a traditional meal at the end. 50 volunteers help with the organization. Today, the Castelnaudary Municipality is not really involved in the development of the Route. This situation could change because there is a plan to create a Museum of Cassoulet; the Municipality is now looking for funding.</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>There is an economic added-value for restaurants, canners and potteries because the Route makes tourists come to the territory. It brings the social added-value for farmers, according to Mr Monod, bean producer, who likes talking about his job and the Castelnaudary bean. Indeed, visitors are mainly senior people who are very curious about the subject.</p> <p>The Route contributes to the local development because it brings tourists to restaurants and to the different sites of the Route (the various places to visit are made visible). There are two other events on the same subject: the Cassoulet Fair at the end of August and the Fat Fair in December. These two events do not seem to be linked to the Route, as there is a specific organisation committee for these two events, and the Tourist Office does not have a stand on these events to talk about the Cassoulet Route with visitors.</p>
<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>According to Mrs Fayard, an innovative culinary experience is what we call experiential tourism, where tourists can act themselves and have emotions: participating at a foie gras cooking workshop, or pottery making, for example. The Route is innovative because cassoulet cooking workshops are organized, but a lot of other experiences could be imagined, the main limitation is human resources and funds. With funding, Mrs Fayard would like, in an ideal situation, to recruit a half-time employee to organize animations on the Cassoulet Road. She would like to organize Cassoulet meals at a bean farm to create connections between farmers and chefs.</p>

<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>In the years following its creation, the Cassoulet Route federated a lot of stakeholders and was strengthened by several services offered by the Tourist Office: (1) Cassoulet cooking workshops organized by farmers and chefs. These workshops still exist today but without formalisation or enhancement. These culinary experiences refer to individual initiatives without collective dynamics, (2) Professional trainings for local actors of the Route, to strengthen tourist skills (welcome) and unify the speeches to be made on the cassoulet. (3) A global signage to identify the Route in the field. (4) Personalized services and experiences, brochure for travel agencies, which is a sign of professionalization of the Route.</p> <p>The recovery of the Cassoulet Route is being considered. The approach could be expanded to lodges and B&amp;Bs and the link with tourist activity bound to Canal du Midi (UNESCO) could be strengthened. A Cassoulet museum could also be created (see above). This reflection is no more led at the municipality scale. Due to the institutional evolution in France, the power of isolated municipalities is decreasing in the context of grouping and merging. Called “communities of municipalities”, these new institutions are becoming increasingly important. In Castelnaudary, the reflection is thus led by the “Communauté de Communes Castelnaudary Lauragais Audois” (23 municipalities, 23,000 inhabitants). This new institution benefited from the transfer of tourist and economic development competencies from municipalities.</p> <p>This new initiative is also part of a broader reflection bound to the food strategy of the municipality. Castelnaudary has recently implemented an innovative policy called “Territorialized Food Project”, which is a national initiative aiming at supporting local authorities in the definition of a food security strategy. The local representatives are actually redacting a charter which will define the main axis of this strategy: supply chain support, development of local production in collective gardens, awareness of young people about food security, fight against food waste, enhancement of culinary heritage).</p> <p>During interviews we identified the following key success factors: necessity to have an animation structure permanently dedicated specifically to the Route, the presence of a “leader” who has to emerge from the group of stakeholders (this leader can be an elected representative, but not necessarily, and must have legitimacy and a vision for the enhancement of culinary heritage and more broadly for the development of the territory, the necessity for a culinary experience not to take place on a too wide geographical area (governance becomes increasingly difficult when stakeholders are far from each other).</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Mr Monod, President of the Castelnaudary Bean Producers’ Union</i></b></p> <p>Mr Monod has worked on his farm of 120 ha since 2005, when his grandfather retired. He and his permanent employee produce, among other cultures, the Castelnaudary bean. President of the Castelnaudary bean producers’ union, which counts around 30 producers, Mr Monod plays the role of an intermediate between the cooperative Arterris and the producers, so that the production of beans is valued at best. He is also working hard so that the bean of Castelnaudary is recognized as PGI.</p>

He welcomes groups of tourists on his farm to show them how the Castelnaudary bean is produced. He has been involved in the Castelnaudary Route since the beginning. His motivation was to create animation in the territory, to make people discover the Castelnaudary bean. When people come to his farm, he talks about history of the bean, how it is produced, sold to the cooperative, but also about irrigation, and his job as a farmer. Mr Monod does not have any financial interest organizing these visits, as he is not paid for the time spent.

Mr Monod is involved in a very complete approach to sustainable agriculture: a part of the farm is labelled organic agriculture, but his farm is also engaged in the ISO 14001 certification (as one of only 300 farms in France). With a view of continuous improvement, he works on increasing biodiversity and organic matter on his farm, but also training and safety at work.

***Mr Orta, owner of Auberge des Dominicains restaurant***

Mr Orta took over the restaurant Auberge des Dominicains, located in the village of Montréal, 30 years ago. The name Auberge des Dominicains refers to the history: The Dominican Order was created near Montréal, in the convent of Prouilhe. Mr Orta claims to be in a territorial quality approach and wants to promote regional products. He buys regional products to cook his meals for the restaurant. He prefers selling meals cooked with local products at 22 EUR rather than selling meals with products coming from the other side of the world at 10 EUR, but says there are costumers for every type of restaurants: 10 EUR meal, 22 EUR meal and 200 EUR meal in star chefs' restaurants. According to him, quality has to be everywhere: welcome, products, cooking. He has been involved in the Cassoulet Route since the beginning. 15 of 60 restaurants that make the Cassoulet in the Castelnaudary area decided to get involved in the Cassoulet Route, but he seems to be the most involved.

He cares about his role in the Route: he talks to his customers about it, and about the cooking workshops he organizes. However, there are few connections with other stakeholders of the Route, even with the other restaurants, whose chefs do not want to share their more or less secret recipes with customers. Mr Orta feels closer to stakeholders from the territorial brand "Pays Cathare" ("cathar country") to whom they send customers looking for accommodation, for example. Mr Orta organizes around 5 cooking workshops per year, lasting 3 hours and costing 47 EUR. These workshops are a good opportunity to communicate and to have more customers in the long-term. Mr Orta thinks that the animation done in the territory is pretty good: there is no event on the Cassoulet Route specifically, but many little events (producers markets, for example). He explains that it is not easy to understand who organizes the different animations ("You know, between all the stakeholders involved, it is a layer cake, but there are a lot of things organized").

*Written by: Alice Dardelet and Julien Frayssignes*

## WHEREVER NATURE



Grilled sardines on wheat bread (image credit: Elisabete Mesquita)

*Wherever nature is a Portuguese tourist product which offers visitors genuine interaction with local community and follows the principles of ecotourism. The product includes both gastronomy activities (e.g. cooking classes) and visits to specific sites (e.g. production sites, natural and cultural heritage locations, walking routes). Traditional gastronomy is part of Wherever Nature and combines old methods for food preparation, lessons on historical and natural aspects of food production. The culinary experience offers individuals the opportunity to learn to prepare local traditional food, to communicate with different interests and environments and to see closely how the culture influences the gastronomy. This approach creates a sense of community belonging. This mixture of cultural, patrimonial, and gastronomic experience enriches both the community and the visitor who communicate with each other and learn stories and food preparation techniques.*

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### Introduction

The main objective of Portuguese ecotourism is to provide genuine and complete experiences to visitors, to create a sense of belonging, to respect and appreciate the visited territories and to contribute to the awareness of environmental and social issues through the adoption of healthy attitudes and citizenship. These sustainable gastronomic tourism experiences can take place anywhere in Portugal.

### Culinary experience

It is intended that both participation in gastronomic and food preparation activities (through cooking classes for individuals and for catering) and visits to special places (production sites, natural and cultural heritage locations or walking routes) offer the visitor a rich portfolio in culture assets, local resources and history, thus contributing to local sustainable development through good practices of accessible tourism. These experiences are based on visits to local territories, looking for typical and traditional gastronomy and their involvement in activities relevant to the agrarian cycles, special festivities, meal preparation, or even socializing with local population. Getting to know the local cuisine is a genuine experience. Food influences human beings in all senses (morphologically and physiologically, culture, society, resources, technology and environment), hence it is considered that local knowledge is the tasting of local food, different from territory to territory.

### Local (territorial) anchoring of experience

The inclusion of heritage in the culinary experience takes place through traditional gastronomy, using old methods of food preparation, its history,

<p><b>and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>influence of natural resources and territorial conditions in the production of the same. The gastronomic heritage is used as a base, emphasizing that in the Portuguese case, it is the result of movements that welcomed other cultural influences enriching its heritage. The processes of change are inevitable, and as such, it defends the preservation of the heritage, allowing innovation and creativity.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The main stakeholders are local farmers, population, entrepreneurs. These actors present their products, share their traditions and in some cases even benefit from the economic return (depending on the type of stakeholders). The initial work was to visit the territories, presenting the project and inviting the partners, offering recognition, publicity and, in some cases, economic return.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>To date, there is no relevant policy strategy for the culinary experience, nor has any financial support been given for the implementation of the project. However, the local community is enriched by recognition, economic return, empowerment and, in some cases, economic return and appreciation of the role of the elderly in the community.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>This experience has a positive impact on sustainability, promoting intergenerational dialogue, social cohesion, while promoting the preservation of the environment and the local landscape by giving added value to the local economy. The thematic packages promoted include a culinary experience and, in cases where this is not possible, the host receives a typical delicacy related to the thematic tour.</p>
<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>The culinary experience focuses on the fact that the individual can be an active actor: they are offered the opportunity to learn to prepare local traditional food, to communicate with different interests and environments, to see closely how the culture influenced the gastronomy and, vice versa, in each territory. This approach creates a sense of belonging and greater understanding. This mixture of cultural, patrimonial and gastronomic experience enriches both the territory and the visitors who communicate with each other by learning the stories and techniques of the foods used. The result is the inspiration to test different products with different techniques and experience new flavours.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>Project monitoring is possible through customer loyalty, assessment of the satisfaction level and observing the reception attitude of the visited territories' stakeholders. Allergies and food intolerances are likely to have become obstacles to some activities, so we try, as much as possible, to use alternative local products, leaving no customer out of the experience. For participants with some type of disability, other innovative solutions are designed with accessibility solutions in the design of activities. In the future we intend to increase the variety of gastronomic productions and more food. It is also intended to reduce the negative natural impacts of the visit</p>

	<p>of territories, including experiences of typical winter gastronomy to minimize the effects of seasonality.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b>ACAPO Coimbra, Portuguese Association of the Blind and Poorly Sighted (based in Coimbra, Portugal)</b>  Wherever Nature cooperates with the ACAPO association, which aims to implement actions that guarantee the accessibility of the cultural heritage to people with visual impairment.  This partnership, which is extremely relevant to the visually impaired citizens of the country, reflects the fact that those responsible consider culture as a good that must be accessible and at the service of all; this is an example of good practice of cultural offer.</p> <p><b>Tourism Institute of Portugal</b>  The Tourism Institute of Portugal, with the collaboration of companies, intends to position the Destination as accessible to all, namely through the development of conditions for the reception of tourists with reduced mobility and in the implementation of integrated programs for the development of accessible tourist destinations.</p> <p><b>Polytechnic Higher Education School of Agriculture (based in Coimbra - Portugal), Escola Superior Agrária de Coimbra (ESAC)</b>  Educational tourism is one of the fastest growing trends in recent years. Travelers are opening up more and more to new ways of knowing the world, and the possibilities of learning add to the already existing ones.  In some cases, learning activities at the destination are performed as an annex to the travel objective itself. These tours are learning activities that provide a different way to live local experiences that increase their knowledge of the environment that receives them. We see them as an efficient approach in this higher education level and are highly recommended to academics, students and teachers, from Portugal and abroad.</p> <p><b>Bonafide Tours – Foreign tour operator (USA)</b>  Portugal is off the radar for most tour operators. Even the latest National Geographic Expeditions catalogue does not have any tours of Portugal. There is an opportunity in promoting a multi-day and multi-faceted tour with an emphasis on food and farming, wines, ports, and people in Portugal. Our guests appreciate the experience because of the many facets that link agriculture, food, history, culture, and a fabulous landscape, in places out of the way and really interesting attractions that most tour operators won't have in their itineraries. The accents on culture and nature printed on (Wherever Nature) tours really round off the visitor experience.</p>

*Written by: Arlete Rodrigues*

## EATING ALGARVE FOOD TOUR



Traditional wheat bread making (image credit: António Guerreiro and Ms Joana Cabrita)

*Eating Algarve Food Tour specialises in cultural and food tours in the Portuguese region of Algarve. The experience is dedicated to those who search for genuine culinary experience in Algarve. The tour comprises the tasting of local produce, drinks and traditional dishes, visits to ancient heritage sites, culinary activities and corporate events. The organisers work in collaboration with family businesses, local producers and local people, institutions, and regional associations. They intend to contribute to the development of tourism in Algarve and to promote Algarve as a brand. Each culinary experience (dish, ingredient, drink) comes with an explanation about its origin, right way of preparation, consumption and its seasonality. Telling stories is an important part of the experience. The main goal of the food tour is to promote gastronomic heritage of Algarve and its history. The experience is based on tradition, although digital media play an important part in attracting customers.*

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<p><b>Introduction</b></p>	<p>The idea came from the matching of passions and professional experiences of the founders, António e Joana. While living in several countries - Italy, United States, England and Spain -, they soon realized how little local people know about the Portuguese, and Algarve cuisine in particular. So they brainstormed to bring a service that could be a solution for the people that come to visit the Algarve and want to know more about our gastronomy and culture.</p>
<p><b>Culinary experience</b></p>	<p>Eating Algarve Food Tour is a company specialized in culinary activities, food and cultural tours in historic and gastronomic neighbourhoods of the Algarve. They develop a combination of the regional gastronomy and history to offer the authentic Algarve, by providing explanations and tastings of 100% Algarvian ingredients, traditional dishes, drinks, activities and visits to millenary heritage sites. Through the online shop people can book the experiences, by selecting the activity, date, and time. They will automatically receive an email with all the necessary information to get to the meeting point and to make the most out of their experience. Then they will get in touch directly with them to prepare all the details (insurance, possible food restrictions, etc.) and to provide the invoice. The services of the company guide/ambassador, the entrances and all the tastings are included in the price. At the start of every tour they offer an EAFT Notebook to the customers, which includes a brief history about Algarve's gastronomy, illustrations, recipes, and house made design sheets to take notes. At the end of each tour they give the BEST SPOT card to the customers so they can</p>

	<p>choose the best establishment of the experience and enjoy a discount, or an offer, when they come back and show the card.</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>They provide guided walking tours with someone who is a guide ambassador and has a passion not only for gastronomy, but also for history. They have outsourced historic content scripts from professional historians. By sharing historical and architectural details, they are committed to go beyond the gastronomy experience. Also, during tastings they go beyond eating and savouring. Each dish, ingredient, and drink to be tasted is accompanied by an explanation of its origin, the reason for being chosen, the right way to be consumed, its seasonal period, or even how it is cooked. Eating Algarve Food Tours went beyond the concept model of the usual food tours. They tell our story in loco. They do not just stroll along some buildings. They innovate by taking clients to visit sites with identity and heritage value in our cities and region, such as castles, ancient defensive walls, churches, museums, historical buildings and traditional architecture, wells, tunnels, and many others. Nevertheless, they also use digital support to show old photos of areas and details of the city/region that no longer exist in order to broaden the imaginary of the whole experience. The main goal of the experiences they offer is to share and promote our gastronomic and culture heritage, as well as the history and evolution of our society across the centuries until today, while sampling some of our cuisine staples. The content of the experiences is based on tradition, although their modus operandi is innovative by using digital media supports, for example.</p> <p>They believe that the best way to protect cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) is to make it alive. By visiting it, speaking about it, experiencing it, tasting it, buying it, and conveying its importance to others. This is what they do in each experience, by visiting important historical heritage places, and explaining the history behind them, the people, the ingredients, and the recipes. The notepad offered is a way of supplying contents such as historical and gastronomic insights, and even recipes, so visitors can remember their experience, and can try to make the dishes themselves, or even innovate. They work with historical researchers and photographers to create accurate content with quality, and then promote our valuable traditions and history by sharing it with the international community.</p> <p>All those experiences are carried out within a certain landscape context that gives it the inherent reality of the gastronomy heritage they tell and share. If they were not integrated in the proper landscape - urban, maritime, countryside - they could not be authentic and immersive as they intend to be.</p> <p>During these experiences, they visit, share, and promote interaction between the local vendors/partners and customers. Each tour integrates a network of restaurants, shops, museums, private properties, and others, which take part in the total experience. They introduce their places, stories, activities, and products to the clients, who have the possibility to try many of them and pay a fairly established price for every tasting (to the partners).</p> <p>They involved the heritage expertise in designing culinary experiences. They have worked along with several historical researchers to make the historical, heritage and gastronomic content of the experiences. They are all</p>

	<p>enthusiasts of our services and believe in the potential of preserving and sharing our identity in the gastronomic and cultural heritage sectors.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>They believe that the richness of enogastronomy and cultural heritage must be shared and recognized. With those informed and passionate local guides, they want to share the identity and guide the visitors through every nook and cranny they know about, the residents, from the unmissable taverns to the best restaurants and places with stories to unravel about the Algarve. Algarve Food Tours aims to contribute to the establishment of the Algarve as an internationally recognized gastronomic destination and a brand, beyond the common offer of Sea, Sun, Sand, and Golf.</p> <p>They work closely and in collaboration with family businesses, local producers, local people, institutions and regional associations. They intend to contribute to the boost of the small economy and the community's self-esteem. The local guides, the heritage site partners, the tourism agencies and associations, press and social networks, travel agencies, hotels, restaurants and vendors are the most important stakeholders.</p> <p>The company does a great deal of promotion for their partners by communicating through their platforms, displaying their faces, stories, menus, and by that they help bring in new clients. They also benefit from the regional and international media coverage. In the end this means a small boost for restaurants at a financial level. Guides can make an extra income by doing an exciting and never-the-same job, by sharing their passion and personal input on gastronomy and history with international clients.</p> <p>Clients have the opportunity to live an immersive experience and get to know more about the local identity, to be guided by a local resident through places only known by locals, to enjoy more than 10 tastings, all this with a young and already respectable company.</p> <p>This way, tourism promoting entities and associations benefit from a new type of service that promotes and adds value to the local/regional identity. Press and social media have a fantastic story to report about, regarding an innovative way to experience something so traditional as gastronomy and history. Travel agencies and hotels have this opportunity to offer a new tourism service to their clients.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>To date, there is no relevant policy strategy for the culinary experience in Portugal. However, the company received financial support after being selected as one of the winning business ideas of the Portuguese Government funding program "VEM", during 2015/2016. This company contributes to the local community economy by promoting and adding value to its cultural identity, bringing new travellers (professional and tourists) that get to know the community, to consume local goods, and to share their experience among their social network spreading it in their own countries.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>The Algarve Food Tours boost the local economy, helps to rise the self-esteem of the community and create jobs. They share and value the places, the landscape, the gastronomy, the local activities and products so they can be recognized, cared and preserved, at a national and international level. The company promotes the social and intergenerational network and cohesion by working close and directly with many local and external players.</p>

<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>They intersect culinary, cultural heritage and very specific historical sites that are related in a broad range with food, believing that this new concept supports the beneficial balance between enogastronomy and tourism. They try to make their customers/visitors feel more like creators/locals, rather than just simple consumers/tourists.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>They measure the success of the culinary experience by the feedback they receive from customers, partners, and stakeholders; by the diversity of their visitors' nationalities, by the new customers they bring to their enogastronomical partners, to the museums, churches, and others; by the awareness and exposure they get from the local and international media; by the number of followers on their social media channels.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Algarve Tourism Bureau, Associação de Turismo do Algarve</i></b>  Eating Algarve Food Tours is an associate member of the Algarve Tourism Bureau. Since January 2017, their combined services of gastronomy and history deserve the trust of ATB, and are highly recommended to its network of partners, media, and international tour operators.</p> <p><b><i>Real Marina Olhão Hotel</i></b>  Eating Algarve Food Tours and the Real Hotels chain develop a series of services of gastronomic and cultural experiences, some exclusive to the clients of Real Marina, and others for the general public. This partnership is a strategic asset to the Hotel, which boosts its portfolio of tourism services to its customers, and to EAFT, which brings another prestigious partner to its vast network of strategic partners.</p> <p><b><i>Conserveira do Sul, Producer company</i></b>  Conserveira do Sul is a family-oriented company dedicated, since 1954, to the production of pates and canned fish. Being a certified and award-winning company, Conserveira do Sul is renowned both in national and international markets.  Eating Algarve Food Tours and Conserveira do Sul, in Olhão, have been developing a partnership since 2017. Eating Algarve Food Tours considers itself as an ambassador and mediator of the direct contact between the products and history of the oldest canning company still operating in the city, with our private and professional clients from all over the world, providing international prominence for a company national reference, and family and traditional basis.</p> <p><b><i>Faro City Council, Câmara Municipal de Faro</i></b>  Eating Algarve Food Tours has been working closely with the City Council since its inception. In our gastronomic experiences held in Faro, we take our clients to visit several of the council's most emblematic historical sites, among them: Regional Museum, Municipal Museum, Municipal Market, and the Interpretive Center of Arco da Vila. Several protocols have been established to formalize this partnership that has proved to be valuable to both parties, so that we can make our history and identity known in an innovative and creative way, combining heritage and gastronomy.</p>



TYPE 2

SERVICE CONNECTED TO FOOD PRODUCTS

## HOMESTEAD BELAJEVI



Herb garden in front of Homestead Belajevi (image credit: Maja Topole)

*The homestead Belajevi is situated in the area between two regions in Slovenia, Kras and Brkini, and offers various experiences to visitors. They can choose to visit homestead's garden of herbal plants from Kras, learn about scents, tastes, differences between plant species, medicinal and culinary uses of herbs, characteristics and biodiversity of the dry karst meadow and many other things. This is a meeting point of natural, cultural, ethnological, healing and culinary heritage. The culinary experience is based on cooperation with the neighbouring farms, small businesses, and a cooperative, which supply the homestead with local products and produce. With their business the owners want to develop the village of Kačiče-Pared, its tourist visibility and promote the Municipality of Divača and Kras region. They want to promote human traits, such as socialising, love and responsibility to wildlife and the environment, sustainable behaviour, and sustainable mobility. They place special importance to service providers who are committed to quality and integrity.*

### Contact

*organisation:* Herbal and ethnological homestead Belajevi  
*name of coordinator:* Ms Andrejka Cerkenik  
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### Introduction

The inviting and user-friendly website homestead in the area between Kras and Brkini has a carefully prepared and user-friendly website and offers various experiences. The experiential event is tailored to the interests of the visiting group and is designed such that participants are free to choose and combine the activities that interest them. They can choose to visit their own herbal garden, which represents microcosmos of Kras and a treasury of European herbs; learn about scents, tastes, differences between plant species, preparation and processing, modern phototherapy, medicinal and culinary uses of herbs, the dangers of being unfamiliar with herbs; learn about the characteristics and biodiversity of the dry karst meadow; learn about Karst winter savory as the central plant in Kras, its possible innovative uses and about the brand Satureja as a promoter of winter savory; learn about the experimental planting of savory and lavender as well as their extra-culinary uses; get to know Karst architecture (the homestead is listed in the Slovenian Cultural Heritage Register and has an ethnological collection of authentic items, e.g. items with typical karst stone carving details); learn about contact karst and the significance of the homestead's position between flysch and limestone; learn about the life of the barn swallow, a migratory bird that returns to the farm every year to build a nest; learn about the former and present way of life in Kras; get to know the Kras folk costume and its people's music culture; learn about Karst pearls and diverse richness in its close proximity (Škocjan Caves Regional Park, Kras and its biodiversity,

	<p>karst wild plants); learn about the spiritual culture of the area (its prehistorical significance, the importance of ancient knowledge and beliefs, connections with herbs).</p>
<p><b>Culinary experience</b></p>	<p>The culinary experience is based on cooperation with the surrounding farms, small businesses, and the cooperative, which supply the farm with local products: ricotta, Karst sheep and goat cheese, Karst prosciutto, Karst pancetta, kraški zašink (Karst cured neck meat), Karst Teran, Karst juniper brandy, Brkini plum brandy, Karst honey, baked goods, Istrian olive oil, and salt, as well as on the help of family and friends. Participants can choose between: tasting, Karst marendra (light meal), or Karst lunch or dinner, and get to know about the practical uses of Karst herbs.</p> <p>The owner was first inspired by a relative, an exceptional connoisseur of edible Karst wild plants. She conjured up a programme that would allow her to survive on the farm where she grew up (as a 6th generation descendant), on the land that she grew to love and where she loves to work. She felt the responsibility to save a precious old house, dated 1839, from ruin, which she inherited. Her experience with public speaking, tenders, as well as a knack for work organisation helped a lot, as well as her desire to create something useful for her home, town, entire Kras, and the environment. This is what has driven her ever since 2013, when she started to develop this business, while she is continuously coming up with new ideas on how to improve upon the results. Everything was spontaneous, and, were she to do it all over again, the owner would not change a thing.</p> <p>There are many motives for running a business and they are all significant: Andrejka Cerkenik, as a true native of Kačiče, wants to contribute to the development of her hometown, its recognisability, and the development and visibility of the Municipality of Divača and the broader region – Kras. She wants to encourage positive human traits, such as socialising, love and responsibility to wildlife and the environment, sustainable behaviour, and sustainable mobility; in short, she wants to raise people’s awareness about everything good and noble. The tourism she is trying to develop will follow these principles. Her own survival and regional economic benefit are important as well. She finds that networking, i.e. the connection between service providers committed to quality and integrity, is vitally important. Her own experience and her friends’ experience and recommendations are the most important part of it.</p> <p>For the time being, she addresses all visitors’ groups, but in time she wants to focus on visitors expressing interest in natural and cultural heritage who will also spread knowledge about the richness of Kras. Even now children’s groups and school groups mean a lot to her, as she can significantly affect their interest in and knowledge about herbs – sustainable behaviour. Under</p>



*Photo 1: Guiding visitors through the herb garden (image credit: Maja Topole)*

	<p>the Herb Festival she organises a special day for children to learn more about the use of herbs.</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>The owner uses traditional herbs in an innovative way, particularly savory, which is a wild plant – she includes them in honey, salt, fruit, and dairy products, and thus presents a picture of the former way of life in Kras – Karst material, social, and spiritual cultural heritage. Two things are important to her – bringing back life to traditional uses and introducing innovation. The cultivation of winter savory is new, as in the past it was actually a wild-growing species. Even more, the cultural landscape is being restored, as the people of the Karst have cleaned many overgrown karst commons and reintroduced arable land that existed in the past. They are even restoring the dry stone walls around fields. The newly cleared fields are intended for the growing of winter savory as well as allochthonous lavender. Karst soil is permeable and arid, which is ideal for these two crops. With the use of tarps, which keeps moisture in the soil, they can thrive without watering. The landscape is particularly attractive due to the presence of contact Kras, as well as many sinkholes and caves in close proximity, contributing to its exceptional biodiversity. Natural conditions led to a specific cultural appearance; they are reflected in material, social, and spiritual culture of the inhabitants. Andrejka Cerkvjenik’s supplies come from her home region, while, in turn, she offers her providers the possibility to promote themselves at individual events (e.g. at the Spiced-up Karst Evening or on a field trip through Kras she presents other characteristic activities – new lavender groves, fishing, wine-growing, etc.).</p> <div data-bbox="962 331 1487 674" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><i>Photo 2: Those who visit the Spiced-up Karst Evening receive a glass of complimentary sparkling wine and snacks (image credit: Maja Topole).</i></p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>Andrejka Cerkvjenik also offers the products of Karst wine makers, beekeepers, cheese makers, prosciutto makers, as well as Istrian oil and salt producers. She chooses them based on connections and trust, with the help of friends and acquaintances. These combinations contribute to increase the product’s sale and reputation, as it is of high-quality and organic production. If only credible providers are involved in the culinary experience, there are no negative surprises. Cheese and curds, prosciutto, wine, honey, oil, and salt used during culinary events and offered by their in-house boutique store are enriched with spices and thus given added value. There are no formal associations or connections; agreements between the participants take place for each event separately, while the range of services is adapted on an ongoing basis. The trio of Pršutarna Šepulje, the cooperative or wine cellar VinaKras, and the Belajevi homestead is increasingly present at various events. The</p>

	<p>combination of prosciutto, excellent Karst Teran, and local herbs works very well, and adds a new value to the region's enogastronomy. They also offered guided tastings during the traditional Teran Wine and Prosciutto Festival.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>This culinary experience does not follow any groundwork, such as a document or a strategy. Neither the Slovenian Tourist Organisation nor The Ministry of Economic Development and Technology are involved. The farm, listed in Cultural Heritage Registry under No. 23923 (old house (1839), house (1894), stable, barn (1884), well (1817)), was eligible to financial support under the LAS project. She was awarded a European grant and professional services by the Cultural Heritage Institute, Nova Gorica regional office. The Belajevi Homestead contributes to the visibility of Kačiče-Pared and the Municipality of Divača, and offers opportunities for tourist development (interest in accommodation). As an example of good practice it brings optimism into the local environment, encourages innovation, imitation, the preservation of architectural heritage or structures of tangible culture, networking, and collaboration.</p> <p>The municipality does not take part in the promotion of the activities pursued by the Belajevi Homestead, but it is part of a group featured on a shared website (<a href="https://www.visitkras.info/">https://www.visitkras.info/</a>) and prints a joint leaflet with annual event programme in five municipalities (Kras Brkini, 2017 Events). Financially it supports Kačišn'ca, a traditional autumn festival of three villages (Dana, Kačiče, Pared), which increasingly focuses on herbs.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>Even though the homestead started to operate no sooner than 2013, it brought optimism to the local community, and strengthened the sense of responsibility to nature and culture. The villagers support her, help her to their best abilities, and work with her. She also encourages their networking. The Belajevi Homestead's programme is not included into the programmes of major tourist agencies or their tourist packages; nevertheless, the farm has ties with the association Društvo Ognjič and the non-governmental project Together for the Health of Humans and Nature, while her annual programme includes a growing number of events (workshops, field trips, lectures) that are jointly organised.</p> <p>The homestead also organised the Herb Festival on the Contact of Kras and Brkini, which was held for the fourth time in 2017. This time, spring, summer, and autumn events came together on the homestead: a workshop on thujone, an intensive one-day herb field trip in Kras, a workshop on sun-loving plants, the enogastronomic 2nd Spiced-up Karst Evening, a children's day for experiencing herbs during holidays, a lecture on karst herbs in folk tradition and plants of ancient believers, and the 3rd Winter Savory Festival.</p>
<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>Culinary innovation lies in the use of ingredients in an unusual way. Spices, particularly winter savory, are used in dishes that were traditionally not known or at least not in such a form (savory salt, savory wine, savory beer, wormwood wine, savory honey, savory cheese, etc.) – therein lies the innovation. Ideas come and go. There are too many for the owner to pursue. Added value is found in these new combinations and the joint market approach with other service providers.</p>

	<p>In 10 years' time the owner plans to make even more useful products from savory, also for extra-culinary purposes. For example, she is exploring how to produce savory limestone plaster in karst stone houses. It should act against wall mould. Andrejka collaborates with the regional agroforestry institute and dedicates her studies to savory processing technologies. Savory should turn into a special branch of crop production. She hopes that the native Karst winter savory will be named <i>Satureja carsiana</i> instead of the name it has today, <i>Satureja montana</i>, while its reputation should travel far. The Belajevi Homestead would become the centre of its promotion. Savory, as part of natural heritage, could be used as a promotor of public mobility and the area could dedicate a hiking or tourist trail to the plant, e.g. the Savory Trail. The owner already has plans for special vehicles taking the form of a mythical creature that would connect neighbouring villages and promote sustainable mobility.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The owner measures success by the number of those interested in the events that take place at the homestead. The turnout usually greatly surpasses the envisaged, optimal, number, while visitor demographics has changed as well. It is much more diverse than it was initially.</p> <p>Problems emerge during large events when the scope of organisations grows exponentially. Andrejka then asks her extended family and friends for help. The number and type of participants in the range of services offered is adapted along the way, while she continuously follows tenders and searches for possibilities of new financial resources and incentives. In the future she hopes to further expand and boost her business, i.e. by addressing accommodation capacities, which will also bring new content.</p> <p>Her advice for beginners is to build content gradually. Several factors are important – doing things in the right order, making connections, spreading information, following up on tenders, and consistently completing the goals set.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Peter Boršič, cooperative or wine cellar VinaKras z.o.o., sales promoter and tasting organizer</i></b></p> <p>They like working with and encouraging small innovative businesses; this is mutually beneficial, both in terms of promotion and innovation. The combination of herbs and wines creates added value. They got in touch with Andrejka Cerkvnik at major tourist culinary events in Kras.</p> <p><b><i>Nataša Macarol, Municipality of Divača, senior advisor for economy, agriculture, and tourism</i></b></p> <p>The Belajevi Homestead activities are well known at the town hall. The homestead is not financed directly; nevertheless, the municipality financially supports the organisation of Kačišn'ce, a festival of three villages (Dane, Kačiče, Pared), which is increasingly focusing on herbs. Andrejka Cerkvnik is recognised for her important role in the local community. Her business contributes to promotion and visibility of the municipality. She is active in several fields, involved in the LAS projects, and has positive impact on other inhabitants and local development. The optimism she exudes infects the town and provides an example that people want to follow. Children and school groups often accompany her as guests and thus she shapes children's</p>

attitudes to herbs, natural and cultural heritage. She takes an exemplary care of the environment and is trying to raise awareness about sustainable mobility and our attitude towards heritage.

***TIC Sežana***

The Centre is familiar with the activities in the Belajevi Homestead and posts news about their events on a website shared by five municipalities (<https://www.visitkras.info/>).

In 2013 the Belajevi Homestead held its first event together with TIC Sežana, but now they work independently. Two festivals take place at the same time – the Karst Commons Festival held by TIC Sežana and the Herb Festival held by the Belajevi farm. The Belajevi Farmstead holds events with very specific content and a low number of participants, which lends its own charm. Participants like to come back and spread the word about the homestead's reputation.

TIC lacks its own tourist development strategy; nevertheless, a strategy is being drafted under the LAS project. It will be presumably completed in 2017.

*Written by: Maja Topole*

## COOKING CLASSES WITH LOCAL PRODUCTS



Learning how to prepare traditional pasta during a cooking class (image credit: AZRRI)

*This culinary experience is a product of The Didactic Gastronomy Centre from Gortanov Brijeg in Croatia. They aim at promoting best uses of agricultural produce, supplied by local providers, among chefs and cooks from the local community. At the workshops they get acquainted with Istrian traditional food and participate in the making of typical Istrian dishes. Istrian culinary heritage is presented through the revival of dishes based on traditional recipes. They use culinary heritage as the basis for the valorisation of local products which are used in modern and innovative cooking methods. In the beginning the workshops were tailored for local chefs and cooks. Over time, since culinary workshops took place at a culturally attractive locality, the workshops developed into a tourist product. Today tourists form the majority of workshop participants. They are interested in Istrian culinary heritage and search for new experiences that are not based solely on sea and sun. They want to learn about cultural and historical heritage of the region where they stay. As part of the workshops, participants can taste traditional dishes that are prepared by professional chefs (truffles, olive oil, traditional pasta, and prosciutto) and wine produced by local winemakers. The culinary experience is complemented with visits to local farms.*

<b>Contact</b>	<p><i>organisation:</i> AZRRI – Agency for rural development of Istria Ltd. Pazin  <i>name of coordinator:</i> Mr Edmondo Šuran  <i>address:</i> Ulica prof. Tugomila Ujčića 1, 52000 Pazin, Croatia  <i>email:</i> <a href="mailto:info@azrri.hr">info@azrri.hr</a>; <a href="mailto:edmondo.suran@azrri.hr">edmondo.suran@azrri.hr</a>  <i>website:</i> <a href="http://www.azrri.hr">www.azrri.hr</a></p>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>The Didactic Gastronomy Centre located at Gortanov Brijeg near Pazin, co-financed by the European Union within the KEY-Q project, is founded as part of AZRRI and has become the centre of excellence that aims at promoting the best use of local agricultural products among the local chefs and cooks in the hospitality sector.</p>
<b>Culinary experience</b>	<p>With the purpose of promoting the Istrian local products beyond the national border, AZRRI began offering a distinctive tourist experience which includes the presentation of Istrian traditional culture and food and participation in the making of a typical Istrian dish. Local producers are the key suppliers of the local ingredients needed for the cooking classes.</p> <p>The chefs involved in the initiative present the food by using all the senses. This gives the consumer a unique way of experiencing the food.</p>
<b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b>	<p>The experience consists of cooking classes and tasting sessions enriched with the area's typical Mediterranean spices that remind of the rural rustic way of life. The goal is to present Istrian culinary history through the revival of traditional recipes and preparation methods.</p> <p>Istrian culinary heritage is presented through the revival of cooking traditional recipes and preparation methods. The culinary experience uses culinary heritage as the basis for the valorisation of local products, which are used for modern and innovative cooking methods.</p>

	<p>AZRRI plays the vital role in preserving the Istrian heritage, more precisely taking care and preserving autochthonous breeds of domestic animals. Preserving the breeds and valorisation of meat through culinary workshops have contributed to the creation of original and unique dishes, which certainly ensures the survival and affirmation of the new Istrian gastronomy.</p> <p>Culinary workshops take place at Gortanov brijeg, a historic settlement near Pazin, which is of cultural and historical importance to the local community. Local farmers are directly involved in this culinary experience because their products are used as the main ingredients in the culinary workshops. Gortanov brijeg, apart from the Educational Gastronomy Centre, is also the home of a farm of Istrian cattle that can be visited by culinary workshop participants. In order to learn more about the Istrian culinary heritage and the purposes used, stakeholders can visit other farms of autochthonous breeds (Istrian cattle, donkey, and goat), as well as plantations of different spices and herbs.</p>	
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The principal idea for Istrian agro-food products valorisation through culinary workshops was initially targeted specifically towards local chefs. However, as culinary workshops take place in a culturally attractive position, through which many tourists pass, the idea emerged of a new tourist offer that might enlarge and diversify the current tourism offering in the area.</p> <p>Today, apart from local cooks, the key stakeholders are tourists who are interested in Istrian culinary heritage. Participants of this experience are looking for new experiences that are not just based on the sea and sun, but they want to get to know the cultural and historical heritage of the region they are staying.</p> <p>As part of the workshops, participants can taste traditional foods that are prepared by professional chefs (truffles, olive oil, traditional pasta, and prosciutto) and wine produced by local winemakers.</p> <p>A combination of local foods, visits to local farms and the preparing of typical recipes is key to the success of this culinary experience.</p>	
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>Culinary experience can be linked to the Master Plan of Tourism of the Istrian Region 2015–2025 where gastronomy is mentioned as one of the five primary tourist products attracted by tourists to the rural/central areas of Istria. Gastronomy represents one of the main reasons for tourist arrivals in</p>	

*Photo 1: Boškarin – Istrian cattle (image credit: AZRRI)*

*Photo 2: Cooking class in progress (image credit: AZRRI)*

	<p>Istria; this product makes about 1% of total turnover, which is certainly not negligible because 85% of trade is made up of sun and sea products.</p> <p>The local Tourism Board supports and promotes culinary workshops as a complete experience of the local wine and gastronomy tradition through interactive cooking with professional chefs, according to the principles of Istrian gastronomy: simplicity of preparation, the freshness of ingredients, seasonal and local food, and eye-catching presentations.</p> <p>The tourism sector of the rural areas of Istria grows year-on-year, so apart from the new accommodation facilities, it is necessary to offer accompanying contents which will valorise local products.</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>Tourism based on the local resources gives greater value to Istrian rural farmers and at the same time benefits the biodiversity of the area. Local farmers and farmer organizations are involved in providing the produce for the event. The chef promotes Istrian gastronomy using local products. In this way, the products become important and recognizable, leading to greater demand but also the need for greater production.</p> <p>The cooking classes contribute to local development because they bring tourists to Central Istria, where besides the culinary workshops there are several gastronomic events that certainly affect the promotion of rural areas as a gastronomic destination worth visiting.</p>
<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>This form of culinary workshops is unique in our region, where tourists do not consume food in a classical way by going to the restaurants or other hospitality facilities. Tourists take part in this culinary experience by first getting to know traditional food, autonomous breeds, plants and spices used in preparing meals and later tasting it. Culinary workshops are designed to prepare traditional food in modern and innovative ways, using traditional ingredients specific to this area.</p>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>Through our annual reports, we track the number of participants and their needs. Social media accounts are also indicators of success performance and the potential disadvantages. Based on the feedback received, it is about improving but also putting new offers. There are no special problems in implementing this experience because stakeholders are always invited to join, especially primary producers.</p> <p>When conducting culinary workshops, we encounter technical problems because of the limited number of participants. Namely, because of the small space capacity, we are unable to receive a large number of people and groups.</p> <p>In the future, we would like to enhance this unique culinary experience in the direction of expanding the number of autochthonous breeds that will be promoted through this tourism segment.</p>
<b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b>	<p><b><i>Marijo Čepek, professional chef and consultant</i></b></p> <p>Chef Marijo is pleased to accept the role of a chef educator. The love of this business and the desire to transfer knowledge to interested stakeholders is inspiring him to be part of this culinary experience. With his knowledge gained through almost two decades of work, Mr. Marijo wishes to contribute</p>

to the valorisation of foods from the Istrian region but also to the micro-location of the City of Pazin. With his knowledge and the way of transferring knowledge about certain local foods, he contributes to the quality of this culinary experience.

***Petar Rojnić, participant***

In order to better prepare and present local food, Mr. Rojnić decided to take part in this type of culinary experience. With the aim of better preparation and presentation of local foods, Mr. Rojnić was dedicated to this type of culinary experience. As part of his new culinary experience, he learned a lot about authentic breeds, local products, and his new gained knowledge will surely greatly facilitate his future work.

***Eros Sorić, Chamber of Crafts and Trades of Istrian Region***

Mr. Sorić coordinates and represents the Istrian catering sector with a special regard on these educational activities. In front of the Chamber, which has a long tradition in organization of various gastronomical manifestations and events, Mr. Sorić is very pleased and satisfied with the cooking classes. His impression of the overall feedback of the catering sector is that in a relatively short time (3-4 years) the level of knowledge in the regional context, especially regarding the use of traditional and area connected products, has noticeably increased. In his opinion the strongest part of the cooking classes is a unique mix of different coherent activities making it attractive to professionals but also to gastronomy enthusiast and local food lovers. Mr. Sorić wished that this activity and experience evolves even more in the years to come making the cooking classes a recognizable activity in the wider region.

*Written by: Antonia Dušman*

## XATHERI



Mrs Maria Pitsikaki during a cooking showcase (image credit: Maria Symeonidou)

*The Xatheri is a chain of restaurants and an accommodation service located in Krousonas in the mountainous region of Crete in Greece. They organise cooking classes and outdoor recreation activities. Xatheri promotes Cretan culinary heritage and works together with other forms of alternative tourism. The traditional recipes they use for preparing their food are part of local cultural heritage. They put special emphasis on passing their authentic recipes to new generations and to promote them among foreign visitors. The area where Xatheri culinary experience takes place is a Natura 2000 region. The landscape and its settings contribute positively to the overall experience of the visitors. They designed a culinary route which is popular among visitors. Along the route individuals from the handicraft sector such as pottery and wood carving are invited to exhibit their work. This is the same route the ancient Minoans walked to offer gifts to Gods. Xatheri is cooperating with individual farmers and cooperatives to get fresh agricultural produce.*

### Contact

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### Introduction

Xatheri is a chain of restaurants and rented rooms that offers three kinds of services for visitors: cooking classes combined with recreational activities, culinary and recreation services to a Mental Wellness Center from Holland, and Cooking classes for local schools twice a year (Christmas and Easter).

### Culinary experience

Xatheri offers three kinds of services for visitors:

- Cooking classes for visitors who take part in Jeep-Safaris along with local culture and local products promotion. Visitors are shown production of local products, e.g. cheese, they taste it and cook with it. They combine gastronomy with walking routes through the mountainous Minoan path, where the ancient Minoites used to climb the mountain once every three years to take their offerings to Gods.
- Culinary and recreation services to a Mental Wellness Center from Holland who sends groups of visitors for a week of experiences once a month. Visitors typically spend a week at Xatheri and visit museums, go through ancient routes and paths, visit bakeries to see how bread is prepared and taste it, visit pottery workshops and then return back and have cooking classes.
- Cooking classes for local schools twice a year (Christmas and Easter) where local pupils are becoming familiar with cooking customs of Christmas and Easter in Crete.

Xatheri was established in 2008 but the culinary services provision started in 2014 to diversify services and promote local products and rural tourism in the Kroussonas area. The initiative started by the proprietor Mrs. Maria Pitsikaki

who started offering the three kinds of services mentioned above. The top-down approach was used as the individual activities were planned at a later stage than the initiation of the idea and activity. The main reason for offering these services was the need for diversification of services provision and the promotion of Crete's local products, customs, and rural areas. One of the reasons that became prominent over the last years was the financial profit as this activity provides extra income during an era of deep financial crisis in Greece.

The culinary experience promotes Cretan culinary heritage and culture. In terms of local development, the area of Krousonas is promoted and local businesses (e.g. farmers, coffee shops) benefit from the influx of visitors. The activities at Xatheri connect the hinterland of the Malevizi Local

Authority with the busy coastal area through provision of alternative tourism services under a different model and the local society does not feel excluded from the rest of the Municipality. The personal motivation for the proprietor is the promotion of Cretan Culture and Culinary heritage, the diversification of services provision and the presentation of the rural area in Malevizi Municipality. Xatheri's target group is any visitor who chooses alternative tourism and culinary heritage in particular.



*Photo 1: The initiators from Holland (image credit: Maria Symeonidou)*

**Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage**

Heritage is included by using traditional local recipes that go back in time. With the participation of local schools, heritage is passed on to younger generations so that it is safeguarded for years to come. All recipes presented at the culinary experiences are authentic and traditional. For the proprietor it is more important to protect heritage as it is and pass it on to younger generations and also to promote it to foreign visitors. Heritage is protected by the preservation of customs and culinary tradition. The proprietor of Xatheri has also written a book, which includes traditional recipes and the customs related to them as a way of preserving heritage for younger generations.

The area where the experience takes place is a Natura 2000 region. The landscape and its setting contribute positively to the experience and enhance the result for the visitors. The route used is the same route that ancient Minoans used in order to climb every three years at the top of the mountain to offer gifts to Gods. Krousonas village is located near Byzantine monasteries and the Archaeological Museum of Malevizi and therefore visitors can combine experiences in the nearby area. The Xatheri experience, amongst others, combines visits to local traditional pottery and wood workshops and also local producers such as shepherds and cheese producers. Visitors are shown how cheese is produced from milk and can taste the final outcome. Xatheri is cooperating with individual farmers and cooperatives, too, for supply of agricultural products. They also cooperate with individuals in the

	<p>handicraft sector (pottery, wood carving, etc.). Local community is also involved through local school visits that take place before the Christmas and Easter festive seasons. School visits are implemented in cooperation with the teachers and the parents' and guardians' associations (PGAs).</p> <p>The proprietor has been working for years on tradition and local culture, has written a book on culinary heritage with traditional local recipes and is therefore an expert on heritage, but has not been assigned to help develop the culinary experience. It is frequent that Mrs. Pitsikaki is the person that other people ask for consultation on culinary tradition and tradition in general.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The most involved stakeholders are the local producers, farmers, cheese-makers, shepherds, handicraftsmen, etc., who are the main suppliers of products and experiences to the visitors. The schools participating are doing regular visits just before Christmas or Easter holidays so that pupils have knowledge of the local culinary festive customs at a young age. Stakeholders' linking was formed by personal contact. The experience is included at the tourist package "Safari Club Crete" in one of its excursions (<a href="http://www.safariclub.gr">www.safariclub.gr</a>). The Safari activity was an effort that took two years to realize as a similar excursion taking place at Lasithi plateau was saturated. The proprietor proposed to them the Krousonas route along with the rest of activities and eventually cooperation took place. Stakeholders were found by personal contact that was initiated by the proprietor. Doors are always open for cooperation with new stakeholders and it depends on the proprietor to move on with new cooperation as she does not want the experience to become "industrialized". Stakeholders benefit from the extra income as a result of diversifying their services. Their other motivation is socializing with visitors, exchanging experiences with them and teaching them their professions (as in the case of co-operating shepherds, handicrafts craftsmen, cheese-makers, etc.). It is not only the financial issues that determine cooperation but the result that they might bring to the experience.</p> <p>The proprietor sees as the main obstacle in the experience the roads' infrastructure network, which is an "off-road" route, but turns out as beneficial as the experience is traditional and the existence of modern roads would deviate from the hinterland experience model. In the same sense the proprietor has kept the signs in their old and vintage style so that the visitors are always reminded of the traditional character of the experience.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>The proprietor was funded in 2006 through LEADER+ for the development of the restaurant at the venue. The experience is putting at the forefront the hinterland of the Malevizi Municipality and the possibilities that exist. Through this activity the area and also its possibilities for alternative tourism experiences are promoted.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>The culinary experience attracts visitors who are responsible tourists and who show a great respect for natural resources. Therefore, the experience brings extra income in the local economy (producers, shepherds, handicraftsmen, etc.) with respect for the environment and the local society.</p>

<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>Regarding innovation, Xatheri likes evolution but they themselves use only traditional recipes and new elements are used only within borders and respect to heritage. Innovation is perceived by the proprietor as experimentation and evolution. Flash forwarding 10 years from now, the proprietor is thinking of creating a traditional village with rented apartments where activities will take place and a traditional house acting as a Folklore Museum of the area.</p>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>There are no evaluation tools in place to record or measure success. The proprietor considers appreciation received by tourists, their comments, hugs, etc., as a measure of success. In addition, the visitors' interest for returning the following year is another indication of success. A procedure to monitor potential problems with stakeholders is not in place as they are always available and have a verbal agreement between them. Providers cooperate with Xatheri for many years and so they are always available to help or meet any potential unforeseen needs. Visitors' requests are a means of monitoring and improving the culinary experience. Every day they correct things (small or big) according to visitors' needs. Following her experience and the visitors' comments, the proprietor Mrs. Maria Pitsikaki would advise anyone who wishes to create a new culinary experience to believe in and love the culinary service provided. Newcomers should not only think about financial profits but love their professional activity too. The other thing they should take care of is the differentiation from other service providers, as in order to succeed they need to be a little bit different from the rest.</p>
<b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b>	<p><b>Mr. Georgios Pitsikakis, local farmer from Kroussonas</b>      “I am the owner of a small farming unit that produces raisins, wine, raki, olives, fruits and vegetables in Kroussonas. Cooperation with Xatheri offers me financial benefits as the number of visitors increases every day. I was invited by the proprietor and I happily accepted the potential of cooperating together. I believe my role is quite important, as I try hard to produce agricultural products under the highest quality and specifications to meet the demands of Xatheri. The main benefit for me is the certainty that a big part of my products will be sold through this cooperation and I will have an assured financial benefit every year.”</p> <p><b>Mr. Evangelos Anagnostakis, proprietor of Safari Club Crete</b>      “Safari Club Crete started activities in 2002. Our target was our main motivation, too, since we offer a fun and enthusiastic introduction to the raw beauty of Cretan nature, the tradition, the traditional professions, the history, the culinary heritage as well as everyday life. Our cooperation with Xatheri was initiated by the proprietor, Mrs Maria Pitsikaki – an idea that we embraced as we wanted our visitors to enjoy and taste “the real Crete”, its customs and traditions, its local businesses supporting villages and mountainous areas. We believe that our role and contribution are important in promoting local culinary heritage, since we make sure that all our visitors taste Cretan dishes and buy local products. Our benefits through this cooperation are mostly financial, while some benefits are non-tangible, as all visitors leave happy and they bring home, to their countries, the best of impressions.”</p>

***Margriet Rijsenbrij and Albert Toby, from Holland***

Mrs. Margriet Rijsenbrij and Mr. Albert Toby from Holland are certified therapists and the proprietors of “Nieuwste Tyd” (shop with natural healing and wellness products) and “Ontmoeting met Jerelf” (therapy group “Encounter with yourself”) in Holland and they bring groups of people to Xatheri to experience alternative tourism (walking tours, meeting local people and local producers, watching cooking classes using traditional recipes, etc.).

“The landscape, the food prepared with only local fresh ingredients, and the hospitality of the proprietor of Xatheri are our main motivations to join the experience. The location is the perfect place that everyone from Holland would like to visit. And that includes not only those who are stressed or overworked but anyone from Holland in general. It is frequent that people who join our Holland wellness activities are interested in joining, when informed about our Cretan activities at Xatheri. Our role is that of an intermediate in bringing visitors to Xatheri. The activities are suggested by the proprietor of Xatheri, but we propose and initiate activities ourselves. Visitors watch the proprietor cook and learn about traditional cooking with local fresh ingredients. The idea behind these visits is that people who join try to learn about themselves through alternative tourism activities with the help and guidance of therapists.

Our benefits through this cooperation are the positive experiences that Dutch visitors get through the activities at Xatheri. The food tasting and the landscape are part of the therapy and people are enthusiastic about the experience. Visitors express the way they benefit in wellness. Through this activity our company diversifies its activities and services, and this is a great benefit for us. We hope we will expand and bring more people from Holland to join the wellness groups in Crete. Our main drawback is that we need to learn how business is done in Greece as it appears more bureaucratic compared to Holland. When we are certain and knowledgeable of the business procedures in Greece, we will certainly more diversify our services offered in Crete.

Dutch visitors interact with the local community and they get to know them: farmers, residents in Kroussonas, artisans, etc. They love the hospitality of Crete, they blend with local people and this is done spontaneously – it is not organized beforehand. We believe that our visitors from Holland add up positively to the local economy as they purchase local products and add up to the services economy. We are currently considering starting to import Cretan local products such as olive oil, soaps, mountain tea, face creams, honey, etc., in Holland and sell them at our natural products shop. In the future, we hope we will be able to bring more groups of people from Holland to Xatheri. The rate of our visitors grows steadily. We do not want to bring large groups and we usually have groups of 5 to 10 people. Mrs. Maria Pitsikaki, the proprietor of Xatheri, through our network of business partners, will visit Holland during winter and offer cooking classes on Cretan cuisine to Dutch chefs. We are also considering opening a “pop-up” restaurant where the main theme will be Cretan cuisine, and proper investors will be sought in order to open a Cretan cuisine restaurant in Holland”.

*Written by: Maria Symeonidou and Michael Katharakis*

## CRETAN MIRACLE DIET AND CUISINE



A group of businessmen and women from USA having a cooking class with CMDC at their hotel in Heraklion (image credit: Maria Symeonidou)

*Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine is a private Greek company which works on culinary experiences. The Traditional Cretan Cooking Lesson is one of their activities tailored for groups of two up to ten persons. They organize one-week culinary holidays in Crete which go beyond culinary experience to the field of holistic travel experience. The company is located in the small village of Koxari. The wider region is one of the most touristy destinations in the Mediterranean Sea, receiving approximately 7 million overnight stays during the tourist season (April to October). The main reason for establishing culinary tourism was the lack of tourist activities in the Cretan hinterland. With their services they promote Cretan Diet and authentic old and modern local recipes. They provide a unique chance for intercultural exchange between hosts and guests through Cretan gastronomy.*

*Through storytelling they present local recipes, their origins and their variations in different areas of Crete and Greece. The innovative elements are the use of local herbs in traditional recipes, the dish preparation from scratch and the search for connections between cuisine and culture.*

*In 10 years from now, they plan to establish a cooking school with dormitories for students and visitors. They wish to work with universities from abroad and host students of Greek culture and heritage.*

### Contact

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### Introduction

Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine is a private company offering culinary experiences services to visitors. Their venue is located at the small village of Koxari, positioned at the hinterland of the busy tourist Municipality of Hersonissos that hosts approximately 7% of Greece's tourist influx.

## Culinary experience

Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine offers services of culinary tourism. They offer private Traditional Cretan Cooking Lessons for groups of two up to ten persons and they also organize one-week culinary vacations in Crete where the culinary tourists cook and taste Cretan cuisine and visit places of cultural and historical heritage. All activities are tailored to the guests and their interest and also their dietary preferences. Their services aim to promote the idea of the Cretan Diet, the authentic old and the modern local recipes. Each programme is a unique chance for an intercultural exchange between the hosts and the guests through the field of Cretan gastronomy.



*Photo 1: Galaxy hotel of the Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine (image credit: Maria Symeonidou)*

The culinary experience was started in 2013 by the two proprietors Mrs. Eleni Maragaki and Mr. Ioannis Komontahakis. Mrs. Eleni Maragaki has studied European Civilization and specialized during her thesis on the Projection of Cretan Culture through Gastronomy. For Mr Komontahakis who has studied Geography, the motivation to start the experience was the lack of presentation of Cretan Culture and Gastronomy through existing tourism practices. The experiences were created with a bottom-up method, where all different segments and activities were studied and planned and at the end a Business Plan was established. The proprietors have studied the gastronomic tourism models of other European regions such as that of Tuscany – which is based more in the agricultural approach – and the French model and finally decided the kinds of services and experiences they would offer to visitors.

The main reason for the creation of the culinary experience was the lack of activities in the area that project Cretan Culture and Cuisine. The company is located in the Municipality of Hersonissos, one of the most touristy destinations in the Mediterranean Sea, hosting approximately 7 million overnight stays during the tourist season (April to October). Even though the Municipal Authority has set out a Strategy Plan for alternative tourism development, the tourism model approach in the area is still that of sea and sun and few opportunities are offered for alternative tourism activities.

The culinary experience promotes Cretan culture through Gastronomy and the main objective for the proprietors is the development of the rural area (Koxari village) that the company is based. The village of Koxari is situated in the rural part of Hersonissos Municipality and tourist influx caused by the CMDC activities brings economic benefits to the locals. Also, all products used are locally bought by local businesses and farmers, benefiting thus the local economy. In addition, the local society does not feel excluded from the tourist development of the Local Authority since the activity is related to the Municipal tourist activity but under a different perspective and model.

The proprietors' personal motivation for involvement was professional development, the promotion of Cretan culture through gastronomy, and the presentation of beauties of their Municipality's hinterland.

The main target group is the gastronomy tourist and the culinary savvy, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or religion. The company often visits

	<p>schools in cooperation with the Parents' Associations and therefore addresses children who are taught about healthy eating, cooking habits and traditional local dishes.</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>Heritage is included through safeguarding the tradition of preparing and presenting dishes. Cooking recipes are presented with a story behind them that explains the recipe's origins and the possible variations according to the different areas of Crete and Greece in general. There is a theoretical element of the experience, where the model of Cretan diet and the connection of Cretan diet with customs and religion are presented.</p> <p>All recipes come from the traditional Cretan cuisine and, in some cases, CMDC presents their modern versions but with the use of only local ingredients, mainly herbs and vegetables. It is considered important to use tradition as a basis for innovative development.</p> <p>For CMDC it is important to safeguard heritage. Traditional recipes and methods of cooking are presented and given in written form to visitors. During school visits, pupils are explained the traditional way of cooking in Crete and the connection between cooking and civilization. In this way, heritage is passed on to younger generations. In addition, the initiators have taken part in a publication by the Ministry of Culture and Sports (Intangible Cultural Heritage Directorate) on traditional pies of Greece, where they presented the traditional pies of Crete. The publication is in English so that any interested tourist has the chance to repeat the recipes back home.</p> <p>The role of the landscape is very important for CMDC. The small village of Koxari is situated in the hinterland of the Hersonissos Municipality. It is a rural area with picturesque views ideal for relaxation. The area is situated near two insular wetlands under protection status (Mallia wetland and Aposelemis wetland) and near the Natura 2000 island of Dia. The surrounding landscape has high biodiversity with many indigenous species and it contributes positively in the culinary experience offered.</p> <p>The participants of the culinary experience taste local lifestyle, culture, habits and values since they take part in local activities such as village tours with historical information. They also participate in any cultural events that take place on the day of their visit, such as the Snail Cooking Event, along with the Cultural Festival. They visit local traditional coffee shops (called kafeneia in Greek) and they experience the life as locals.</p> <p>Mrs. Eleni Maragaki one of the two proprietors, is a heritage expert – she studied European Civilization and, in her thesis, she specialized on Cretan Culture through gastronomy. Moreover, the initiators of this experience have taken advice and studied different culinary experiences in Crete but also in other areas of Europe (mainly Italy and France) before developing their own activities. Dr Maria Hnaraki, Professor of Greek Studies at Drexel University</p>



*Photo 2: Canadian group taking a cooking lesson (image credit: Maria Symeonidou)*

	<p>in Philadelphia, is including Cretan Miracle Diet and cuisine experience during her study visits in Crete.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The most important stakeholders are the local farmers who provide agricultural products, the tour operators or hotel owners who bring visitors and the Local Authority of Hersonissos Municipality that promotes alternative tourism in their already congested tourist area. They also established a link with the schools in the area and with the USA University of Drexel, which is involving the CMDC experience during their study visits in Crete.</p> <p>The most active stakeholders are the local producers and the hotel owners who cooperate with Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine. The Municipality of Hersonissos is making a great effort to promote alternative tourism in their area of administrative governance and promote the experience through their Land of Experiences campaign of tourism in rural areas.</p> <p>The connections with stakeholders were made while trying to set up the activities of the experience. For farmers only local producers were selected through personal communication, hotel owners and tour operators were contacted through visits by the proprietors. The Municipality of Hersonissos was informed also by the proprietors. The proprietors contacted stakeholders by personal contact.</p> <p>The motivation behind liaison with farmers, tour operators, and hotel owners was their business expansion or to offer alternative services to their guests. The Municipality's motivation was the need to diversify the tourism product offered, as it makes up 7% of Greece's influx, which is under the sun and sea massive tourism model.</p> <p>There have been no particular obstacles regarding stakeholders' involvement and cooperation. Potential gastronomy tourism providers should consider liaising with Local Authorities and coordination with local policies. CMDC is not connected through any association of providers of gastronomy services or alternative tourism in general.</p> <p>CMDC is jointly participating with the Municipality of Hersonissos in Cultural events provided by cultural associations in the area. CMDC is often called to provide services for Municipal guests, e.g. when the Municipality invited the 10 most famous tourist bloggers from Italy to visit the Municipality and promote the area. At this event CMDC provided a cooking class for the bloggers in order to promote alternative tourism services in the Municipality. Similarly, CMDC cooperates with the Region of Crete, e.g. business people from US, who will invest in Crete, were shown Cretan cuisine and folklore dances.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>One of the proprietors contributed to the publication Culinary Cultural Heritage of Greece – The Pie by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, where traditional Cretan Pies were presented. The publication is in English, so that visitors and readers from abroad can get information on different Greek pies. This publication provides the opportunity for the culinary services company to get high visibility.</p> <p>There has not been any bank loan for the initiation of the company and no direct financial contribution through a funded programme. Indirectly, the company's Business Plan was developed through the EMMA Project</p>

	<p>(Entrepreneurship Methodology Mediterranean Assistance) funded under the Programme MED. Currently, the proprietors are seeking funding through the LEADER+ programme in order to develop their services further.</p> <p>The culinary experience brings added value to the small village of Koxari, as it brings a number of visitors who are experiencing alternative tourism with respect to the local community and the environment. The visitors' influx contributes to development of local businesses (e.g. agricultural products, coffee shops, souvenir shops). The contribution to local development is a sustainable and monitored economic development with the influx of responsible visitors in the hinterland of Hersonissos.</p> <p>The Municipality of Hersonissos is one of the few Municipalities in Greece that have a concrete Strategic Plan on alternative tourism called BITA (Sustainable Tourist Development). A municipal website (<a href="http://www.landofexperiences.gr">www.landofexperiences.gr</a>) is in place where all alternative experiences in the Municipality are listed. One of the experiences showcased is CMDC. The Municipality cooperates with CMDC during food and agro-product festivals, when hosting officials (e.g. hosting of tourist bloggers from Italy), etc. The Municipality has currently assigned the D.M.O. to a marketing company and the main elements in the creation of the D.M.O. will be the development of Tourist Packages and Thematic Experiences (including culinary experiences).</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>The culinary experience has a positive effect on the sustainability of the area since culinary tourists are “responsible” and “environmentally aware” tourists. The activity does not result in any environmental burden and brings out positive, progressive, and sustainable economic development to local businesses. The company's activity promotes intergenerational dialogue, as most recipes are traditional Cretan recipes transferred by older people to the proprietors; sometimes they are presented with a modern twist that brings out an innovative element. The experience is not included in any thematic tourism packages, the proprietors prefer to directly book their services and they also offer routes, tours, and hospitality upon request.</p> <p>The company participates in various festivals and celebrations. They take part in contests and agro-products festivals all over Crete. They participated at the Cretan Cuisine Festival, at the Kids' Christmas Cretan Foods activities, at the Municipal festivals, etc.</p>
<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>This innovative culinary experience allows the visitor to understand the role of cuisine in the local culture. Proprietors consider their experience as innovative because it connects gastronomy with civilization; everything is done from scratch with visitors' active participation – not through observation only.</p> <p>The innovative elements are the use of local herbs that form a “modern” twist version of each traditional recipe, the procedure of preparation that is done from scratch to your plate, and the relation between cuisine and culture.</p> <p>The visitors themselves are the inspirational force behind CMDC's efforts and the local culture. Their culinary experience does not only offer a dinner but also a holistic travel experience. In 10 years' time, they envisage having a cooking school with accommodation to offer boarding to students and</p>

	<p>visitors. They aspire to liaise with more Universities from abroad and host students who study Greek culture and heritage.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>There is a comments' book in place where people can write their comments and there is also a link with Trip Advisor where people express their opinions. Certainly, the most important indicator to measure success is the smile on visitors' faces.</p> <p>Stakeholders are usually eager and willing to get involved and cooperate with the culinary experience. The proprietors would wish to be able to hire staff in order to offer services to more people and would also like to have easy access to bank funding in Greece. In order to improve their services, they would like to develop further by establishing a boarding school for students. Also they would like to have an exhibition with local products and a vending spot within their premises.</p> <p>Their advice to beginners: "The first thing to keep in mind would be to put quality high on the agenda. The second thing would be to take small steps at a time in order to better control all the parameters related to the culinary services provision".</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Mr. Nikos Chronakis, vegetable producer from Hersonissos</i></b></p> <p>Through this culinary experience, our completely local agricultural products are promoted further, and this is very important for the support of our production and our income. Through this promotion and cooperation, we can more easily promote our products in hotels in the nearby area. Apart from supplying vegetables for the culinary experience, I have hosted in my farm visitors who hold baskets and harvest vegetables that they later on cooked at Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine. The farm is available at any time to host visits. With my own initiative I inform about the newest seasonal products that can be used at the cooking classes.</p> <p>A high quality gastronomic experience has to include agricultural products of high quality. My contribution as a farmer is important because I supply the raw material needed; these are organic products of the highest quality. My benefit is regular supply based on quality rather than quantity of the products, which is reflected also in the higher prices achieved. The promotion of my organic products through this culinary experience helps me liaise with and find new customers in the Hersonissos area.</p> <p><b><i>Tourism deputy mayor Mr. Efthymios Mountrakis from the Municipality of Hersonissos</i></b></p> <p>Local gastronomy is a strong identity part of every place that highlights local cultural elements, customs, and the historical route from the past into the future. We support the initiative of Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine as our main motivation is to promote the cultural heritage of our land. The initiative for cooperation is bilateral depending on the activities and needs. Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine is organizing specialized activities where they connect local cultural substrate with interactive gastronomic experiences. So far the Municipality has cooperated with Cretan Miracle Diet and Cuisine by: a) offering free gastronomic experience to the 10 top food bloggers from Italy (a mission of the National Tourist Organization in Italy for the promotion of Greek tourism), b) offering free gastronomic experience to 5 Greek travel</p>

bloggers (for the promotion of tourism in Hersonissos Municipality) c) cooperating at the “free-pass” initiative of the Municipality that includes free services to travel organizers, and d) taking part at various Municipal festive activities open to the public with cooking workshops (e.g. during celebration of Father’s Day) and organizing free buffets during important cultural events (e.g. celebration of 100 years since the initiation of excavations at the Minoan Palace of Malia).

The role and contribution of the Local Authority is the free promotion of CMDC’s services through our alternative tourism platform (land of experiences) to visiting tourists. The Local Authority’s benefits through this cooperation are the safeguarding of our local traditions, the promotion of Cretan cuisine and the enrichment and diversification of Hersonissos tourist product. The promotion of alternative tourism is one of the Local Authority’s targets and this is achieved through our Annual Programme of Tourism Promotion and through our Strategy Planning on Sustainable Tourist Development.

The activities organized by CMDC support the production of local products and local economy as a whole. CMDC contributes to our efforts for diversification of our tourist product, which is of paramount importance for the tourist development of our Municipality. The role of the Municipality is important in the experience as it is promoting, at its own expense, such alternative tourism initiatives on its website [www.landofexperiences.com](http://www.landofexperiences.com).

*Written by: Maria Symeonidou and Michael Katharakis*

TYPE 3

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY LINKED TO FOOD HIGHLIGHTED THROUGH A TOURIST ACTIVITY

## TOURIST FARM BUTUL



Mrs Butul is picking lavender from the Mediterranean herbal garden at Tourist farm Butul together with a visitor (image credit: Tourist farm Butul).

*The tourist farm Butul in coastal area of Slovenia is a family-run business which organises culinary workshops and offers tasting menus and boutique caterings. The workshops on Mediterranean cuisine are designed for anyone from beginners to experienced chefs. Visitors can visit olive groves, vineyards, meadows, beehive and vegetable and Mediterranean herb garden. They produce wine, olive oil, jams, syrups and canned vegetables. They are all made of their crops. They add their herbs to wine, beer, cheeses and cosmetic products. The farm's motto is: "Tradition is our mission". They promote traditional Istrian dishes served in an innovative and modern way. They respect heritage and aim to offer their guests an authentic culinary experience. They always base their services and products on their own experience rather than "culinary experts". Since they like to travel, they collect new knowledge related to culinary heritage from different countries and try to apply it at their farm. They agree with an idea that "right when we think that we know everything, that is when we start learning."*

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### Introduction

Their food atelier or culinary studio offers various tasting menus, individual culinary workshops, and boutique catering. Food is produced on 6 ha of agricultural land and prepared following the Slow Food principles, i.e. clean, healthy, local, seasonal, and fair. In winter months they move to Sri Lanka. There, on their second tourist farm, they grow tropical crops, which are then introduced into Slovenian and Mediterranean cuisine, and vice versa.

They hold around 100 culinary events per year and take part in many international culinary events, such as: Slow Fish (Genoa; IT), Cheese (Bra; IT), Terra Madre (Torino; IT), Berlin Cheese Days (Berlin, DE), Orange Wine Festival (Izola; SI, Vienna; AT), Kozjansko Apple Festival (Podsreda, SI), Malvasia Wine Festival (Portorož, SI), Sweet Istria (Koper, SI), The Slovenian Istria Agriculture Days (Koper, SI).



*Photo 1: Members of the Butul family (from left): Mitja, Tatjana and Črt (image credit: Tourist farm Butul).*

## Culinary experience

The culinary experience at the Butul tourist farm in Manžan near Koper in Slovenian Istria is a family story run by Tatjana, Mitja, and their son Črt. The educational Butul tourist farm holds workshops on Mediterranean cuisine for anyone, beginners and experienced chefs. Visitors are told about and shown their olive groves, vineyards, and meadows as they walk past the beehive to the vegetable and Mediterranean herb garden. The month of April is dedicated to asparagus, while the diverse summer is dedicated to culinary workshops on Mediterranean vegetables and fruit, their growing, preparation, canning, and preserving, while autumn months are dedicated to olives. Along with wine and olive oil, they also grow herbs, while jams, syrups, and canned vegetables are prepared from other crops. They add their herbs to wine, beer, cheeses, and cosmetic products.



*Photo 2: Students from the University of Gastronomic sciences Pollenzo in Italy are taking notes while listening to Črt Butul (image credit: Tourist farm Butul).*

The beginnings of the Butuls' culinary efforts date back to 1997, when they started holding their first culinary workshops. Since 1999 this has been their primary activity, while their work has become their way of live. In 2000, in the desire for a healthy life style and contact with nature, they moved from the centre of Koper back to their roots, to the nearby rural area around the village of Manžan. They had the idea of eating a healthy diet, with homegrown food, while offering surplus food to their guests. They participated in a project about a healthy lifestyle, where unlike restaurants that mostly offered processed food, they started to prepare their dishes "slightly differently" – in a traditional way. Tatjana Butul wrote a booklet entitled *Zdrava sredozemska hrana* ("A Healthy Mediterranean Diet"). It was published by The Healthy Living Society Manžan in five languages (Slovene, English, Italian, French, and German), and distributed in over 20,000 copies.

Their culinary workshops were complemented by a tourist farm and accommodation services. Their homestead is neither an inn nor a restaurant. Their home – a tourist farm – is a house with its doors wide open, striving to teach its guests about food and cuisine, where all people with good intentions are welcome. This kind of thinking was passed on to their son, who became a culinary explorer and who brings to the table the experience he gained in Michelin restaurants across the world.

Their target group are people who like to know what they eat and how their food was produced. Most visitors, i.e. as much as 95%, are foreigners. They can seat up to 25 guests at a time. They advertise themselves via a simple website, which is in English only. They are advertised through word of mouth, journalists

	<p>who write about them, and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>The Butul tourist farm's motto is: "Tradition is our mission". Their cuisine brings their guests back to traditional dishes, served in an innovative and contemporary way. They focus on traditional Istrian dishes. By respecting heritage and coming from the desire to offer their guests an authentic culinary experience, they used stone and wood to make unique plates, wooden trays, tables, and benches. They make their own packaging and labels. They always based their services and products on their own experience rather than "culinary experts". They travel abroad, learn, and gain culinary and life experience. They follow the motto: "Right when we think that we know everything, that is when we start to learn."</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The Butul farm collaborates with around 40 small local providers of agricultural products and stakeholders that promote them. Since 2014 they have been a learning centre for the University of Gastronomic Sciences from Pollenzo, Italy, which was established by the Slow Food organization. Students can do their internship with them, while twice a year a one-week culinary field trip across Slovenia is organised for the students. An important stakeholder is the Institute for the Development and Research of Catering and Agricultural Activities, SloVino, from Maribor, with which they collaborate in events related to cuisine and wine. They work with cheese makers at two mountain pastures in the Julian Alps – Matajur in Božca – where they make cheeses with herbs. The Butul family provides herbs from their Mediterranean herb garden and salt from the Sečovlje Salt Pans Landscape Park, while the dairy farmers on the mountain pastures make cheeses from the recipes of the Butuls, which finally age in their cellar. This is a special case of experimental learning of cheese makers and the Butuls, as adding herbs and other additions to cheese is a special challenge (addition of black tea, cream of tartar, rosemary, basil, etc.). With hop growers from the Rojnik farm in Savinjska dolina they are involved in a micro brewery project called "Birca". From the native barley and buckwheat from the Istrian countryside they created a beer with Butul herbs. They exchange guests with restaurants Hiša Franko and Vila Podvin, and thus make up a triangle of three regions: Mediterranean, Posočje, and Gorenjska. Their products are sold in the Strunjan Landscape Park, LifeClass hotels in Portorož (Istrian Market), in Koper, Berlin, Torino, Marseille, Bratislava, Prague, Rotterdam, etc. They base their collaboration with stakeholders on "a good feeling right from the start, when they feel each other, and with whom they never come up against closed doors". Collaboration must be genuine, integrated with real life, and without acting.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>In developing their own culinary experience, the Butul family does not follow any special municipal or national tourist strategy. They have their own strategy, which they pour their souls into. The Municipality of Koper and the Koper Tourist Organisation occasionally provide funds for printing promotion materials. In their activities they take into account the standards and recommendations for various certificates, but do not</p>

	<p>pursue them due to too much red tape. With workshops for working with wood, natural stone, and ceramics, in connection with cuisine, they take part in training programmes for the unemployed and special needs' people.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>Tourist agencies do not include the Butul Tourist Farm in their tourist packages, as they typically charge a commission, which is not the Butuls' policy. This happens only exceptionally, i.e. when this is explicitly requested by agency guests. The Butul family was involved in the design and beginnings of many culinary events, which have now turned into major culinary events. Among them, Sweet Istria in Koper is probably the most known. In recent years they have held small culinary events in their home village, trying to pursue authenticity by steering away from crowds. They organise Pohod kakijev ("The Persimmon Hike" up to 200 visitors) and Šagra fižoletov (Green Bean Festival), where they use culinary workshops to educate people.</p>
<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>In 2010 they arranged the Mediterranean Herb Garden in Slovenian Istria, which was declared the best tourist product in the Municipality of Koper. In 2011 they made it to the semi-finals for the Sejalec award – the Slovenian national tourist board event for the best national tourist product.</p> <p>The Butul family follow the principle that innovative culinary experiences should bring food production and processing closer to people and teach them something new. Their guests are shown the garden, fruit, vegetables, olive trees, grape, and herbs, and told about their production. Right after that they taste the food with a different attitude. Their biggest innovation is that their guests get to feel the tradition and domesticity – they come into their homes, which is the most that anyone can offer.</p> <p>The added value of the innovative culinary experience at the Butul farmstead is that visitors are made to think about their own diets. If people start thinking about what they eat, they will surely make at least a small step toward a healthier diet. Innovation lies in meeting the food producer, serving food where it was grown, for example on a table inside a vineyard, tasting olive oil under an olive tree, visiting a mountain pasture to see how cheese is made, seeing the cow that gave milk for the cheese, drinking a glass of milk that will become cheese, and learning the cow's name. Innovation lies in discovering old traditional tastes served in a modern way so that the guest participates in food preparation and that the provider's story is real, tangible, and honest. Each morning the Butuls bake bread for their guests and themselves, as they all eat the same food. An example of its innovation is that intentionally there is no sign saying "Tourist Farm Butul" hanging out front – when guests leave the place they understand why. They do not accept unannounced guests, and their work schedule is agreed in advance. Another innovation of their culinary experience is that it is not for the masses but is personal and small-scale. The Butuls are inspired by the Slow Food organisation.</p> <p>In 10 years' time they see their current range of services as significantly upgraded, they will travel abroad where they will present Slovenian Istria and bring to it, with its activities, as many visitors as possible. They will</p>

	<p>keep pouring their souls into their products, as this is what leads to high-quality services that make them proud. This is how they attract their future guests to come visit.</p> <p>They will bring tasting menus back to popularity and continue to run the tourist farm in its current scale, following the motto “less is more”. They do not want to turn into a restaurant or a “farm hotel”, as many others have done. Their focus will remain their link with the soil, while they will build on local integration of products and people.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The success of their culinary workshops and culinary and educational hosting is measured via surveys distributed among the participants. The response to other services is evaluated through personal discussions with users. The main obstacles to networking among the people in Istria are: (1) mentality, (2), envy, (3) lack of readiness to collaborate, (4) fear of new things, (5), search for an easy way. People do not know how to be successful as they are afraid to try new things and of their own success, and they do not believe in themselves. Rather than stepping out of the box, people prefer to complain and stay inside the box. Success comes from believing in one’s work and long-term commitment. There is no overnight success. The Butuls established their own way of work that they stick to, as they know that it is a good one.</p> <p>Older people must surround themselves with young people and give them the opportunity to pursue culinary arts. If they are doing well, they should be commended for it in front of others, but when they make a mistake they should be told in private. The stakeholders and beginners who want to form their own culinary experience must be familiar with their locality and its culinary tradition, the ingredients that were used in the past, and with what grows in their vicinity. Their range of services must provide profound experience. They must believe in what they do. They must offer their guests the food that they eat themselves, while knowing its origin and being fair to their guests. Food is people, while cuisine is one of the connections between nature and humankind.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Rok Stres, cheese maker at mountain pasture Planina Matajur</i></b></p> <p>The collaboration between Rok Stres, cheese maker on the Matajur mountain pasture, and the tourist farm Butul dates back to 2012. The cheese maker had previously tried to make cheeses with various additions, such as pepper, sweet peppers, and chili peppers. Following the Butuls’ recipe, he started to make cheeses with less traditional additions, such as lavender, savory, rosemary, basil, cream of tartar, and black tea from Sri Lanka. The Butuls deliver herbs from their Mediterranean herb garden and salt from the Sečovlje Salt Pans to the mountain pasture. In their common experimental learning, i.e. of the cheese makers and the Butuls, they learnt that adding herbs and other additions in cheese making is a special challenge. The fact that the cheese maker makes cheeses together with the Butuls is an advertisement for him, and he sells more cheese as a result. He also experiments by making cheese with coffee beans.</p>

***Dejan Baier, Institute for the Development and Research of Catering and Agricultural Activities SloVino***

The collaboration between the SloVino institute and the Butul tourist farm goes back to when they met at a business fair; this has now lasted for more than 15 years. They are connected through the Slow Food movement, where the Butuls lead the Primorska convivium, and SloVino the Štajerska convivium. The SloVino institute has held sommelier courses at the Butul tourist farm for over 10 years.

Over the years their business relationship has grown into friendship. The Butul family is the best part of the Butul tourist farm. They are genuine and put all their efforts in their lives with cuisine. They live what they speak. It is nice to work, live, and share good ideas with Mitja, Tatjana, and Črt.

We have exhibited with the Butul tourist farm at various culinary events in Bratislava, Prague, and the Terra Madre Salone del Gusto in Torino. The Butuls always take part at the International Wine and Delicacy Salon, VinDel, in Maribor.

***Tamara Kozlovič, Tourist organization of Koper***

The City Municipality of Koper and the Koper Tourist Organisation have collaborated with Tourist farm Butul for a number of years to promote gastronomy. In 2009 at a tender held by the City Municipality of Koper for co-financing new tourist products, Tourist farm Butul received funding for developing the Mediterranean Herbal Garden of Slovenian Istria. With its diverse gastronomic range, thematic culinary workshops, tasting evenings, accommodation capacities, and guided tours of the Mediterranean Herbal Garden, Tourist farm Butul significantly increased the visibility of the City Municipality of Koper, its rural areas, and Slovenia as a whole. With its activities, it endeavours to bring rural areas, gastronomy, and local products closer to people, thus making the gastronomy more recognisable. In its work it takes into account and builds upon the guidelines from the Development Strategy for Gastronomy in Slovenia (2006) and the Development and Tourism Marketing Strategy of the City Municipality of Koper by 2025.

*Written by: Primož Pipan*

## BENVINGUTS A PAGÈS



Selling wine outside Can Morral del Molí wine cellar (image credit: Col·lectiu agents Benvingut a Pagès)

*Benvinguts a Pagès is a Spanish project which promotes consumerism in the local environment and alternative forms of tourism related to local food production. It aims at bringing tourists closer to the authenticity of food products and cuisine. The project also aspires to generate new forms of cooperation among producers, restaurants, and consumers. Their main goal is to bring urban residents closer to the countryside and to create a tourist experience focused on their relationship with local producers and gastronomy. In other words, it is centred around offering the tourist the possibility of having a real experience of living out in the country as well as learning the origin and reasons for the quality of the food they consume. This entails tasting the products, sharing experiences with the producers, being in touch with the animals, visiting the orchards and fruit tree orchards, and seeing the connection between earth and life. Benvinguts a Pagès helps to rediscover the place where the food that we eat comes from. Tourists can visit the farms, see the boats that fishermen use and discover all the local products by sampling special menus. In a nutshell, Benvinguts a Pagès is about valuing the relationship between gastronomy, territory and local products, promoting rural tourism and fostering local purchasing through visits to farms around Catalonia. They cooperate with rural accommodation establishments and restaurants that follow the “buy local” concept.*

### Contact

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### Introduction

In 2016, Catalonia was appointed as the European Gastronomy Region by the EU, and the local government declared 2016 the year of Gastronomic and Wine tourism. Both distinctions are closely related and they prioritize the relation between gastronomy, product and territory, while emphasizing the singularity of Catalan cuisine, Catalan products and the recognition of the country as a quality food and wine tourist destination.

The Catalan government has assigned a new label on locally grown products and “local purchasing.” This label enables consumers to identify food from local producers when buying it or consuming it in restaurants.

In this context, the Alicia Foundation suggested the Catalan Tourism Agency (ACT) and the Department of Agriculture, Cattle, Fishing and Food (DARPA) the development of a project which gives value to the agro-food heritage and promotes a type of live experience tourism in the form of an open doors weekend in farms all over Catalonia. This was done both in connection with restaurants offering local products and with rural accommodations establishments.

Benvingut a Pagès (“Welcome to the Countryside”) is managed by the government of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya) through the Catalan Tourism Agency (Agència Catalana de Turisme, ACT) and the Agriculture,

	<p>Cattle Industry, Fishing and Food Department (Departament d’Agricultura, Ramaderia, Pesca i Alimentació, DARPA). The project has the support of the regional government’s tourism section (Patronats de Turisme de les Diputacions) and is coordinated by Alicia Foundation (Fundació Alícia). The contribution of all producers, restaurants and accommodations establishments involved should not be forgotten.</p>
<p><b>Culinary experience</b></p>	<p>Benvinguts a Pagès is a service, which promotes local purchasing and new forms of tourism related to the production within the region. It aims at bringing tourists closer to the authenticity of the territory, its products and cuisine. The project also aspires to generate new forms of cooperation among producers, restaurants and consumers in general.</p> <p>The main goal is bringing city dwellers closer to the countryside and to create a tourist experience focused on their relationship with local producers and gastronomy. In other words, it is centred around offering the tourist the possibility of having a real experience of living out in the country as well as learning the origin and reasons for the quality of the food they intake. This entails tasting the products, sharing experiences with the producers, being in touch with the animals, visiting the orchards, and seeing the connection between earth and life.</p> <p>Benvinguts a Pagès is a unique experience to rediscover the place where the food that we eat grow comes from and how the food that we bring home is produced. You can visit the farms, be shown the boats that fishermen use and discover all the local products by sampling special menus. In a nutshell, Benvinguts a Pagès is about: (1) Valuing the relationship between gastronomy, territory and local products. (2) Promoting rural tourism.</p> <p>(3) Fostering local purchasing through visits to farms around Catalonia, in liaison with rural accommodation establishments and restaurants that opt for the “buy local” concept</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>Benvinguts a Pagès searches an immediate impact for the producers: have their work recognized and increase direct-to-consumer sales. Creating a specific interest in their products during the weekend, producers can give visibility to their job and benefit from sales growth in farmers’ markets, traditional shops, online platforms, restaurants, etc.</p> <p>When participating in the project some farms can face some logistical limitations such as labour shortages, dated or not suitable facilities, incompatible schedules for farming work and tourist visits, etc. This kind of obstacles make the involvement of all the farms difficult.</p> <p>The participation of restaurants and lodging establishments in Benvinguts a Pagès is a strategic action with a direct economic impact. This impact was</p>



*Photo 1: Farmer of Hort del Puig in Bagès explaining visitors the process of growing vegetables. (image credit: Col·lectiu agents Benvinguts a Pagès)*

	<p>present during the weekend of the meeting and we hope it will last, at least, until the end of the year.</p> <p>In this pioneering project the initial plan was working with 200 farms in Catalonia, 5 per region. Finally, the number of participating farms was 182. The criteria to select the participating farms were:</p> <p>Labelling: Making quality products with the quality label: PDO (Protected Designation of Origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indications), organic or integrated production.</p> <p>Accessibility of the activities and facilities related with to visits.</p> <p>Farm's owner had to be a young farmer, according to regulations.</p> <p>The requirements for the restaurants were:</p> <p>Provide a Benvinguts a Pagès Menu during the weekend that included mainly local products. All the dishes had to include products from different producers of the area. Same structure of the usual weekend menu, and for the restaurants without menu, the effort of creating one for the occasion. The main goal was to continue with the usual offer but showing the origin of the ingredients with the name of the farm.</p> <p>Not using products out of season in the menu was considered favourable.</p> <p>According to the participating farms and territorial delegates the estimates number of visitors was 12,019.</p> <p>Dairy farms were the most visited with 34% of the visits. The second most visited type was the meat farms (19%), almost a fifth of the total; followed by the “vegetables and mushroom” farms (14%), beverages (9%), and “poultry and eggs” (7%).</p> <p>The first three categories involved almost 70% of the total visits. The rest of the categories had between 1% and 5% of the visitors. There is a great interest for the farms with animals, representing a 60% of the visits.</p> <p>By regions the 12,019 visitors were distributed as follows: 5,797 in Barcelona, 3,796 in Girona, being the most visited regions, and 763 in Tarragona and 1,663 in Lleida, with a more modest result.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The structure of Benvinguts a Pagès as it was put in place:</p> <p>Technical Commission: A commission composed of technicians from the Alicia Foundation, Catalan Tourism Agency (ACT) and Agriculture, Cattle Industry, Fishing and Food Department (DARPA), who led and coordinated the project.</p> <p>Territorial Delegates: Technical staff linked to the Regional Board and local organizations working in the promotion of local products and merchants, and tourism. Their duties consisted of informing inside their territorial field about the initiative and the actions inside the project Benvinguts a Pagès; and collecting information from the actors and enterprises participating in the project and other relevant information.</p>



Photo 2: Visitors tasting artisan cheese (image credit: Col·lectiu agents Benvingut a Pagès)

	<p>Agents: A complement for the territorial delegates. They know the territory and the actors interested in the project. These agents are also connected to the administration, normally related to the Territorials Services of DARPA, local or regional Tourism Offices, and city councils.</p> <p>Actors: farmers, farms, restaurants and hospitality establishments. Along with the visitors, they are indispensable to Benvinguts a Pagès. The selection of the participants was aimed to comply with the requirements that guarantee the aims of the project.</p> <p>Visitors: the target of the project. The “guests” to Benvinguts a Pagès visited the farms, stayed in the hospitality establishments and ate at the restaurants.</p> <p>Alicia Foundation Team: Alicia brings their platform, knowledge and expertise to develop and coordinate the project. They were in charge of the platform, design, execution and control of every task, actions and interventions necessary for running the initiative.</p> <p>The territorial delegates identified the agents in each territory. The required profile for the agents was: (1) Administration Technician working principally in the field of tourism, economic promotion and/or local development. (2) Regional governments’ workers in the areas of tourism, trade, and economic promotion. (3) Councils managing the PDO (Protected Designation of Origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indications), and ETG (Especialidad Tradicional Garantizada). (4) City halls.</p> <p>Associations and cooperatives of producers.</p> <p>Rural hospitality associations, professional associations of restaurant business owners, cooking industry workers, chef unions, etc.</p> <p>Other associations, confederations or similar, related with the agrarian sector, restaurant business, and tourism.</p> <p>In regard to the typology of farms we observed a high participation of farms within the drinks classification (wine and cava). The majority of them were wineries with their own vineyard. They represent more than a quarter of the total of participating farms (27.4%). The other categories of products with a high representation are: meat and cold meat (13.1%), vegetables and mushrooms (13.1%), cheese and dairy (11.6%), olive and olives (11.1%). Another typology of farms with a minor representation but also important: aromatic plants, honey and other sweet products (7.2%), fresh fruit (6.7%) and poultry and eggs (4.6%). The farms with minor representability were fish, shellfish and derivative (0.6%), legumes (1.4%), rice and other cereals (1.6%) and nuts (1.8%).</p> <p>The numbers of Benvinguts a Pagès are the following: Territorial Delegates: 63, Number of regions: 42, Initial number of farms: 200, Number of participating farms: 182, Initial number of restaurants: 264, Number of participating restaurants: 226, Initial number of hospitality establishments: 286</p> <p>Number of participant hospitality establishments: 228</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>Benvinguts a Pagès main priority is to offer a good experience to the visitors and bring to attention the real value in the products, producers and the food from the region. The guideline gives the option to participate at the project wanted and assure a maximum coherence between the participants.</p>

<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>There is an added economic value for restaurants, rural hotels and farmers because visitors have the option to not only visit but also to buy local products, and to eat and sleep in the places involved in the project. The fact that the first prerequisite to participate in the project is labelled: “local purchasing”, shows the importance put on the local economy by the project. The project also maintains a perspective of giving equal opportunity to participate to all the people living in the Catalonia region. For this reason, the project organized workshops and information sessions in different places throughout the region.</p>
<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>The website (<a href="http://benvingutsapages.alicia.cat/">http://benvingutsapages.alicia.cat/</a>) has been the central element of communication about and connection to the project. In the first stage, the website was working to connect the organization with the various participants. In the second stage, the information was given about the project, who the participants are, and the organizational plan for the weekend. In the third and final stage, the website served as a message of gratitude for the contributions of the participants and visitors and acted as a summary of the Benvinguts a Pagès weekend with pictures and stories.</p> <p>The decision to not create specific social networks with the profile of the project was due to the large numbers of followers in the different networks of the organization's entities. The different entities already had separate successful networks. Most of the separate entities were using Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The channels are @fundacioalicia, @somgastronomia, @catexperience and @darpa. All of them used the hashtag #benvingutsapages.</p> <p>With the GPS data given by the actors, a map from Google Maps with the location of all the farms was created. By using this map, the concentration and types of farms around the region could be seen, with icons specific to the category of the products that they produce and sell. The search on the map could be done in two ways:</p> <p>For regions: with an interactive map. Moving the cursor on a specific territory you can see the name of the farm. By clicking on the farm that you are interested in, you can see the participants.</p> <p>For products: A mosaic with representative icons of each category of product. By clicking on the particular product, you can see all the farms that raise or grow that product.</p> <p>On the map there is a date for the event along with an explanation of the activity done there. This information helped the visitors to plan their weekend and navigate their adventure. The promotional material was innovative and distributed to the participants. It is expected that in 10 years this experience will continue to prosper, but we cannot guarantee that it will be done with the same format or with the same participants and farms.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The results are very positive with almost 56% of the survey responded with a high satisfaction level and only 9% with dissatisfaction. A total of 88% of the farms want to continue with the experience in a second edition. Only 1% do not want to continue and 11% remain undecided.</p> <p>The positive feedback about the outcome of the experience Benvinguts a Pagès was ranked as follows: in first place with 71.43% of the answers – meet and talk with other farmers and, in second place with 64.29% – learning</p>

	<p>about the life of the farmer. The possibility of direct sales between farmers and consumers came in third.</p> <p>The critical remarks were related to the coincidence of the Benvinguts a Pagès weekend with the end of the academic course holidays and the weekend before the Saint Joan festivities, an important local festivity. This had a negative impact on the number of visitors at Benvinguts a Pagès, according to the general opinion. Some farms also noted that during the season in which the event occurred they have a very limited offer of products because the event took place outside of harvest season.</p> <p>The duration of the event, three days, was the reason for some critical remarks. The problem lies in the difficulty to balance farm work with three consecutive days of open doors at the farms without reservations.</p> <p>Initially, the possibility to create “tour packages” in coordination with a tourism agency was considered. This option would facilitate reservations in advance and the possibility of discounts on packages, including visits, meals and lodging. The ACT was in charge of sending emails to the tourism agencies in the territory to coordinate this offer, but for a variety of reasons this proposal was finally rejected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• logistics challenges</li> <li>• difficulties to sell the tourism packages</li> <li>• preparing additional information</li> </ul> <p>Some difficulties were found during the project, which provided an important lesson for the next editions. For example, the preparatory sessions and workshops before the weekend of Benvinguts a Pagès was mandatory for the participants, but after realizing how difficult it was for a large number of the farmers to be present at the last session, on 19th April in Món Sant Benet, it was decided to record the session. The recording was uploaded to YouTube and all the links were sent out to the participants who did not have the opportunity to assist. The Delegates from each territory followed up with the farms to confirm the viewings.</p> <p>Another difficult point was collecting information with a survey. A lot of effort and work had to be put in the organization. Numerous emails and phone calls were made to the participants to ensure that all the information required in the survey was submitted.</p> <p>The Civil Responsibility Insurance generated questions and doubt. Due to the challenge it represented for some farms to obtain this insurance, the project decided to offer personal advice services. It consisted of providing exhaustive and close monitoring and advice on the individual situation of each farm.</p> <p>Beyond these limitations, we measure the success of this experience with the significant number of consumer participants, with the intention expressed by the producers to participate in future editions, and the goal to incorporate new participants in every edition. The interest of the public administrations to continue with this initiative is also very encouraging.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Toni Beltran, director of “Olive Oil” enterprise</i></b></p> <p>“The production of olive oil is in Horta de Sant Joan (Terra Alta). I have been offering guided visits and tastings in our family farm for a few years. Participating in the last edition of Benvinguts a Pagès gave us the opportunity to get our name out and have the visibility that we need to boost our projects in olive oil tourism.”</p>

***Joan Canal, Espai Can Mir in the Selva region***

“We are very happy about our participation in Benvinguts a Pagès because last year we had a very good reception. People are surprised when they see the cultivation process and kids are the most fascinated. Interest in aromatic herbs is increasing because everybody can identify with mojitos, herbal teas, jams, and their pleasant smell. For us, the project was very positive because it increased our visibility and sales.”

***Josep Capdevila de Can Sargaire, Farmers and Ranchers of Almacelles (Lleida)***

“We’re repeating the experience because we think that it is a good idea to show our work and our products. Last year, we received a lot of visitors from our own region but this year we also received visitors from Barcelona. It was a success.”

*Written by: Margalida Mulet Pascual and Fundació Alicia*

TYPE 4

CULINARY EVENT

## ONION FESTIVAL



Discovering the great onion varieties at Onion Festival farmers' market (image credit: Paolo D'Antonio)

*The Onion Festival (Ente Festa Cipolla) is a culinary event organized to promote Cannara onions, a traditional local produce which is cultivated based on specific guidelines and in specific areas around the town of Cannara in Italy. The Cannara onions are in the process of being recognized as PDI. At the festival, visitors can order full onion-based food menus (from starters to desserts). Each of the six local organizations is responsible for one culinary stand or restaurant. At the festival visitors are invited to discover new flavours and unique onion-based recipes. Onions and onion-based dishes can be bought at small farmers' market accompanied by music concerts. The Onion Festival was established in 1981 through grassroots mobilisation by volunteers from Cannara who wanted to promote and increase the value of this local produce. Onions were traditionally considered as "food for the poor". The first few festivals were organized in the kitchens and garages of people living in historical centre. With time, and thanks to the success of the event, the organizational aspects were improved. The latest festivals attracted about 100,000 people during a two-week event. The Festival plays an important role in social and economic development of the community: it supports local initiatives and recognizes the work of associations, promotes local produce and strengthens the sense of community. Around 500 people help in different ways to successfully organize the festival.*

### Contact

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### Introduction

The Onion Festival is such an important event for the community that the municipality provides its support. The Ente Festa Cipolla is a local organization that supervises and manages the organization of the Onion Festival. It is formed by six local associations (Pro Avis Cannara, A.S. Dilettantistica FIDASC rifugio del Cacciatore; Amici di Cillemancio Cannara, Pro Loco Cannara; El Cipollaro and La parrocchia di San Matteo) and each of them manages one culinary stand (which are the heart of the event). The consortium of Cannara onion producers is not part of the Ente Festa Cipolla: it is the supplier for the onions used during the event and has a stand to sell onions and other onion-based products (such as jam) during the festival.

## Culinary experience

The Onion Festival is a culinary event organized to promote a local traditional product: Cannara onions, which are cultivated based on specific guidelines and within a clearly defined area. The consortium of producers, together with the municipality, have started the process to have Cannara's onions recognized as Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs). The festival is about offering visitors full menus (from starters to desserts) made with onion-based dishes. The above-identified six local organizations are responsible for one culinary stand/restaurant each where people sit down to have their meals, usually dinner. People participate in the event to eat onions and to discover new flavours and unique recipes. During the event, there is also a small farmers' market that sells mostly onions and there are other collateral events (such as music) for entertainment.



*Photo 1: Preparing onions to be used for meals preparation (image credit: Paolo D'Antonio)*

Before the official establishment of the Ente Festa Cipolla (in 2009) the Pro loco of Cannara was responsible for the organization of the event (also for raising the economic resources and the sponsorships). The Onion Festival was created in 1981 by volunteers from Cannara who wished to promote and valorise the cultivation of this local/traditional product. The idea behind the event was to increase the status and value of this agricultural product, traditionally considered as "food for the poor". The first editions were organized in a simple way, by using the kitchens of people living in the historical centre and their garages. With time, and thanks to the success of the event, the organizational aspects were improved. In the latest editions about 100,000 people attended the event in a two-week period. The event was created with a bottom-up approach.

The festival has been developed with this format since its very beginning to promote the aggregation of onion production and to maximize the value of this product. With time this aspect has not changed and the first article of the Ente Festa Cipolla's statute directly mentions the promotion of the territory and the valorisation of typical products.

The Onion Festival plays an important economic role for the community: it contributes to economically supporting the local associations (that form the Ente Festa Cipolla) which have recreational and community (social) scopes. With the money raised during the festival, these associations implement activities on behalf of the community (young people and people in need). The main benefit for the onion producers is not really economic, but mainly the promotion and valorisation of the product.

Additionally, the event is important since it strengthens the sense of community: 500 people (of a total of 4,000) participate in different ways in the successful organization of the event.

	<p>The President of the Ente Festa Cipolla shares with the rest of the volunteers and all stakeholders the same motivation to participate: increasing the image and visibility of the municipality. The event is first a community event. It is the celebration of Cannara's citizens and local products. The event does not really have a target group; the organizers try to meet the needs of all ages (especially with collateral activities). Families represent a major group. There are no workshops nor educational activities linked to the onion's cultivation.</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>Onion is a local traditional product (a natural and cultural resource) and has a key role in local gastronomy. This aspect is totally included in the event since all the menus served are only made with Cannara onions.</p> <p>The preservation of the cultural heritage and innovation are both important for the continuity of the event. Without its cultural heritage (there are traces of onion cultivation in Cannara that are hundreds of years old) there would be no event, but innovation is at the same time essential to have successful festivals.</p> <p>The regulations and the statute of the Ente Festa Cipolla provide for strict rules in order to protect and grant the success of the event.</p> <p>Cannara is a small municipality and its architecture (especially its squares) perfectly match the structure and format of the event. Also, the surrounding countryside and the Collemancio hills contribute to making the whole scenario attractive.</p> <p>The event mirrors local culture and habits, especially in terms of culinary traditions; moreover, since 80% of the families of Cannara are involved in the festival there is a close link with the lifestyle and cultural background. The association of onion producers is also involved, as they provide the onions for the event.</p> <p>The festival was developed by local people and volunteers and thanks to the managerial capacity of the staff involved throughout the years. No experts were involved.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The event is organized by the Ente Festa Cipolla with the direct involvement of the six associations that manage the culinary stands/restaurants, and with the contribution of the association of the onion producers. The volunteers have a key role; without them no event will take place.</p> <p>The Ente Festa Cipolla was created by the local associations of Cannara: the local Pro Loco (which was originally responsible for the Onion Festival) was the first one to open and manage a stand/restaurant. The following five were added later and most likely this will remain the number since having other stands would mean</p> <div data-bbox="810 1525 1477 1966" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><i>Photo 2: Cannara onions ready to be served (image credit: Paolo D'Antonio)</i></p>

	<p>expanding the festival outside the city walls, and this would change the format too much.</p> <p>No specific problems occurred with and amongst the involved stakeholders: each local organization is represented in the Ente Festa Cipolla and its presidency changes every few years by appointing as President one member of the involved associations. Mr. Damaschi feels that having a valuable product to promote with a strong link with the local community and its cultural heritage is indispensable to initiating a similar culinary experience.</p> <p>On a local level there are other initiatives (such as Vernaccia Pop Wine and many religious celebrations) where the local stakeholders actively participate. But, with the exception of the Winter Onion Festival, the Ente Festa Cipolla is not involved. There have been only a few editions of the Winter Onion Festival: not all the culinary stands are heated, and people expect the same activities and offers provided during the summer edition. For this reason, the number of visitors is much lower and is not a consolidated event.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>The Statute of the Ente Festa Cipolla and the regulations are the documents relevant for the culinary experience. There is cooperation with the municipality, the Region, the Perugia Province, and the chamber of commerce. They support the event. The municipality covers between 10 and 15% of the organizational costs. The Onion Festival is the main event for the local community and it provides an important contribution in term of social aggregation and increasing local economic resources. Neither the National Tourism Organisation nor the Ministry of Tourism have a role in this culinary experience.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>The festival attracts a lot of people to Cannara and consequentially important economic resources are spent in the territory. As said, local associations directly benefit from the management of the stands/restaurants and the municipality benefits from the “concession” of the public area for the organization of the event. Additionally, there is the revenue coming from advertising to cover the organizational costs.</p> <p>The festival really benefits from word of mouth. There is no formal cooperation established with tour operators. However, the local Pro Loco promotes the event (before and during the festival), especially through the network of Pro Loco (In Italy, basically every village and town has its own pro loco). The event is organized after the harvest, which starts in the middle of July and lasts until the middle of August.</p> <p>A critical aspect is that Cannara’s onions (being more expensive than other onions cultivated in the area because they are produced by specific guidelines) are seen as a “niche product”. A greater effort should be made to communicate to the market the high quality and production principles that stand behind this product. The festival is a great opportunity to promote Cannara onions (and in fact during the event its sale increases in the stores that commercialize it) but a lot more can be done to ensure and strengthen the production. Even though the format of the Onion Festival is solid and fruitful, improvements can be made to facilitate the access to the town during the event; there is a need for better parking.</p>

<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>Mr. Damaschi suggests: “An innovative culinary experience is linked to the capacity of promoting products that belong to the local community”. This connection will be valuable also for future generations. Additionally, the Onion Festival is innovative because it is capable of meeting the “needs” of tourists also thanks to the offer of different kinds of entertaining activities. What inspired (and still inspires) the Onion Festival was the desire to become an event unlike any other.</p> <p>The possibility of eating unique and authentic recipes makes the onion-based food of Cannara an excellence. The most surprising thing in 10 years will be having the same success as nowadays and seeing the same people coming back to the Onion Festival to eat the same food and experience a unique atmosphere created thanks to the participation of Cannara’s citizens. Having loyal customers is an important goal to achieve.</p>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>The event is monitored with the number of participants and the number of served meals. And additionally, Mr. Damaschi personally checks the level of complaints (for example an email from people who were disappointed with something), etc. if the level is close to zero the satisfaction is high.</p> <p>All the regulations (and especially the most recent ones) are making the organization of the event increasingly difficult. In order to improve the experience, it would be important to keep the heart of the experience the same but improve the organizational format to satisfy people’s desires, which constantly change.</p>
<b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b>	<p><b><i>Carlo Sirci, President of the Cannara Onion Producers’ Consortium</i></b></p> <p>The Cannara Onion Festival is a good opportunity to increase the value of this agro-food product and to foster its link with the local community. After providing the onions for the event, the Consortium takes part as exhibitor in the market organized on the streets; moreover, it is such an important event for the community that a lot of producers participate as volunteers. The Festa della Cipolla allows to show the high quality of the product but it could really benefit from a more organized sharing of information and knowledge through seminars and conferences.</p> <p><b><i>Maria Angela Bini, volunteer from the Pro Loco Association</i></b></p> <p>The Pro Loco is involved in the Festa della Cipolla as member of the organization that manages the event and also, as a grassroots association, that provides a contribution to the promotion and external communication. The Festa della Cipolla is a key local event, which has improved its format over time. Some improvements can still be implemented in order to allow a better management of the logistic and accessibility.</p> <p><b><i>Catia Bacchettoni, owner of ALA GREEN travel agency</i></b></p> <p>The agency is located in Borgo Trevi and it operates worldwide, including Italy and Umbria. The agency recognizes the positive value of gastronomic events like the Festa della Cipolla which are key tourism attractors, together with other resources (such as fairs, historical commemorations, valorisations of local products with the involvement of local communities) which increase the interest of tourists for the region, especially during low season. An aspect to improve is the cooperation between the organizers and the local tourism</p>

operators which is still weak; this will improve the promotion and visibility of the events.

*Written by: Laura Ridolfi*

## FIRA DE SANT ERMENGOL



A view on the stands and the visitors of the Fair of Saint Ermengol (image credit: La Seu d'Urgell Council)

Every year, during the third weekend of October, a large number of artisan cheese producers come to the town of La Seu d'Urgell in Spain to display their products. This fair is one of the oldest registered events in Spain and it was first organized in 1048. It offers visitors the opportunity to taste and purchase different kinds of artisan cheese and attend activities that revolve around dairy productions. The fair also brings together an array of other activities. It features workshops for adults or children, show cooking, contests, tastings, etc. Parallel fairs are organized, such as artisan fair, Pyrenean ecological products fair, and husbandry show-off. The festival also features cultural events such as theatre shows and music concerts. The fair is organized by the local council and its department for economic development and supported by Regional government and local dairy company called La Cooperativa del Cadí. The main aim of the fair organizers is to promote la Seu d'Urgell as the cheese capital of the Pyrenees.

### Contact

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### Introduction

The Fair of Saint Ermengol was created to become a showcase for the artisan cheeses of the Pyrenees. Every year, during the third weekend of October, a great amount of artisan cheese producers come together in the city of La Seu d'Urgell to display their products and know-how. The organizer is the Local Council of la Seu d'Urgell. Nonetheless, the major is personally involved in the project.

### Culinary experience

The original fair dates back to 1048, and it has changed through time. Historical sources situate the fair as one of the oldest registered events of the country. During the 20th century it remained a stock trade fair, a meeting point for cattle and stock breeders in the Pyrenees. In its current form it dates from 1995, when the local Council was searching for new ways of giving the fair a second life. A technician from the Department of Agriculture of the Catalan Government had the idea of choosing a specialization on artisan cheeses, due to the local growth of this activity in the region. It was thought of as a development strategy, in a joint effort to attract visitors and revitalize a forgotten area.

Over the years, it evolved into a well-attended event and established itself as an appointment not to be missed. It offers the visitors the opportunity to try and buy different kinds of artisan cheese and attend the activities that revolve around the production of dairy products, such as workshops for

adults or children, show cooking, contests, tastings, etc. Beyond the main event, the Fair brings together an array of activities and parallel fairs such as an artisan fair, Pyrenean ecological products fair, husbandry show-off, cultural events such as theatre, music concerts, etc.

The event is organized by the local Council (specifically, its section for the economic development of the city) and supported by the Diputació de Lleida (regional government) and a local dairy company: La Cooperativa del Cadí. The main aim of the organizers is to situate the city, la Seu d’Urgell, as the cheese capital of the Pyrenees.

The main event, the artisan cheese fair, is celebrated in an enclosed fairground. Several stands representing the artisan cheeseries coming from different areas of the Pyrenees offer their products as well as a special “tapa” made for the event (usually cheese with some marmalade, bread, etc.), a sample of the product that the visitor can try by buying a special ticket for ten “tapas”. In this way, for a small budget the attendants can try different cheeses and buy the larger formats for later. In the same venue craft beer and wine are offered. For the forthcoming edition, there are 45 cheeseries attending the event. The parallel activities for 2017 included the traditional contest of artisan cheeses of the Pyrenees: over 150 cheeses (that could or could not be attending the fair) compete for the 12 prizes by category, awarded by a prestigious jury of over 40 experts. Another activity is the tasting workshops, which offer different sessions to taste and learn about cheese, its organoleptic characteristics, possible pairings, elaboration techniques, and so on. Finally, there is a range of children activities organized by the fair, revolving around cheese production in a didactic and lecturing way.



*Photo 1: One of the artisan and local cheese in the fair (image credit: La Seu d’Urgell Council)*



**Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage**

The region is, and has always been, one of the poorest areas in Catalonia. Its location in the North-western section of the country and on the steep slopes of the Pyrenean mountains explains its relative isolation and late entry into broader national markets. The Alt Urgell experienced drastic changes throughout the 20th century. Several waves of depopulation affected the district since the end of the 19th century and continued to do so until the 1980s. At the beginning of the 20th century, the area improved its connection to larger regional markets by developing a new production system based on specialization in dairy farming. At the end of the 20th century, following European Union directives, new quotas were applied to milk production, driving the sector to major restructuring and even to the collapse of the smaller farms in the upper valleys. Later, at the very end of the 20th century, new economic paths were opened and promoted in line with contemporary European trends: a new conceptualization of rural spaces led to the emergence of a new service economy designed to attract and accommodate

rural tourism. Nowadays, the region is struggling to consolidate its economic development, fostering heritage policies, tourism and artisan productions. Dairy production continues to be an important aspect of the region's economy, both in its industrial or artisan format. The *Cooperativa del Cadí*, founded in 1915 and still active, developed in the past years special products for which they obtained quality certificates such as the European Protected Designation of Origin (Cadi butter and Urgelia cheese). More than eight artisan cheeseries are active in the region, developing their own recipes and in many cases producing their own milk be it from cows or goats. In 2010, the city opened a new museum, one of its three stores dedicated exclusively to the world of cheese, in an official pursuit to situate la Seu as the cheese capital of the Pyrenees.



Photo 2: The fair's poster (image credit: La Seu d'Urgell Council)



The Fair intends to work as a bridge between tradition and innovation. The long tradition of dairy production developed during the 20th century in its industrial form and evolved from the 1980s on with a cluster of artisan endeavours rooted in various sources such as traditional and local recipes or formal education in French schools. With its motto: "Millenary roots, new branches", the Fair intends to promote innovation departing from tradition and heritage, seeking singularity and authenticity.

**Organising and managing experience**

The organizer of the Fair is the Local Council, through its economic development section. The mayor is personally involved and oversees the organization. The financial support of the Fair comes from the Local Council, the Diputació de Lleida (regional government) and the *Cooperativa del Cadí* (local dairy industry). Having a stand has a price, which depends on the situation of the stand; this secures important incomes for the Local Council. The organizers are constantly looking for collaboration with different entities. There are many stakeholders related to the project:

- Cooperativa del Cadí. Dairy industry.
- Several association of cheese producers of the Pyrenees. For example, ACREFA: Associació Catalana de Ramaders Elaboradors de Formatgers Artesans): <http://www.acrefa.com/>.
- Escola de capacitació agrària dels Pirineus del Departament d'Agricultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Agrarian Training center of the Pyrennes Agricultural Department, Catalan Government) from the beginning of the experience. Together they promote an annual programme of Artisan Cheese Production.
- Artisan cheeseries attending the Fair.
- Local restaurants: they offer special menus based on artisan cheese for the many visitors attending the Fair.
- Local hotels and businesses that benefit from the great amount of visitors.

**Policy and strategies**

The Fair in its current form originated in the 1990s, at a historic moment of change. New economic paths were opened and promoted in line with

contemporary European trends: a new conceptualization of rural spaces led to the emergence of a new service economy. The emergence of a new production model in the Alt Urgell, focused on the implementation of a service economy, came together with the development of heritage processes and the commoditization of rural space as a common trend within Western countries at the turn of the century. The mayor at the time was worried about the future of the city and the region: the Pyrenees were an abandoned territory with many ghost villages and few opportunities for development. His idea was based on the need of specialization, to find singularities that would help to promote the region. His first bet was to link the city to the Olympic Games of 1992 in Barcelona. La Seu d'Urgell was the venue of winter sports, mainly canoeing and Nordic skiing, which attracted an international attention.

Within this context, the mayor was seeking consultants to offer new ideas for rethinking the old fair. Salvador Maura, a technician of the DARP (Departament d'Agricultura, Ramaderia i Pesca de la Generalitat de Catalunya), familiarized with the recent vigour of the new artisan cheese producers of the county, propose an idea: a new specialization for the Sant Ermengol Fair. The mayor wanted to situate La Seu as the capital of the whole Pyrenees and insisted strongly to contact cheeseries from the whole mountain range, not just the Catalan area. The first Fair of 1995 had a good reception. It also helped to create links with other areas of the Pyrenees.

From the beginning, Montse Ferrer from the Local Council worked as one of the organizers, together with Salvador Maura. They mobilize different strategies and ideas:

- Inviting well-known guests from the food sector such as famous cooks (Montserrat Rusalleda, Isma Prados, etc.).
- Together with the Escola de capacitació agrària dels Pirineus del Departament d'Agricultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Agrarian Training center of the Pyrennes – Agricultural Department, Catalan Government) they promote an annual program of Artisan Cheese Production.
- The contest.

From their point of view, the Fair had three cornerstones:

- The importance of being a Fair of producers (not sellers or retailers). The emphasis is on the artisan element.
- The contest for promoting the cheeses. They sought the advice of experts from the dairy world in Catalonia (especially Enric Canut).
- Technical conferences that are held in parallel to the Fair. They wanted to make the Fair a reference of debates and innovative ideas.

The need of situating La Seu d'Urgell as a cheese capital, a reference of quality food, is still one of the main aims of the Fair, according to the current mayor. His idea is to promote the city as a symbol of quality life, connecting good services, quality food and nature. He intends to strengthen the relation between the city and quality cheese, either artisanal or the Cadí Cooperative quality products. He has two main lines of action:

- Developing a tourist experience revolving around cheese, which will allow to link the cheese to the natural surroundings of the city. The idea is to organize visits to the cheeseries, cheese tasting and promote a stronger presence of cheese in local restaurants.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turning La Seu into the cheese capital of the region. This can be accomplished based on: a) official training and education about cheese production (Escola de capacitació agrària dels Pirineus), but not only about production techniques, also about marketing and business plan. The school has teamed up with different universities and training centres from Catalonia in order to achieve excellence (UPC – Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya; UDL – Universitat de Lleida). In the future, they plan to invest in research and development.</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>The success of the Fair guarantees the future celebration of the event, as well as confirms the social interest in artisan products and its related values such as authenticity, quality, link with the landscape, tradition, etc. The affluence of visitors contributes to the local economy and promotes the image of the city as a quality food destination.</p>
<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>The Fair intends to be based on both tradition and innovation, but mostly the organizers emphasize the need of innovative in continuous effort to find new paths of development and opportunities. Their will for expanding and consolidating the market of artisan cheese, based on tradition and quality, i.e. both marks of authenticity, comes together with the desire to find a unique character for the city.</p> <p>The technical conferences held during the fair offer formation and innovation to their assistants, as well as act as a pole of debate and reflection for the artisan producers. The formal education offered in the Agrarian School is a crucial aspect of the innovative dimension of this culinary experience.</p>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>The main strength of the Fair is the existence of a dense web of artisan cheese makers in the area that add to the event with their know-how and willingness to participate and promote their products. These artisan producers are deeply committed with their way of production, the quality of their products and the whole style of life related to it. In this way, they are engaged with the project offering counselling and ideas. In the same vein, the long history of dairy production of the district offers a pool of specialists and experts that help the Fair to be updated every year with new activities and events. The involvement of local politicians and administrations is also key to understand the success of the Fair.</p> <p>The different persons interviewed offer their own opinions regarding the weaknesses of the event. But a general concern nowadays is that the Fair could die from its success. The great amount of public is a big risk, which forced the organizers to move the fair from one place to another. In any case, the organizers are aware of the importance of not dropping any of the ideas that made the fair a success, to prevent any possibility of decreasing the quality of the Fair.</p> <p>As an advice, we highlight the importance of strengthening the relationships and collaboration with different stakeholders in order to include as many parties as possible.</p>

**Stakeholders view on good practice**

***Pep Lizandra, formatgeria L'Orri (artisan cheese producer), Alt Urgell, Catalonia***

In a long interview, Mr Lizandra explained that he decided to open the artisan cheese factory with his wife in 1982. Cesca, his wife, was originally from a little hamlet in the Catalan Pyrenees where this cheese is produced – in the Alt Urgell. He was a tourist first, then he fell in love with Cesca and built a home with her there. They went to France to get trained, and he also learned from Cesca's mother who used to prepare cheese in the traditional way, with milk coming from their goats. From the beginning, Cesca's brothers were in charge of the livestock while Cesca and Pep made the cheese. It was about during this time that some other artisan cheese producers emerged in the same county; it was very difficult to make ends meet during the first years. He remembers selling his cheese during cold winters in street fairs around the Pyrenees. Cheese making became fashionable after a few years, some markets in Barcelona started to look for artisan cheeses for their delicatessen sections. The Saint Ermengol Fair was really helpful for the recognition of their products and to present them beyond the county limits. For him this is a way of life, a lifestyle, not just a trade or a business. The Fair was really helpful in promoting this style of cheese production as found within the artisan cheese factories in the region.

***Salvador Maura, Formatgeria Mas d'Eroles***

Salvador is connected with the beginning of the Saint Ermengol Fair, he initiated and offered the Local Council many ideas to promote and organize the Fair. He himself is an artisan cheese producer. His small factory, opened in 2000, produces sheep and cow cheese from the livestock in his own lands. He sees himself as passionate about cheese, he has read a lot about it and has a great knowledge about the topic. He stressed that the success of the Fair is about keeping its quality label and focusing only on Artisan producers, never retailers. The artisan character of the Fair is, in his opinion, its best asset. He says that this character is cherished not only by the artisan producers, but also by the visitors, who are increasingly learning to appreciate the quality of artisan productions. For him, both the technical sessions between the producers and the cheese contest are key to understand the growing reputation of the Fair.

*Written by: Camila del Mármol*

## ISTRIAN TRUFFLE DAYS



Visitors tasting products served with truffles (image credit: Tourist office of Buzet)

*The Istrian truffle days are an annual event coordinated by the Istria Tourist Board in the Croatian town of Buzet. This is one of the oldest festivals in Istria and features an autochthonous product that can be valorised and can stimulate the development and further enrich of tourist services in Croatian rural areas. At the truffles exhibition individuals participate who are licensed to sell truffles, as well as many producers of local products (honey, cheese, olive oil, wine, brandy, mushrooms, and biscuits). Apart from the gastronomy, there is also a cultural and entertainment program with the sounds of local instruments triestina, bajs, and vijulin. The purpose of the event is to promote, taste, and sell truffles as a unique gastronomic product and also to promote Buzet as the City of Truffles. One of the important goals is to prolong the tourist season. Typical dishes with truffles are presented to guests: fuži, pljukanci, gnocchi, fritada, and various combinations with meat. The event also features lectures on their magical aphrodisiac properties.*

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### Introduction

Truffles are a group of underground fungi with a very specific taste, which are considered the ultimate in gastronomy. They grow in the very heart of Istria, in the damp and grey soil of the forests close to the Mirna River and near Buzet, which was in 1999 proclaimed the City of Truffles.

### Culinary experience

The Istrian truffle days are an annual event coordinated by the Istria Tourist Board. As one of the longest running events in Istria, it shows how an autochthonous product can be valorised and can stimulate the development and further enrich the tourist services in the rural area.



Participants of this sales exhibition are companies registered for the sales of truffles, as well as numerous producers of autochthonous products (honey, cheese, olive oil, wine, brandy, mushrooms, and biscuits). Apart from the gastronomy, there is also a cultural and entertainment program with the sounds of local instruments triestina, bajs, and vijulin.

*Photo 1: Istrian Truffles (image credit: Tourist office of Buzet)*

### Local (territorial) anchoring of experience

This area has been long known as a site rich with white truffle. This kind of manifestation represents a combination of traditional customs of truffle search and presentation of this autochthonous product through competition, quality check, ranking, tasting, and cooking shows.

<p><b>and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>In this experience the landscape is a key factor. Motovun forest is the largest area rich in Istrian white truffle (<i>Tuber magnatum</i>). The value of this valuable and highly esteemed fungus is measured in grams. The area that is rich in truffles is northwest to Buzet and Lanišće to the Raša River in the area of Labin and south to Pazin. In the valley of the Mirna River the highly-prized and world renowned white truffles are harvested in early autumn, as are black truffles found both in winter and summer.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The Truffle Fair is well-received by domestic and foreign tourists, but also by locals who want to find out more about his “Majesty the Truffle”. Some events related to truffle hunting are visited by foreign tourists the most; even 99% of the visitors are foreigners.</p> <p>The purpose of the event is to promote, taste, and sell truffles as a unique gastronomic product (honey, cheese, olive oil, wine, brandies (rakija), mushrooms, cookies, etc.), and also to promote weekend tourism and Buzet itself as the City of Truffles. One of the important goals achieved through such events is of course the prolonging of the tourist season. Typical dishes with truffles are presented to guests: fuži, pljukanci, gnocchi, fritada, and various combinations with meat. There are also exhibitions and fairs, great opportunities to get acquainted with all the mysteries of the magical, aromatic tubers attributed to the aphrodisiac properties.</p> <p>The Truffle Fair is promoted in several websites available in domestic and foreign markets. Truffle hunting can be arranged directly (at the fair), through the website or through travel agencies that offer this kind of arrangement.</p> <p>For visitors who want to try something different, Karlič family offers a whole new experience – truffle hunting. Friendly hosts will tell you all about truffles, the tradition of truffle hunting, and their truffle hunting dogs. Tasting of truffle products will be prepared for you in beautiful surroundings, the products are also available in their shop.</p> <p>The club of quality restaurants and taverns Original Truffle – Tartufo Vero consists solely of restaurants from the enchanting zone of truffles, restaurants and taverns that greatly respect both truffles and their guests. Among the many catering establishments offering truffles we have singled out three, owing to the quality of presenting and serving truffles, while finding a perfect wine match for each truffle dish, knowing all species of white and black truffles, as well as special seasonal truffle menus.</p> <p>Truffle hunters and other producers make up part of the Truffle Association called Istra. The Truffle Association was established in 2014 with the aim of protecting habitats and increasing fertility of truffles. The main objective is the permanent protection of the habitat of truffles in the Motovun forest and other habitats of the Region of Istria.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>Culinary experience can be linked to the Master Plan of Tourism of the Istrian Region 2015–2025 which plans to implement a project entitled House of Truffles. The project encompasses the construction of an infrastructure that, with its permanent set of activities, valorises the association of these exceptional gastronomic delicacies with the local population and their material and intangible heritage, creating and marking the recognizable brand Buzet Truffle Town and enhancing the recognition of Istria as a unique destination of cultural and gastronomic tourism.</p>

	<p>The Truffle Development Strategy and the Strategic Plan for Rural Development of the Region of Istria are also in line with this unique experience. Collection and marketing of truffles in Croatia is governed by several laws and regulations, which certainly speaks of the importance of truffles in Croatia and Istria as well. Local authorities expressed interest in establishing a Centre for Sustainable Mushroom Development, with a special emphasis on truffles. Scientific approach to valorisation and preservation of underground mushroom resources involves the protection of forests with white and black truffles. The City of Buzet's strategy for the period 2016–2020 includes the protection of the truffle habitat – research and development and partnership with other institutions under the Truffle House project.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>This kind of culinary experience has a positive impact on sustainability as better promotion of truffle products leads to their enhanced market valorisation and higher profits for producers. Also, during the events, the labour demand increases and local people are hired. Local truffle hunters and producers of truffle products cater the event and local farmers provide the product for the event. This activity is an important element in the market economy of the area and as truffles are becoming more popular, an increasing number of local people takes part in truffle hunting and making a living of it.</p> <p>There is an interest and need for the development and protection of truffles in the field, so the development of the Centre for Sustainable Mushroom Development would be a key project to ensure sustainability of this experience.</p>
<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>The specificity of this fair is reflected in the fact that the fair is held throughout October, which is also the month of truffle hunting, the top season of white truffles, which are also the most expensive and the most valuable truffles. Thus at the fair you can find and taste extremely fresh truffles and other products.</p> <p>The experience of truffle hunting is innovative because the guests, together with the hosts and their truffle hunting dogs, go to the woods in search of truffles that later they can buy and taste. Namely, guests participate in the cooking show where truffle dishes are prepared.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The obstacles faced by organizers of this experience stem from the fact that the truffle natural food that depends on weather conditions, so truffle hunters encounter occasional lack of truffles and limited habitat. Truffle hunters have planted truffle plants to prevent shortages but also to increase the supply in the face of increasing demand.</p>



*Photo 2: Visitors tasting the truffles (image credit: Tourist Office of Buzet)*

## Stakeholders view on good practice

### ***Nada Prodan Mraković, Head of Administrative Department for Tourism of Region of Istria***

For the purpose of improving truffle and truffle-based tourism, the Region of Istria has adopted the Master Plan of Tourism of the Region of Istria Region 2015–2020. The Region of Istria promotes all truffle fairs in the region in order to achieve better quality valorisation of white but especially black truffles. In order to complement the existing range of services and products and to strengthen networking concerned with truffles, the Region of Istria supports the development of many projects such as House of Truffles, Truffle Park, etc. With the aim of protecting truffles at the national level there are regulations requiring the issuing of special licenses for truffle hunting.

The Original Truffle project aims to further strengthen the project of the Truffle Days in Istria and, on a professional basis, enable a good knowledge of different types of truffles, both white and black, and with the basic intent that the caterers acquire the necessary knowledge for quality presentation and gastronomic delicacies to clarify and/or to portray the whole story of truffles. This is a project aimed at diversifying catering facilities on the principle of respecting the quality of indigenous gastro products. By certification or quality marking, we perform a qualitative selection of catering facilities that will be worthy of presenting the truffles and thus obtaining the name of the Truffle Embassy.

### ***Mila Nežić, Buzet Tourist Office***

At the initiative of the Tourist board, the city of Buzet was declared as the City of Truffles in 1999. Since then, the city has been promoted as a truffle city in all its activities, strategies and other documents, which contribute to the development of this area in the agricultural and tourist sense. Documents such as the Truffle Development Strategy and the Strategic Plan for Rural Development of the Region of Istria demonstrated the importance of the overall experience of truffles in this area.

The City of Buzet, together with Buzet Tourist Office, funds the truffle fair. The Croatian Tourist Board, the Administrative Department for Tourism and Administrative Department of Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Water Management of the Region of Istria have also recognized the importance of this event and are participating in its financing.

Due to the multiplicative effect, the maintenance of this fair is of great importance to all inhabitants of this area. Apart from the presentation and sale of truffles, the preparation of local truffle foods at the fair is also promoted by local caterers. During the fair, producers, local people, and the general public can attend various lectures on truffles.

The increasing popularity of truffles as quality food, increasing attendance at the fair, and increasing local population awareness of this activity contributes to the creation of new companies, products, associations, etc.

### ***Radmila Karlić, owner of SME Karlić tartufi, GIR d.o.o.***

The truffle business of the Karlić family from Paladini near Buzet was established last century by Mr Ivan Rašpolić. Since she was ten years old, Mrs Radmila Karlić used to go truffle hunting with her father Ivan. She continued her family tradition, and together with her husband Goran founded the company GIR d.o.o. Family Karlić deals with truffle hunting with great

dedication, by buying and selling fresh and frozen truffles as well as processing and launching of products on domestic and international markets. For the purpose of promoting long-term work and truffle products, the Karlić family participates every year at the truffle fair in Buzet, i.e. the Istrian Truffle Day. In addition to the tasting of the product, the Karlić family also offers an unforgettable adventure of truffle hunting.

*Written by: Antonia Dušman*

## PIE FESTIVAL



Older Women preparing pies for the visitors at the Festival (image credit: Maria Symeonidou)

*Every year in August the Women’s Association of Episkopi village in Crete organizes the Pie Festival. The experience is based on pie making that includes show-cooking and tasting. The festival is organized in smaller workshops, where older women prepare pies and younger people are taught how to make them, so that the knowledge of food preparation is passed on to the younger generation. The reason for creating the festival was to promote the culinary heritage of Crete since the early years when women had few ingredients in their homes such as flour and tried to manage feeding their families with whatever was available. Other reasons for the creation of the annual event were to encourage women’s empowerment and entrepreneurship and finally to support intergenerational solidarity by passing on older women’s techniques to younger generations. The culinary experience brings visitors and visibility to Episkopi that is situated at the hinterland of Hersonissos Municipality. The Municipality of Hersonissos hosts approx. 7 percent of Greece’s tourist influx that is mainly directed towards the coastal line, so the Pie Festival experience brings visitors to the rural hinterland of Crete.*

### Contact

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### Introduction

The Women’s Association of Episkopi ERGANI organizes the Pie Festival on an annual basis every August. The festival showcases the development of pie-making over the years where older women pass on to the younger generation recipes and techniques of pie making. The local coordinator is the Women’s Association ERGANI, which is located in Episkopi, in Hersonissos Municipality.

### Culinary experience

The experience is a festival of pie making that includes show-cooking and tasting. The festival is organized in smaller workshops, where older women prepare pies and younger people are taught how to make them, so that culinary heritage is passed on to the younger generation. The festival takes place at the end of August, every year, usually at the end of the month, upon agreement with the Municipality of Hersonissos, so that it does not coincide with other cultural activities and festivals. The majority of local women contribute in organizing and volunteering during the event. During the festival, the Women’s Association prepares approximately 3,000 pies (cooked or uncooked). Visitors are able to taste them or take to their homes the uncooked ones and bake them later on.

The festival first started in 2012, by the Women’s Association of Episkopi ERGANI. The reason was to promote the culinary heritage of Crete since the early years when women had flour in their homes and tried to manage feeding their families with whatever was available. Other reasons for the creation of the annual event were to encourage women’s empowerment and

entrepreneurship and finally to support intergenerational solidarity by passing on older women's techniques to younger generations. The top-down approach is used for the creation of the festival. Every year the date is decided and the concept of the festival remains unchanged. The individual activities are planned later on and before the festival.



*Photo 1: Members of Ergani Women's Association, the Women's Association of Rural Larnaca with their sponsor (image credit: Maria Symeonidou)*

The culinary experience brings visitors and visibility

to Episkopi that is situated in the hinterland of Hersonissos Municipality. The Municipality of Hersonissos hosts approx. 7% of Greece's tourist influx, which is mainly directed towards the coastal line, so every activity that brings visitors to the rural hinterland brings elements of economic development. All products used are local and this brings economic benefits to the area's local producers. The participation of older women in the process brings an element of inclusion for older ages and intergenerational solidarity, while the organization by the women brings the element of empowerment of local women. The personal motivation for involvement was the safeguarding of culinary heritage, the promotion of Cretan culture, the communication between generations and the empowerment of women. There is no specific target group that the festival is focusing on. The target group is everyone interested. The main focus is given to the participation of women and younger generation.

**Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage**

Heritage is included with the traditional recipes upon which innovative recipes are based to create new form of pies. Older local ladies pass on techniques and recipes to younger people so that heritage is safeguarded for younger generations. The idea behind the festival is to pass on culinary tradition to the younger generation. There is also an effort to showcase modern styles of pies that are local recipes. Heritage safeguarding is done by passing on traditional recipes to younger generations. As a result, more and more visitors are participating every year and traditional pie making is disseminated to more people.

Episkopi is located in an area of high biodiversity in the hinterland of Hersonissos Municipality. It is situated hill-side, away from the hectic rhythms of the coastal area of Hersonissos Municipality. The Municipal Park is adding on to the experience as visitors can have a relaxed walk through a green oasis.

During the festival evening there is folklore music and dancing so that visitors have an idea of local culture and customs. Products are offered by local farmers, beekeepers, local wineries, certified cheese makers, etc. The Cultural Association of Episkopi is contributing to the festival with organizational matters and volunteering. There has been no involvement of

	<p>any heritage expert in the creation and development of the festival. The Women’s Cooperative has only consulted the older ladies of the village who are aware of the traditional pie recipes and the local customs. In 2017 they hosted the Women’s Association of Rural Larnaca, who also prepared their own pies and offered them to the public.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The most important stakeholders are local women, the Cultural Association of Episkopi, the local farmers who provide agricultural products, and the Local Authority that promotes culinary tourism and alternative tourism in general in their area of administration. All stakeholders are equally involved and passionate about the festival that brings visitors to the village of Episkopi and promotes the culinary heritage. The connections with the stakeholders were made while trying to organise the festival for the first time. Local producers, Cultural Association of Episkopi and the Local Authority were the stakeholders who gladly contributed to the experience. Stakeholders were contacted by the Women’s Association Board by personal contact. Their motivation for their involvement was to make visible their village within the Municipality that has a congested coastal line with massive tourism and limited leisure activities. Their motivation was also to promote their culture and culinary heritage. Following cooperation with the Local Authority, the Municipality of Hersonissos was represented at a Culinary Heritage contest in Halkidiki by the Women’s Association of Episkopi ERGANI. The contest “Mount Athos Area Cuisine” takes place every year in Halkidiki and every year a region is honoured depending on the contest’s results. In 2017 the Women’s Association ERGANI was the winner of the contest and therefore, next year the honorary region will be the Region of Crete represented by ERGANI.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>ERGANI is a Women’s Association and therefore behind every activity there is a Board Decree that describes the activity and the details. In the case of the Pie Festival the Decree describes the place, the date, and the individual events surrounding the event. The Festival receives technical support from the Municipality of Hersonissos (microphones, speakers, etc.). The Region of Crete financially supports the Cooperative only when they participate at contests, where they substitute their tickets and boarding costs. The culinary experience brings visitors to the village that is not a busy tourist destination and also helps local producers have their products promoted through the pie making. The visitors who visit the village of Episkopi contribute financially to local businesses by buying products or services (such as coffee shops, souvenir shops etc.). The festival brings high visibility to the hinterland of Hersonissos Municipality and added value to women’s efforts to promote the local products and recipes.</p> <p>The Municipality of Hersonissos has a Strategic Plan on alternative tourism (Sustainable Tourist Development). The Local Authority is cooperating with the Women’s Cooperative during the festival and disseminates the events through all its channels of communication. The Municipality has currently assigned its D.M.O. to a marketing company and the main elements in the creation of the D.M.O. will be the development of Tourist Packages and Thematic Experiences (including culinary experiences).</p>

<b>Sustainability</b>	The festival itself is not creating jobs but it creates ideas for the professional development of women in rural areas. It also attracts visitors to the part of the Municipality that is less known and less congested.
<b>Innovative aspects</b>	According to the president of the Women’s Association Mrs. Sevasti Krasanaki, Innovative is the culinary experience that uses elements from the past, the tradition and mixes those up with modern ways of cooking or uses modern or non-local ingredients. Flash forwarding 10 years from now, what would be surprising for the culinary experience would be a live TV broadcasting so that people who are not able to attend have the chance to experience the event and get to know traditional pie making and local customs.
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>There are no assessment tools such as questionnaires or evaluation forms in place, in order to measure the success of the culinary experience. The Association perceives success as large influx of visitors and their level of participation at the events.</p> <p>There are some practical obstacles and difficulties, such as the transfer of heavy equipment, roads closure and traffic deviation, set up of rigs, coordination with local merchants, etc. Problems are solved by team work and coordination by the Women’s Association. As the festival has been taking place for five years now, most of the initial obstacles are foreseen long time before they arise and corrective measures are taken before hand.</p> <p>Stakeholders are usually eager and willing to get involved and many people volunteer during the festival. Nevertheless, involvement can be hindered by work-load pressure, as many people from Episkopi work for the busy tourist sector in Hersonissos coastland. August is the busiest period of the year in tourism and this can jeopardize the involvement of volunteers from Episkopi. Another topic is that many volunteers contribute financially to the event and the current financial situation in Greece is a major factor that can put obstacles at the culinary event.</p> <p>In order to improve the festival, we would like to extend this experience for another two days. The experience would be improved if it could be split into more thematic divisions, each one taking place at a different neighbourhood of the village. This would enable older people who are not able to move freely to participate in their own neighbourhood. Our advice for a beginner in culinary experiences would be to start from the local roots, follow the local identity, and consult older people who are the safe keepers of culinary heritage.</p>
<b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b>	<p><b><i>Family business of cheesemakers “Stamatogiorgis”</i></b></p> <p>“Our motivation for being part of this experience is the promotion and presentation of the local products. Being a small family business of cheesemakers, we want to actively engage in such activities. The initiative for this cooperation was taken by the Women’s Cooperative and we were happy to respond positively. Our role in this festival is supportive and consultative so that our cheese products (that form an important part of Cretan Gastronomy) are projected in the best possible way. Our benefits are multifaceted: promotion of our dairy products, satisfaction that we help</p>

promote our local gastronomy culture and the fact that our products are cooked so delicately by the members of the Women's Association."

***Mr. Efthymios Mountrakis, deputy mayor from the municipality of Hersonissos***

"Local gastronomy is a strong part of identity of every place that highlights local cultural elements, customs and the historical route from the past into the future. We support the Pie Festival organized in Episkopi by the Women's Cooperative as our main motivation is to promote the cultural heritage of our land. The initiative for cooperation is either taken by ERGANI or by the Municipality depending on the events. ERGANI is organizing culinary events (annual Pie Festival, Annual Bazaar of traditional products, etc.) and has also represented the Municipality of Hersonissos at the Athos Mountain Culinary Festival in Halkidiki.

The role and contribution of the Local Authority is formulated according to the needs of each activity. Sometimes it is only financial contribution, sometimes promotion and dissemination and sometimes technical support. The Pie Festival organized by ERGANI is financially supported up to a certain point from the Municipality so that the outcome is of high standards to represent the local society to the visitors. The Local Authority's benefits through this cooperation are the safeguarding of our local traditions and the promotion of local gastronomy mainly to the local society and the younger generation. The promotion of alternative tourism is one of the Local Authority's targets and this is achieved through our Annual Programme of Tourism Promotion and through our Strategy Planning.

The pie festival is an event that has an impact on local society that learns to offer it in an organized manner. In addition, the festival supports the production of local products and this leads to sustainable local development with the contribution of local society. The Municipality plays an important role in the development and promotion of the Pie Festival as it is financially responsible for the promotion of the event through posters, advertisements, press releases, etc."

*Written by: Maria Symeonidou and Michael Katharakis*

**TYPE 5**

**SPECIFIC TOURIST SITE DEDICATED TO FOOD OR CULINARY PRODUCTS**

## EPICURIUM – PLANTS FROM SEED TO FORK



Children at an Epicurium workshop (image credit: Epicurium)

*Epicurium is a museum in the French city of Avignon dedicated to fruits and vegetables and managed by an association. The museum was initially designed as a communication centre for those working in the field of fruits and vegetables production. Its structure gradually evolved into a tourist venue dedicated to edible fruit and vegetable plants and to its seeds and dishes. Epicurium features interactive and playful experience for visitors, in particular for children. The main components of the experience are the permanent exhibitions around various themes in connection with fruits and vegetables, a guided tour through gardens (for example orchards, greenhouses, hives, gardens dedicated to aromatic and medical plants), educational activities for schools and general public (cooking classes, conferences, temporary exhibitions) and a store where regional produce and products from Epicurium gardens are sold. The main strength of Epicurium lies in its culinary experience where the immersion of visitors highlights all senses: taste, touch, smell, and sight.*

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### Introduction

Epicurium is a museum dedicated to fruits and vegetables managed through an association. The Director is Pauline Grison, who manages a team of three other persons employed by the association. The activity is also temporarily supported by several internships and volunteers (European Voluntary Service or civic service). Historically, Epicurium was created on the initiative of a competitive cluster called Terralia (a cluster dedicated to the innovation in fruits and vegetables sector created in 2005). In France, competitive clusters are bound to a specific public policy aiming at encouraging innovations through partnerships between firms, research centres, and local public authorities. In the beginning, Epicurium was created as a communication tool of the cluster, in order to share knowledge bound to fruits and vegetables with the public.

Officially unveiled in 2010, Epicurium was imagined by the main stakeholders involved in the cluster: Avignon University, INRA (French National Institute of Agronomic Research), and private firms. The story of the current Director – Pauline Grison – is also close to the creation of Epicurium. Pauline Grison is from Avignon University and began a PhD in Museology funded by Terralia in 2007.

Dedicated to the enhancement of food in museums, this PhD allowed her to be hired in Epicurium in 2010 and to become Director two years later.

## Culinary experience

In its content, Epicurium appears at an unconventional place. Designed as a communication tool for the fruits and vegetables (F&V) sector (techniques, jobs, scientific innovations), the structure gradually evolved into a full-blown tourist place dedicated to edible plants, from seed to plate (cereals, aromatic and medicinal plants, etc.). This trajectory makes Epicurium a unique place in France: at the same time a place of technical and scientific mediation, a place of communication for F&V regional sector, and a tourist place.



Photo 1: Gardens of Epicurium (image credit: [www.epicurium.fr](http://www.epicurium.fr))

In its tourist dimension, Epicurium is designed as a sensory immersion in the world of F&V, featuring many interactive and playful experiences for visitors, in particular for children. The main components of the experience are:

- a permanent exhibition dedicated to fruits and vegetables, with different thematic areas (sensory experiences, geographical origin, nutrition, history, current use of F&V)
- several gardens (orchard, greenhouses, aromatic and medicinal plants and more recently a hive), enhanced by a guided tour
- an important program of activities and events for school audience (pedagogic workshops) and general public (cooking classes, conferences, temporary exhibitions)
- a shop where regional products and products from Epicurium gardens are sold

For children, beyond pedagogic activities, Epicurium developed many summer workshops: how to create original snacks or syrups, how to sow and plant fruits and vegetables, how to recognize insects or aromatic plants, how to realize artistic creations from seed and plants, etc. It is also possible to organize birthdays at Epicurium. For the general public, cooking classes are the main experiences available: organized in situ, these classes have the particularity to involve star chefs of the region (Christian Etienne for example) and can be dedicated to a specific product (truffle, foie gras, tomato, aromatic plants, etc.). Creative cooking can also be highlighted (concept of culinary design, various innovations).

Finally, Epicurium is able to organize specific events, like conferences, where experts are invited to talk about specific topics (“spiders in gardens”, “history of fragrances” are examples of conferences organized in 2017). These conferences can be connected to temporary exhibitions. The last one, called Good in My Plate, Good for My Planet! was an opportunity for Epicurium to make the public aware about the evolutions of food habits through several issues: food waste, food of the future, agroforestry or urban agriculture.

Last year, Epicurium welcomed about 12,000 visitors: 50% school audience and 50% general public. This global attendance has been stable for the last three years, even if the general public is increasing. The origin of visitors is mainly regional (60% of general public are from Vaucluse or adjacent

	<p>departments: Bouches du Rhône, Gard, Drôme), but a significant part come from other countries (10%). Family audience and elderly seem to be dominant.</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>Epicurium has another specificity: because of its history, it is located in an urbanized and industrial area, near Avignon, close to the competitive cluster. Thus, even if the proximity from Avignon (called Pope's City and benefiting from the national label City of Art and History) is a strength, the localization of Epicurium is not considered as optimal from a tourist point of view: the structure is close to several professional institutions involved in F&amp;V sector (FRIAA – Regional Federation of Agrofood Industries; CRITT – Regional Centre of Innovation and Technological Transfer; training institutions, etc.).</p> <p>This situation fits within a context of redefinition of the global strategy and the economic model of Epicurium. The officials of the structure nowadays want to strengthen even more the tourist dimension of Epicurium and ensure that it becomes a real point of interest for the region based on a more professionalized tourist skill. Due in particular to the funding of the structure, more and more secured by Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region (and to a lesser extent Vaucluse Department), the territorial anchoring of Epicurium could be increased (Mediterranean area, Provence area). This strategy is also bound to visitor's requests, more and more interested in the discovery of Mediterranean and Provence natural and cultural resources.</p> <p>The different modalities of anchoring are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthen relationships with local tourist partners (tourist offices, hotels, other museums, etc.) in order to build a global communication strategy</li> <li>• strengthen relationships with professional organizations, in particular in the farm sector (chambers of agriculture, farmers, markets, etc.), to this day, the relationships with the farm sector are not really easy</li> <li>• strengthen the relationships with the local municipalities, in particular through participation with various kinds of events (food markets, fairs, etc.)</li> <li>• in the shop, develop the sale of local food products, in particular the emblematic ones (Cavaillon melon, Carpentras cherry, Lubéron strawberry, honey, etc.)</li> <li>• in the content of the visit, highlight the history of F&amp;V activity in its territorial context (development and future of regional agriculture, landscapes impacts, traditions, etc.)</li> </ul>



Photo 2: The exhibition at the Epicurium museum (image credit: [www.epicurium.fr](http://www.epicurium.fr))

	<p>These reflections are directly linked to another issue: the relocation project of Epicurium. Indeed, the officials are today looking for a new place, which would better correspond to the tourist vocation of Epicurium (more rural and less “artificial” area). Supported by Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region, this research is also considered as an opportunity to strengthen the territorial anchoring of Epicurium.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>Today, Epicurium is organized through an association, created in 2014 for tax reasons, and in order to benefit from private patronage funding. Before 2014, the structure was an activity of Terralia. The creation of the association means today a stronger independence between Epicurium and the competitive cluster. Daily, Epicurium is managed by a team of four persons, supported by several internships and volunteers (European Voluntary Service or civic service), in particular during the summer. The functioning of Epicurium is secured through three kinds of funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public support (30%, Region and Department mainly, but also French Ministry of Research)</li> <li>• self-financing (30%, increasing)</li> <li>• private patronage (30%, decreasing)</li> </ul> <p>The governance of the association is structured through three institutions: Terralia, Avignon University, and INRA. Nevertheless, even if the strategic decisions are mainly taken by these three institutions, the governance of Epicurium is about to evolve in the future. On the one hand, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region becomes more and more important, in particular through the funding. Within PACA Region, this support is ensured by a service called Scientific Culture, Training and Research. On the other hand, the governance will probably be expanded to other stakeholders, notably to private or cooperative firms, other associations, and civil society. As of now, several firms are interested to be involved in Epicurium: Les Paysans de Rougeline (one of the most important French cooperatives for F&amp;V) and Panzani (private firm, wheat). This evolution is also part of the territorial anchoring of Epicurium.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>The operating rules of Epicurium association are conventional. These rules are formalized in classical statutes. There is no specific charter. From an institutional point of view, two organizations play a significant role for Epicurium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Vaucluse Department Board and its Departmental Tourism Committee</li> <li>• the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Board, through its “Scientific Culture, Training and Research” service</li> </ul> <p>The Vaucluse Department Board has funded Epicurium since the beginning. But its main support is technical. The Departmental Tourism Committee was reformed 2 years ago and was merged with another departmental agency dedicated to economic development. The new organization, called Vaucluse Provence Attractivity (VPA), has now the tourist and economic prerogatives and acts on behalf of Department Board. In this framework, VPA supported Epicurium in the acquisition of a certification called Quality Tourism France. This national certification aims at helping tourist sites to improve their management and the professionalization of tourist practices through more</p>

	<p>than 350 criteria (welcome and information to visitors, signage, marketing, assessment, layout, content of the visit, accessibility, etc.).</p> <p>Finally obtained in 2015, the Quality Tourism France label led to an important work through several workshops in order to improve and consolidate the positioning strategy of Epicurium (“What is a live museum of F&amp;V?”), and also to develop its communication strategy (website, link with other tourist sites). Finally, the impact on Epicurium is considered as positive by stakeholders, even if it is not easy to assess. Today, in France, this public label is almost inescapable for any tourist site willing to improve. But at the same time, it is often considered as “too easy to obtain” and is therefore not recognized enough: for example, Trip Advisor has a much greater impact on visitors.</p> <p>As previously stated, PACA Region is the main donator for Epicurium through its activities bound to scientific valorisation. More Broadly, PACA Region federates all scientific and technical stakeholders in a regional network called Culture Sciences. This network involves universities, research institutions, museums bound to science, techniques or industry, and also associations acting in the topic of scientific mediation. This network is structured through a virtual platform (Echo Sciences PACA) and a charter, which defines the missions and responsibilities of the 150 members: enhance sciences and techniques through the implementation of actions for the general public and promote the network anywhere possible (internal and external communication).</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>In terms of impact, Epicurium today involves four employees and several internships, and represents about 12,000 visitors a year. Beyond these human resources, the real added value of Epicurium lies in the specificity of its activity: at the same time a communication tool for the F&amp;V sector and a tourist site with a unique content at national scale.</p> <p>In the future, the impact of Epicurium could be improved with respect to the important evolutions mentioned above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase of the professionalization of tourist dimension</li> <li>• increase of territorial anchoring (link with local stakeholders)</li> <li>• relocation of the museum in a more rural area</li> <li>• enlargement of governance to new stakeholders (cooperatives, private firms, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Within this framework, according to the stakeholders interviewed, the sustainability dimension must be improved in the activities of Epicurium. The last temporary exhibition Good in My Plate, Good for My Planet! is an example of good practice which must be continued in the future, in particular in the permanent content of Epicurium (Mediterranean landscapes, biodiversity, natural resources, etc.).</p>
<p><b>Innovative aspects</b></p>	<p>As mentioned above, the innovative dimension of Epicurium is first based on its specific mission: both tourist, pedagogic, and scientific. During the last years, the stakeholders in charge of the museum improved its positioning and strengthened the sensory immersion of visitors through new interactive activities (workshops, cooking classes, etc.).</p> <p>Generally speaking, in its content, Epicurium is characterized by a balance between modern (innovation in F&amp;L sector, current food habits, future of</p>

	<p>food security, etc.) and traditional aspects (preservation of old varieties, history of F&amp;V production in Provence, etc.).</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>On the one hand, beyond its unique content, the main strength of Epicurium is the fact that it is a real culinary experience where the immersion of visitors highlights all senses: taste, touch, smell, sight. More broadly, several other points can be underlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the enhancement of all the stages of the supply chain: production (through gardens), processing and selling (through the shop)</li> <li>• the diversity in the kinds of visitors: general public, school audience</li> <li>• the increasing territorial anchoring of the site (see above)</li> <li>• the favourable evolution of visitor's requests, through the strong development of experiential tourism in France, but also everywhere in Europe (research of immersion, of authenticity)</li> </ul> <p>On the other hand, the two main weaknesses highlighted by the actors interviewed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The limited budget of the structure (like all public structures in general), which is a strong limit for its development. Funding and human resources remain the main preoccupations of the stakeholders, who still consider Epicurium as a very fragile museum today.</li> <li>• The geographical localization of Epicurium, in an urbanized and industrial area, with a no easy accessibility for visitors, and finally too far from the center of Avignon. This localization is a key factor for the weak increase of attendance during the last years.</li> </ul> <p>Among the advices given by stakeholders met, some of them appear useful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the content of a culinary experience like Epicurium, it seems important not to be in a prescriptive communication with visitors, in particular with young people. For example, the message “5 fruits and 5 vegetables a day” advertising national campaign led by French Ministry of health does not appear in Epicurium.</li> <li>• Inside the museum, the spatial organization is a very important issue and must be considered by stakeholders as a key factor of success (management of visitor's flow). In the case of Epicurium, a good example of space management is given by cooking classes, where the number of persons remains limited.</li> <li>• The explosion of “e-tourism” in the last 10 years. More and more, visitors are planning their own trips through Internet, which leads to a strong decrease of the traditional market of booking (through agencies for example). This evolution is strongly connected to another trend: the “m-tourism” (mobile tourism), where the use of smartphones to plan and then make the visits becomes more and more usual.</li> <li>• The evolutions of visitor's expectations in culinary tourism. In the last decade, the success of “mono-thematic” routes is decreasing (cheese route, wine route, etc.). More and more, it is necessary to join food or culinary assets to other kinds of resources (landscapes, history, culture, environment, etc.) to improve the range of tourist services and products offered. That's why Vaucluse department is currently developing new services, connecting oenotourism (wine tourism), bike rides, and cultural visits. Even if it is becoming increasingly important, the culinary tourism must always be considered as part of a broader offer.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Mrs Grison, director of the Epicurium</i></b>  She was in charge of putting the food theme to the museum exhibition. She knows very well the Epicurium museum as it was one of the case study of her thesis, and she followed Epicurium setting up and evolution. She has a very important role within culinary experiences of the Epicurium museum and in terms of thinking about the future of Epicurium.</p> <p><b><i>Mr Gevodant, Vaucluse Provence Attractivité (VPA)</i></b>  VPA is an association stemming from the merger of the Agency of Tourist Development and the Agency of Economic Development. It is, more precisely, a departmental agency about territorial development, tourism, and economy. Mr Gevodant is the manager of engineering and territories services. He works on projects aiming at structuring cultural tourism, sports tourism, and food tourism, thanks to brands for example. The idea is to set a territorial coherence between positioning of municipality communities and tourist destinations, which are at different scales.  Mr Gevodant advised Pauline Grison to set up the Epicurium project (feasibility study, how to better connect the Epicurium project to food tourism context, business plan – volume of visitors, orientation of the marketing strategy according to the targets that could be reached).</p> <p><b><i>Mr Herbaux, a project leader within the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA) Region</i></b>  He works on the scientific and technical culture and is also general coordinator of the network Culture Science PACA whose member is the Epicurium museum.  The Culture sciences network is a professional network about scientific, technical or industrial mediation. The members are all the universities and the research bodies of the Region, museums the object of which is scientific (examples of natural history museums, archaeology, etc.) and finally a set of small associations having for object the scientific mediation.  The PACA Region helps research actors in the field, through a financial support and thanks to daily exchanges with the Culture Science PACA network members. Thematic meetings are organized each semester with partners, with professional exchange workshops.</p>
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*Written by: Alice Dardelet and Julien Frayssignes*

## HISTORICAL COMMANDARIA MUSEUM



Commandaria Bottles  
(image credit:  
Commandaria museum)

*Commandaria is an amber-coloured sweet dessert wine produced in the Commandaria region in Cyprus. It got its name from La Grande Commanderie, a large feudal estate at Kolossi near Limassol. The area was hosting military barracks and while it was under control by the Knights Templar it became known as Commandaria. The Commandaria Museum was established by the Winery of Commandaria in Zoopigi and Community Council of Zoopigi. Later farmers and Commandaria producers from 13 villages in the region joined the initiative. Commandaria is invaluable for Cyprus, this is why the Cyprus Tourism Organisation supports it in various ways. They organize seminars on tourism and entrepreneurship with relation to Commandaria for local communities, hospitality industry, and public authorities. During wine month, chefs are trained to use Commandaria as a unique ingredient for special Cypriot dishes. Capacity building, team buildings and workshops for more innovative products such as Commandaria Soap, hand cream, fresh beauty products with grapeseed oil, as well as innovative culinary products such as dips, jams, etc., are organized in different villages. Apart from that the Wine Route was established with clear signposting which tourists can follow to reach landmarks, wineries, and the museum itself.*

### Contact

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### Introduction

Wine has a very rich history in Cyprus, supposedly dating back to the time of ancient Greeks, where it was a popular drink at festivals. A sun dried grape wine from Cyprus was first known to be described in 800 BC by the Greek poet Hesiod and was known, by much later, as the Cypriot Manna.

During the crusades, Commandaria was served at the 12th century wedding of King Richard the Lionheart to Berengaria of Navarre, in the town of Limassol; it was during the wedding that King Richard pronounced Commandaria “the wine of kings and the king of wines”. Near the end of the century he sold the island to the Knights Templar, who then sold it to Guy de Lusignan, but kept a large feudal estate at Kolossi, close to Limassol, to themselves.



*Photo 1: Ancient pots used to store Commandaria wine (image credit: Commandaria museum)*

	<p>This estate was referred to as La Grande Commanderie. The word Commanderie referred to the military headquarters whilst Grande helped distinguish it from two smaller such command posts on the island, one close to Paphos (Phoenix) and another near Kyrenia (Templos).</p> <p>This area under the control of the Knights Templar (and subsequently the Knights Hospitaller) became known as Commandaria. When the knights began producing large quantities of the wine for export to Europe's royal courts and for supplying pilgrims en route to the holy lands, the wine gained the name of the region. Thus it has the distinction of being the world's oldest named wine still in production.</p> <p>Although today it is produced and marketed under the name Commandaria, it has been referred to with several similar names and spellings in the past. In 1863, Thomas George Shaw in his book <i>Wine, the Vine, and the Cellar</i> refers to this wine as <i>Commanderi</i> whilst in 1879, Samuel Baker refers to it as <i>Commanderia</i>. In 1833 Cyrus Redding in his book <i>A History and Description of Modern Wines</i> makes reference to the wine of the "Commandery".</p> <p>According to the legend in the 13th century Philip Augustus of France held the first ever wine tasting competition. The event, branded <i>The Battle of the Wines</i> (French <i>La Bataille des Vins</i>), was recorded in a notable French poem written by Henry d'Andeli in 1224. The competition which included wines from all over Europe and France, was won by a sweet wine from Cyprus widely believed to be Commandaria. The Commandery region itself fell into the control of his descendant Philip IV in 1307, after the suppression of the Knights Templar.</p> <p>Another legend has it that the Ottoman sultan Selim II invaded the island just to acquire Commandaria; also that the grapes used to make this wine were the same grapes exported to Portugal that eventually became famous as the source of port wine.</p>
<p><b>Culinary experience</b></p>	<p>The Commandaria Museum experience is made up from travelling through the history of commandaria through the historical exhibition of the development of Commandaria making along ages in combination with the history of the island, a tasting and several activities which run through the year. The Commandaria Museum has been created by the cooperative Winery of Commandaria in Zoopigi in cooperation with the Community Council of Zoopigi and later on with the involvement of the other 13 villages in the area which produce the Commandaria wine and the Limassol District Office.</p> <p>Historically the old winery that is adjoined to the Museum and is a part of it, was created in 1940. In 1999 the cooperative of wine producers of Zoopigi with Mr Kallis, the President of the Community Council, had the idea of creating a Museum to safeguard the long tradition and heritage of Commandaria the wine of the kings and the oldest wine in Europe. In 2002 the Community Council participated in an Interreg Med program with Italian and Cretan partners in order to create the Commandaria Museum. During this program and with the help of the partners from Crete it was identified that the old winery should be a part of the Museum and the development of the Museum started. In 2004 with the induction of Cyprus in EU the Community Council has applied for Structural Funds from the Regional</p>

	<p>Development Program and the building of the Museum started in 2005 and ended in 2010.</p> <p>The creation of the Historical Commandaria Museum was a done by a bottom up approach, the local producers created a cooperative which has set the foundations of the Museum.</p> <p>The main reasons to be included in SCHEMA was the uniqueness of the Historical Museum and of Commandaria as part of the Cypriot culture and heritage with global importance. The aim was the creation of the Museum which was funded by the European Fund of Agricultural Development and the Ministry of Agriculture. The aim was to preserve the Commandaria heritage and to create clusters of Commandaria producers who will support it and the economic development of the area. Tasting of Commandaria and cooking dishes with Commandaria are two main culinary experiences offered by the museum. In addition, the Museum contributes to local development, social cohesion as a community-based development, and aids in the feeling of belonging for all the habitants of the Commandaria region.</p> <p>There are financial benefits both for the stakeholders but also for the region and Cyprus as a whole. With the support of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation there is tourism development, festivals and events as well as Wine Routes which bring tourists to the Museum. Through the local and regional cooperative which supports the Museum the producers network and have developed a common policy for the promotion of Commandaria and the Museum. As a producer of Commandaria, the President of the Community Council and President of the Cooperative of producers of Zoopigi, felt that it was his duty to preserve the history of one of the most precious wines in the world.</p> <p>The target group includes all ages, locals and tourists as well as the disabled. Apart from the information that the Historical Museum contains and which is of great importance to everybody, special seminars, workshops, lectures, and activities are run which address different groups with different needs and interests in Commandaria.</p> <p>The Museum hosts educational activities throughout the school year. They are dedicated to primary and secondary schools and to tourists and locals as well as to people with disabilities as the Museum is fully accessible through lifts and special corridors for people on wheel chairs. Photographing is allowed. The shop has books, copies of objects from the museum's collection, Commandaria, fine Cypriot wines, wine derivatives, and traditional products.</p>
<p><b>Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage</b></p>	<p>Heritage is included in the Commandaria Museum through old Commandaria winery, the Exhibition at the Museum, and guided tours. The Museum is adjoined to the Winery which has been operating since 1940 and serves the whole commanderie district and enables the visitors to see live the unique procedure for the production of Commandaria as it is still in use.</p> <p>In addition, although located in a modern building which was developed around the Cooperative Winery of Commandaria Zoopigi, the Commandaria Historical Museum has an exhibition area, which consists of the ground floor with a reception, and a shop, and the history of the Commandaria is exhibited through photographic and other material as well as antique storage containers and tanks, with the unique smell and aroma from 12 different herbs and spices.</p>

At Level 1 there are exhibits and objects related to the production of this liqueur wine, and several rituals from Antiquity to the present day and at Level 2, there is a multi-purpose room for Seminars, Conferences and workshops, a wine-tasting room, a restaurant and coffee shop with magnificent views to the vineyards. Finally, the old machinery and its new production line are exhibited in the upper floor.

The most important aspect of the Historical Commandaria Museum is to protect heritage; the experience is based on tradition rather than on innovation. Through the museum the history of Cyprus and the history of Commandaria making is presented in a very professional and innovative way. Visitors can see, smell and travel through time to the history of Cyprus and the history of Commandaria making. In this way the heritage is preserved and adds value to Commandaria through the knowledge that is acquired.

With the promotion of Commandaria through the Museum and adjoined winery, people are now aware about the historical and cultural value of our oldest wine, so demand and the price of sun dried grapes have increased.

The role of the local landscape in the culinary experience is extremely important. Vineyards in the area have to be planted at a certain height above sea level. Farmers have to follow some standards in planting, and harvesting and sun drying the grapes in order to use their grapes for Commandaria. There is strict legislation and assessment from the relevant authorities, from the cultivation and harvest of grapes to the final production, to safeguard the high quality and unique taste of the product.

Commandaria is made exclusively from two types of indigenous Cyprus grapes: Xynisteri and Mavro. The grapes are left to overripe on the vine and when sugar content reaches acceptable levels they are harvested. More specifically, Xynisteri is picked when at around 12 degrees Baumé (°Bé) and Mavro at 15–16 °Bé. The grapes are then laid out in the sun to further increase the sugar density through evaporation. When the desired weight reaches 19 to 23 °Bé the juice is extracted through crushing and pressing. Fermentation takes place in reservoirs and will rest naturally due to the high levels of alcohol achieved at around 15%.

The above process has to take place within the land of the 14 designated villages that are located in the Commandaria Region, as they have the right height above sea level. The landscape and its setting contribute to the attractiveness of the culinary experience, as the landscape is beautiful all year round and the picturesque villages with traditional architecture and heritage add value to the whole experience.

Special Commandaria Days are organized where local lifestyle, local culture, habits and values are promoted through tasting, exhibitions, local food, traditions, folklore dancing and folklore arts and crafts. The Wine Routes include the Commandaria Region with maps and signs created by the Cyprus Tourism organisation. The cooperative of producers of the 14 villages which are located around the Historical Museum plays an important role in the running of the whole experience, while the local women and the Community Council safeguard the operation of the Museum.

Apart from the initial experts from Crete who gave their opinion in 2002, and the architect who designed the Historical Museum, another expert, historian and author, has been involved: Mr Kyriacos Papadopoulos, who has conducted local and global research concerned with Commandaria and wrote

	<p>a book, thus providing much assistance and guidance regarding the context of the Museum.</p>
<p><b>Organising and managing experience</b></p>	<p>The most important stakeholders for the Historical Commandaria Museum are the farmers and Commandaria producers of the 14 villages who are around the Museum, in the Commandaria Region.</p> <p>Initially the Commandaria producers of Zoopigi village were connected and made the first cooperative, then the network expanded in the 14 villages of the area. Festivals, workshops, seminars, Commandaria Days, Wine Routes and a special program organized by Cyprus Tourism Organisation for team building and tourism and entrepreneurship based on Commandaria has brought all the stakeholders closer having a common Vision and Mission and a common strategic plan for the promotion of Commandaria.</p> <p>As the island is small and the villages are very close to each other, the farmers were easily located, and formed the first cluster. Most of the farmers have small vineyards and do not have the facilities to sundry and bottle their Commandaria so they bring their grapes to the old winery which is part of the Historical Museum and is still in operation, but with modern facilities now. Farmers and Commandaria producers were offered a platform and facilities to produce their Commandaria and a platform to promote the heritage and culture through the Museum.</p> <p>The obstacles regarding stakeholders were the usual ones, i.e. to stop seeing each other as competitors to be transparent, and to have the will to cooperate and work in teams. Also, the producers of some villages felt less favoured than the ones who live close to the Winery &amp; Museum. Farmers and producers are now connected through the cooperative of producers of Zoopigi and the cooperative of producers of the Commandaria Region.</p> <p>The aim of the Cyprus Tourism organisation is to enhance and develop Rural Tourism and create unique culinary tours and special interest tours for locals and tourists. Commandaria is an asset for Cyprus, this is why the Cyprus Tourism Organisation is supporting the Historical Museum through various ways. It is very important for the stakeholders and the local citizens to feel that a National Organisation is supporting them. Cyprus Tourism Organisation has organized several seminars for the local communities, the hospitality industry, and the public authorities of the area, regarding Tourism &amp; Entrepreneurship based on Commandaria.</p> <p>During the wine month, trainings for chefs are taking place, of how to use Commandaria as a unique ingredient for special dishes made in Cyprus. Capacity building, team building and workshops for more innovative products such as Commandaria Soap, hand cream, fresh beauty products with grapeseed oil, as well as innovative culinary products such as dips, jams, etc., are implemented in different villages of the area and where there is interest. Wine Routes have also been created by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, with clear signposting within the villages, which tourists can follow to reach landmarks, wineries, and important places; the Historical Museum is included.</p> <p>Further, Commandaria is promoted all over the world through the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) offices abroad and the Tourism Exhibitions where CTO participates, promoting Cyprus and the unique products which bring with them all the history and tradition of Cyprus. The benefits are for</p>

	<p>both direct and indirect shareholders, the local communities, and Cyprus as a whole. Official figures released by Cyprus' Vines Products Commission show that there is a general increasing trend in the volumes produced. Much of Commandaria production is still targeted for export.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>Currently Commandaria holds a protected designation of origin (PDO) within the European Union, the United States, and Canada. By Cypriot legislation passed on March 2, 1990, it is only produced in the Commandaria Region in one of the 14 neighbouring villages: Agios Georgios, Agios Konstantinos, Agios Mamas, Agios Pavlos, Apsiou, Gerasa, Doros, Zoopigi, Kalo Chorio, Kapilio, Laneia, Louvaras, Monagri and Silikou. By law, Commandaria is aged for at least four years in oak barrels but this can take place outside the above designated area within Cyprus under strict control and under the conditions laid down in Cypriot legislation. Once fermentation has been completed, at a minimum alcohol level of 10% (which is often exceeded), the alcoholic strength of Commandaria may be increased by the addition of pure 95% grape alcohol or a wine distillate of at least 70% alcohol. However, after this addition, the wine's actual alcohol content may not exceed 20%, while its total potential alcohol (including its sugar content) must be at least 22.5%. Thus, Commandaria may be a fortified wine, but fortification is not mandatory.</p> <p>The Commandaria Museum experience is embedded in the Rural Tourism Initiative of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation. This safeguards the quality and standards of Commandaria, and the brand as the Wine of the Kings and the Kings of Wine. It also adds value to the Historical Museum as procedures and processes and rituals are safeguarded to produce the same wine that the kings have enjoyed.</p> <p>Only grapes from vineyards that have been planted for at least four years are allowed. Planting must follow the goblet method and watering is prohibited. Only two local varieties of grapes can be used. The grape harvest may only commence after the vine products commission of Cyprus has given the green light, based on the average sugar content of the grapes. So the whole procedure is monitored by the public authorities in Cyprus.</p> <p>There was a financial contribution for implementing the Historic Commandaria Museum through the Interreg Program and the EU structural funds for regional development as described above. The Commandaria Historical Museum contributes to the local community by safeguarding the history and culture, by creating new jobs and opportunities to local citizens and creates a continuity and cooperation within the different generations. Local development is maintained through the events where all the habitats participate, through the promotion of Commandaria and the increase in the influx of visitors. Further it empowers team building amongst stakeholders and provides a platform for economies of scale and cost minimization which enables the stakeholders to expand and lead to development.</p> <p>The commandaria, as the only controlled denomination of origin wine that Cyprus possesses today and with an 800-year tradition, has prospects for dynamic presence in the international market, so the development of this wine was a priority. To encourage the production of commandaria, the Council included the payment of a sum of money on wine-making production of Commandaria, for improvement of their facilities, benefits, and more</p>

	<p>favourable conditions for new growers, and subsidies per hectare. Also, there was an on-the-spot check on approved plots for the issue of a certificate and production of Commandaria, to find out whether they continue to meet the criteria specified.</p> <p>Indicative of the perspective of commandaria is that in 2016 there were a total of 564 thousand tons Commandaria wine-making thousands of kilos compared with 209 thousand tons during 2003. Most volumes were produced in communities of Kalo Chorio, Agios Mamas, Doros and Laneia, which are the main villages of this wine production product. 190 thousand litres of Commandaria are sold abroad.</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>The Commandaria Historical Museum has a positive impact on sustainability, it brings direct and indirect benefits to the local economy, it has an added value on the production and promotion of Commandaria, it creates new jobs for young people, especially with the new public schemes for the return of young people to vine cultivation, it creates social cohesion and intergenerational dialogue. Further, it preserves the landscape through training, awareness, and seminars highlighting the importance of preservation of the environment and the bio-cultivation. The vineyards of the fourteen villages of Limassol are filled with people again, young and old, who are replanting the vines that were uprooted in recent years with quality varieties.</p>
<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>The Commandaria Historical Museum is very traditional but there is a will from all stakeholders to integrate innovation into gastronomy tours which will be created. Innovation is inspired through the trainings that the Cyprus Tourism organisation is organizing at the Museum with the aim to empower the farmers, producers, and habitats of the area into creativity and diversification using not only the grapes and Commandaria but also the residuals of the whole process from the harvesting to the final product. Innovation as far as the Commandaria Historical Museum is concerned can be of two kinds: creating innovative bi-products for culinary or beauty products or creating innovative experiential culinary tours. The added value of this is the extended variety of products which can be created and the green development of the area.</p> <p>Flashing forward 10 years, the most desirable thing that can happen to the Commandaria Historical Museum, is Special Nights at the Museum where people will be treated like Royals, eat and drink like the five kings with music from the past and food from those times. There is a need to reconnect with our routes and revive the old rituals and customs. Also, special culinary packages are to be created and promoted around the world.</p>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>The success of the Commandaria Historical Museum is measured by the number of visitors, by the returning visitors, the turnover of the farmers and producers, as well as by new initiatives and new people who enter the market.</p> <p>The lack of human resources, of funds to maintain the personnel at the Museum, and of experienced guides in the area are major obstacles. There have been attempts to outsource the running of the restaurant and coffee shop as well as the souvenir shop so that the Museum will act as an incubator</p>

	<p>for these small businesses. It seems that these trials have been successful and a new management team starts in January 2018. A clear and transparent strategy has been developed so that all producers are happy and engaged in all events and procedures.</p> <p>Human and financial resources are always scarce, but people in Commandaria area are very self-motivated and hardworking and they always make it. The involvement of young people who are experts in technology will improve the experience by attracting more people through the social media and promote the Museum on another level. The involvement of a professional sommelier will upgrade the experience as well as special days with authors of the books on Commandaria; there are so many stories, rituals, love stories, even wars connected to Commandaria.</p> <p>The advice to a beginner who wishes to create new culinary experience is to choose something that is very unique, authentic and multi-dimensional, so that time can make it mature like the wine. Be persistent and create networks to support experience from the local area.</p> <p>In cooperation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Cooperative Winery of Zoopigi &amp; Zoopigi Community Council</li> <li>• Cooperative Winery of Zoopigi Ltd, 12 Commandaria Str., Zoopigi 4565; info@commandariawine.eu; www.commandariawine.eu; contact telephone / fax: 00357-99656288 / 00357-25542510</li> <li>• Mr Nicos Kallis – President of the Community Council</li> <li>• Dr Maria Socratous – Senior Officer – Cyprus Tourism Organisation – 19 Limassol Avenue – tel 00357-22691100</li> <li>• Mrs Lygia Dermatis – Senior Officer – Cyprus Tourism Organisation – 19 Limassol Avenue – tel 00357-22691100</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Christakis Ioannou, farmer</i></b>  The Commandaria Museum is of great importance to the Commandaria producers of the whole area and the sustainability of my own business.</p> <p><b><i>Andri Heracli Anaeti, farmer</i></b>  Commandaria is honoured through the Commandaria Museum and the history of Cyprus is presented through the development of Wine making in Cyprus as Wine and especially Commandaria making is linked to the history and heritage of Cyprus. The impact of different historical eras and important events in the history of Cyprus are linked to the techniques, rituals and legends related to Commandaria and the visitors can clearly see why Commandaria has been named as the Wine of the Kings and the King of Wines.</p> <p><b><i>Michalakis Nicolaou, farmer</i></b>  The Commandaria Historical Museum and the Commandaria factory, which is a part of it, play an extremely important role in the preservation of the heritage related to wine making but have also a direct impact on the producers. The price of grapes that the cooperative offers to the producers has risen from 1 to almost 2 Euro per kilo, creating an incentive for producers to maintain and expand their production.</p>

Written by: Yioula Papakyriacou



## AROMATIC & HEALING HERBS CONFERENCE



Conference of Aromatic & Healing Herbs (image credit: Platres's Community Council)

*Herbs in Cyprus have played an important role in local gastronomy and healing and have been part of different rituals and feasts. Every year the Aromatic & Healing Herbs Conference and Exhibition has a different theme, focus and target. In 2017 the conference was dedicated to the 10 most ancient herbs in Cyprus. It takes place every June and it is organized by The Troodos Regional Board of Tourism in cooperation with Platres's Community Council and the Troodos Network of Thematic Centers. At the Exhibition and Herbal Market people can find culinary products with herbs, herbal products from all over Cyprus, teas, tinctures, aromatic blends and traditional culinary products with herbs. The event takes place in rural Cyprus and promotes the economic activity of herb producers and the involvement of local female workers. They are the main human resource for the preservation and dissemination of traditional herbal recipes in gastronomy and medicine.*

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### Introduction

Herbs in Cyprus and in the Mediterranean in general have played a very important role in the life of people in terms of gastronomy, healing and performing different rituals and feasts. Every house since the antiquities grew its own herbs especially mint, parsley, basil, roses, jasmine, lavender, and people had the knowledge to collect wild herbs and flowers for cooking and healing. Seasonal herbs are included in almost all recipes and are part of the culinary heritage of the island.

Cyprus is blessed with 800 types of different herbs with unique flavour and healing properties due to the unique formation of the mountains, and the soil, the lack of rain and the endless sunshine which makes the concentration of several substances stronger, giving a stronger taste and smell to the herbs. The Aromatic & Healings Herbs of Cyprus Conference & Exhibition was first initiated by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation ten years ago and afterwards, with the creation of local Regional Boards, it was adopted by the Troodos Regional Board of Tourism. The Conference & Expo was created in order to promote the Herbs of Cyprus – more than 800 – all the herb producers and herb related products and traditional recipes, the Cypriot culture and heritage related to the herbs, as the Cyprus Tourism Organisation has seen the potential for tourism development and rural entrepreneurship. It was a top-down approach, as the Cyprus Tourism organisation commissioned a research to first locate all the herb farmers across the island. It made a national SWOT analysis, recorded the potential of each farmer and the market as a whole and sponsored the first Conference and Exhibition in order to create a platform for knowledge, networking and development, as well as to preserve the culinary heritage related to herbs and the traditional healing methods, which pass from one generation to another. During the process it was clear that communities needed training in order to understand the

	<p>importance and the wealth that they had in their hands. safeguard it and develop it in order to be sustainable and pass it to the next generation. A bottom-up approach was used, as capacity building, workshops and seminars took place to create the awareness and empower the stakeholders.</p> <p>The Aromatic &amp; Healing Herbs of Cyprus Conference and Exhibition is organized by The Troodos Regional Board of Tourism in cooperation with Platres’s Community Council and the Troodos Network of Thematic Centers every June. It brings together all the herb farmers and herbalists from Cyprus, who come together to sell their traditional products, they get educated about the herbs and participate at capacity building and skill development trainings. It also brings together tourists and locals who want to learn, taste, and develop their skills and knowledge through the different workshops and activities.</p> <p>What is most important are the spin offs, which have been created, like the Lavender Thematic Center which is a permanent platform for education, skill development, and entrepreneurship. It is located in the Platres’s Cultural Centre and has facilities for Conferences and Exhibitions, a Lavender Tea Room, where visitors enjoy lavender tea, lavender sweets, lavender liqueur and different kinds of traditional and non-traditional sweets prepared by the local women and the nuns of a Monastery.</p> <p>Visitors, students, tourists, and locals learn everything about lavender, through training about the Magical World of Lavender visit the Lavender Shop where lavender beauty products are sold, and attend a workshop for Lavender Soap Making, Candle Making, Decoupage and Distillation.</p>
<p><b>Culinary experience</b></p>	<p>The Aromatic &amp; Healing Herbs Conference and Exhibition has a different theme, focus and target every year based on needs assessment and trends. The theme of 2017 was the 10 most ancient herbs in Cyprus. At the Exhibition/Herbal Market people can find culinary products with herbs, herbal products from all over Cyprus, teas, tinctures, aromatic blends, traditional culinary products with herbs. Parallel workshops are running for gastronomy, distillation, arts and crafts, soap making, etc., enhancing the theme and objectives of the Conference. It has been identified as one of best practices in Cyprus, which could be adopted by other countries and included in the map of best practices so that it can be promoted and reached on a European level.</p> <p>The Aromatic and Healing Herbs of Cyprus takes place in rural Cyprus, promotes the economic activity of herb producers and SMEs dealing with herbs as well as the involvement of local women who are the main human resources for the preservation and dissemination of traditional herbal recipes in gastronomy and traditional medicine, and has spin-offs in the Troodos area. During the Conference and Expo traditional ways of using herbs for culinary and healing are promoted but also innovative ways of cooking and healing with herbs as well as innovative arts items.</p>

The main objectives are the increase of the influx of tourism in rural areas as only 5% of the tourists who come to Cyprus visit Troodos, the expansion of the holiday period beyond the months of July and August, local development, social cohesion by implementing a community engaged development program, the feeling of belonging and pride of living in the mountains by appreciating and exploring the natural resources and rich heritage, the financial benefits of the stakeholders and their communities, social and business networking, of stakeholders, and provision of a platform for their development.



Photo 1: Herbal Stand (image credit: Platres's Community Council)

The moving power behind the initiative is the belief in the potential of the dynamics of the Aromatic & Healing Herbs, the creation of unique culinary treasures with the gifts of nature, the passion for a new world without diseases through the use of herbs, where people reconnect with nature and nurture & heal themselves with the gifts of nature. The will to preserve their cultural heritage and traditional culinary recipes, as was done by their grandmothers, was the motivation of the stakeholders to create the Aromatic & Healing Herbs of Cyprus platform and the Lavender Thematic Center. All ages and all people are addressed, workshops and seminars, the Conference and Exhibition can be attended by everyone, there is a children's corner and activities and a lot of interesting things for all ages. Admission is free, the participation of the stakeholders as Exhibitors is also free, so that everybody can be included.

**Local (territorial) anchoring of experience and relationship to heritage**

Culture and heritage are included in the culinary experience through the traditional recipes for wellness. Traditional gastronomy is preserved, and enhanced by this initiative, traditional medicine, rituals and stories from the past are preserved and promoted through continuous Research & Development, capacity building and a strong team of people who believe in this initiative. The most important aspect of the Aromatic & Healing Herbs is to protect the heritage and to use it as a basis and then develop it in a more creative and modern way.

The experience is based on tradition and innovation. Both are of equal importance, to preserve and protect the heritage but also to be innovative with new products and ideas so that there is development, engagement of more people, while the experience is sustainable, and appealing to the new generation.

Heritage is protected as a team of people, herbalists, chefs, researchers are working together in order to record and preserve heritage. Stories from old women regarding rituals and traditional ways of cooking, traditional recipes are recorded and preserved. In Platres the lavender village, we have 18 ladies who are following different recipes with lavender, from chocolates to cookies to liqueur to lemonades, the number of culinary products is endless. For this

to be maintained lavender planting is organized in the village every year, which is part of their heritage. Lavender distillation is done in the traditional way to have the ingredients to produce lavender sweets and other products. Through training and capacity building, the perception that lavender is something that we put in our drawers to smell and keep the moths away has changed; we can drink and eat lavender and create a hundred products, which can bring income to the village.

Heritage has been documented in a film, with old women describing the religious ceremonies at the village which were done with lavender and these rituals are brought back to the church, as they were forgotten.

The local landscape is extremely important as the soil of Troodos mountains

is exceptional due to the formation of the island. The land is blessed with more than 800 kinds of herbs so the whole idea of the experience is based on the biodiversity and richness of the mountains.

The aim of the Aromatic and Healing Herbs is to create awareness about each herb, their uses in traditional and modern medicine in gastronomy and culture as most religious and social celebrations include several herbs so does the traditional festive cuisine. So, the local lifestyle, local culture, habits and values, religious celebrations, traditional recipes for wellness and gastronomy are involved in this initiative.

The whole community is involved, including the Cyprus Herb Society – Women Association of Platres, the hospitality industry and creative industry. Seminars, workshops, meetings, and capacity building are organized throughout the year, to keep the cooperation strong and involve everybody in the organisation. Different experts are involved every year, depending on the theme, target and objective of the Conference and Exhibition. Their contribution is supporting and encouraging.



*Photo 2: Herbalists at Aromatic and Healing Herbs Conference (image credit: Platres's Community Council)*

**Organising and managing experience**

The most important stakeholders for our culinary experiences are:

- herb producers from the whole island
- tourism industry – tour operators travel agents
- creative industry
- local authority
- local community

Local authorities are more involved than others as the Aromatic & Healing Herbs of Cyprus and the Lavender Thematic Center is very beneficial for the community; it brings tourists and locals to rural areas and expands the holiday period beyond July and August, which are the busiest months of the year. Above all it brings awareness about the herbs as an important ingredient of the Cypriot culinary heritage.

	<p>The linking and networking of stakeholders was done by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation which commissioned a research on an island base in order to locate all the herb producers and map them. In addition, a SWOT analysis was carried out to see the potential of this industry. The study showed that the potential was enormous. This is why the organisation invested in the creation of the Aromatic and Healing Herbs of Cyprus Conference and Exhibition which provides a platform for trading, networking, but mostly preserving the Cypriot culinary heritage, recipes and rituals and religious celebrations with herbs.</p> <p>Stakeholders were located through research eleven years ago, and visits to their herb farms were done, as at the time very few of the producers had access to the internet and not enough IT skills. Their motivation to be a part of the project was the local and international promotion of their herbal gardens and their herbs, the sales of their products and networking, all under the umbrella of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, which gives prestige and recognition at no cost. At the beginning there were communication problems with the herb producers, as they lack IT skills, therefore communication was difficult and very time consuming, which was an obstacle. Also it took several years to start working as a team. At the beginning most of the farmers saw each other as competitors and not stakeholders in the development. Stakeholders are connected through the Cyprus Herb Society which was created through the close cooperation and collaboration of the producers, through social media and one-on-one cooperation, by exchanging knowledge, equipment and herbs, recipes, and technical assistance when needed.</p> <p>The cooperation activated for this culinary experience led to new/additional joint actions focused on tourism and gastronomy. As this is the only national initiative related to herbs, it provides a platform for networking, new cooperation, and growth. The Aromatic &amp; Healing Herbs has been running for ten years and we have seen some micro businesses to grow into medium size companies and a lot of young people to enter the market as producers and micro businesses.</p> <p>Through the Conference people are increasingly becoming aware about the traditional recipes and ways of preserving. Also some new travel agents are providing gastronomy tours only.</p>
<p><b>Policy and strategies</b></p>	<p>This culinary experience is aligned with the strategy of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation for the creation and empowerment of Rural Tourism and Experience Tourism where gastronomy plays a very important role.</p> <p>The Cyprus Tourism Organisation, which is a national organisation, has a leading role in this culinary experience, along with the Troodos Regional Board of Tourism. They are the main sponsors and organizers of The Aromatic &amp; Healing Herbs of Cyprus, which is aligned with their strategy. It has a very positive impact as several trainings, workshops and seminars are sponsored in order to encourage the local communities and other stakeholders to create unique culinary experiences and packages for tourists and locals and be a part of the culinary experience. The legal institutional framework behind the culinary experience is the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, The Troodos Regional Board of Tourism, and the Platres Community Council. The</p>

	<p>organisation of the Aromatic and Healing Herbs of Cyprus is sponsored by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation and the Community Council of Platres.</p> <p>The culinary experience contributes to the local community as it brings income to the whole community, further it educates the local people and the hospitality industry in preserving the culinary heritage and culture. There is a contribution to local development, through the increase in the influx of tourism. Increased income to the hospitality industry can provide a platform for development.</p> <p>The Platres 's Community Council is fully embracing and sponsoring the whole experience. The Conference and Exhibition is hosted at their cultural center, as well as the Lavender Thematic Center, which is active all year round. They sponsor the Opening Ceremony with local music and local culinary delicacies and offer free accommodation to the speakers, experts and VIPs.</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>The Aromatic &amp; Healing Herbs of Cyprus has a positive impact by supporting the local economy, an added value to the tourism industry, creates jobs for local women, especially young unemployed women, which is very important, and creates social cohesion by having a common Vision and Mission. Herbalists, experts, chefs, national authorities and people work harmoniously together, creating intergenerational dialogue, especially during the research and implementation parts, and preserving landscape as people understand the importance of herbs so they protect them.</p> <p>The Aromatic &amp; Healing Herbs of Cyprus is a two-day event with a full program so it is a thematic tourism package on its own. Other thematic tourism packages have been created but not yet exploited, such as the Lavender Culinary Tour of Platres, which is implemented only upon request for journalists, travel agents and specific groups interested in lavender.</p>
<b>Innovative aspects</b>	<p>Innovation in the culinary experience can have three aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional culinary products which are forgotten come back with new refined and modern recipes – in Cyprus we have the example of carob syrup and grape syrup</li> <li>• Culinary products can be used for their medical/healing properties – e.g. potatoes as stomach pills or for creating beauty products, which gives an added value to any recipe as people know the healing, healthy part, apart from the great taste</li> <li>• Traditional recipes to be served in an innovative way, e.g. bean recipes as pesto, starter, or topping for pasta, etc.</li> </ul> <p>Aromatic and Healing Herbs of Cyprus is innovative as it integrates all the three aspects of the innovation, and fosters and nurtures further innovation through seminars, workshops, capacity building, product diversification, and innovative packaging of the products. The most innovative part of it is both turning culinary products into cosmetics and preserving and upgrading the traditional culinary products into refined and prestige products, of high nutritional and traditional value.</p> <p>The inspiration of the innovative culinary experience comes from the passion for development, the love for the people and their stories, their traditions, and the wealth which is uncovered and forgotten. The desire to keep the unique identity authentic through the generations to come.</p>

	<p>The Aromatic &amp; Healing Herbs of Cyprus innovative culinary experience is important as it creates interest, demand, and encourages more people, especially young ones, to be actively involved. As there is continuous R&amp;D and capacity building, the awareness is spread and the Cyprus Tourism Organisation is supporting financially the whole initiative in many villages. Many channels in Cyprus and in Greece have covered the Lavender Thematic Center and the innovation of eating and drinking lavender in so many ways. Flashing forward 10 years, the most desirable result will be thematic culinary tourism packages and prestige health &amp; wellness shops selling all the products at the European and global level.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The success of the culinary experience is measured by the number of visitors, the turnover of the herb farmers and SME's, the interest of the tourists, the feedback, and the sustainability of the whole project. The obstacles faced are the seasonality and the lack of human resources due to urbanization. To monitor this problem, the Community Council in cooperation with other organizations organizes various events throughout the year, wellness packages, and activities camps for children, which are implemented during off-peak periods.</p> <p>The challenges are related to the lack of human and financial resources, the weather conditions in winter, and the fact that the Aromatic &amp; Healing Herbs and the Lavender Thematic Center is based in the mountains – for some people the distance is prohibiting. To improve the culinary experience, the organizers are in touch with small tourism operators who specialize in culinary tourism, bringing more people to the mountains and schools for school trips.</p> <p>The advice to a beginner who wishes to create new culinary experience is that the experience has to be unique, authentic, to benefit the community, while it has to lead to community-engaged development. Without local human resources it is impossible to be sustainable.</p> <p>In cooperation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Maria Socratous – Senior Officer – Cyprus Tourism Organisation – 19 Limassol Avenue – tel 00357-22691100</li> <li>• Mrs Lygia Dermatis – Senior Officer – Cyprus Tourism Organisation – 19 Limassol Avenue – tel 00357-22691100</li> <li>• Mr Constantinos Constantinou – The Troodos Regional Board of Tourism – 4 B Olympou Street-Pano Platres, Limassol 4820 – tel 00357 25 421020</li> <li>• Mr Panayiotis Papadopoulos – President – Platres's Community council – 1 G. Skyrianides Street – 00357-25813112</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stakeholders view on good practice</b></p>	<p><b><i>Susan E Worwood M.I.F.A., President of Herbs Society of Cyprus</i></b></p> <p>The Aromatic and Healing Herbs expo and conference is a very important and beneficial event in Cyprus. As President of the Herb Society of Cyprus I feel that information and education on the benefits of Cyprus herbs is vital for our members and this is the event where they can learn how to use herbs in many ways. The expo is growing every year with new events within it and more people becoming interesting in different ways of looking after their health and that of their family using natural products.</p> <p><b><i>Caroline Evans, MH, ND, herbalist and founder of Heaven on Earth Herbals</i></b></p>

My 13 years of herbal practice and herb growing in Cyprus have been one of the most fulfilling aspects of my career to date. The herbs in Cyprus are second to none in their potency and use as essential oils. I particularly love it in Cyprus that in every village, the old villagers have distillation units with more and more people using these to distil the amazing aromatic herbs of myrtle, sage, thyme, oregano, and of course the much loved lavender. As a tourism sustainability award winner for my commitment to environmental protection, conservation and local culture, I believe that the impact that this conference will have on our society is key in promoting our important work with herbs and aromatics within Cyprus and will ensure the benchmark is set to enable future development in this area.

*Written by: Yioula Papakyriacou*



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