



# The Gourmet Festivals in Romania – Way to Promote Tradition in the Rural Area and of Stable Development through Tourism

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## ABSTRACT

The work focuses on highlighting the level achieved in developing the gourmet festivals from Romania, on the necessary resources that are subject to the event activity and give dimension, wealth and variety to the cookery patrimony, as well as on the frequent and permanent actors that bring the intake in their organization and development, being more aware of their necessity through the attractiveness they create. The impact created by the size of the festivals is the more direct and the fastest sequence in contouring the image of tourism, providing through their content, richer alternatives than other aspects of traditional life to rural area, being connected with the abundance of food and care for the variety of meal, the multitude of raw materials, numerous procedures to combine them, the diversity of food and eating habits. The European policies are those that come to support the development of tourism through gourmet festivals, the promotion and development of the local communities, of entrepreneurship on traditional products and of the areas according to the concept of durability.

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## 1. Introduction

The gourmet festivals are an important expression of human activity, best highlighting the strong connection between tradition (on the account of food products) and tourism, contributing to our social and cultural life.

Generally, festivals, for some countries, were once seen as being more and more connected with tourism so as to engender business activities and income for host communities, and this type of festival under analysis, becoming universally known, was considered as belonging to the category „festival of wine and food”. For example, in Europe, after the 90's, the relaunching and comeback of the demand for rural tourism could be assigned to the development of prolonged weekends. Thus, a new product has been created-high quality services, maintaining competitive prices, simultaneously providing attractive activities, implying the selection of the farmers hired in rural tourism, some who continue to offer only accommodation and others who specialize in quality food or complementary activities in harmony with their specific activities. One of the most popular strategy of rural development has been tourism and the entrepreneur opportunities associated to it due to its ability to produce money, to engender jobs and to support the increase of on-detail sale.

In the present tourism is considered a potential way of economic development and regeneration of rural areas especially of those affected by the decline of traditional agricultural activities.

That is why gourmet festivals are also a way to reply to the effects of European policy of durable rural development which supports the production of food stuffs at local and regional level. They are seen by governments as tools for rural regeneration and renewal, to contribute to the change of the image of destination, to bring a new life and prosperity to communities.

We consider gourmet festivals after Vasile Carabis, in the article „Romanian nedeias: traco-dacic customs”, as originating from the *nedeias in the carpatho-danubian – pontic space* (as ancient stopover places, with names that even date back from the second half of the XVI th century and with old roots in history), considered *traco-dacic customs*.

Nedeias were also seen, understood and described as follows: „through ancient stopovers we understand those chosen places, for a certain period of time, on different roads of Romanian countries and provinces, in which villagers periodically come to exchange their own products first directly, in nature, then as it is common nowadays” or the „nedeias’ days were a chance of great feast, of joy, cheer, games and repasts, at which the village people gathered, sometimes coming from great distances”, or „nedeia, as a pastoral holiday, constituted a social life skill specific to our lands / realms”.

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The role of these festivals is multiple.

a) The festival causes a promotion of a traditional product or of a category of products from local and regional cuisine (some already appear in the National Register of Traditional Products), which through their own name (e.g. "The Festival of Plescoi Sausages", Berca, county Buzau; "The Festival of Headcheeses" of pork, poultry, beef, turkey, fish from Gorj,) the recipes and the traditional presentation style come together (sometimes even with organizing an exhibition) along with the product manufacturing and serving. Why? Promoting a certain cookery product through the conservation of abilities and techniques leads to readopting history, reacquiring what was lost and it also helps at creating, innovating and accepting the change; the cookery patrimony from a rural area corresponds to the memory of the whole group, its roots engendering a feeling of belonging to that area, that is why a great number of communities claim, defend and appreciate it, seeing it as a source of income, a label and an instrument of local development.

b) Along with the gourmet patrimony the whole cultural patrimony of a community is promoted on the one hand „a mark of identity, a distinct feature of the social group because it offers historic depth and a permanent pattern in a world in a continuous change „and on the other side an attractive feature for those from the outside of an area.

c) Through the gourmet festivals, with great impact on the space, *they create the chance of developing the local communities through tourism and some rural settlements as tourist destinations, especially if these are advantaged by their location in exceptionally natural setting.*

d) It is created *the frame in people's orientation and the development of the idea of building a mentality based on a healthier nutrition through legitimized authentic patrimony, (through registered traditional products)* coming inclusively from a greater awareness of the urban population and of the one returned in the rural space. Numerous national and European authorities regulate the agro-feeding sector with labels and certificates of all types, including Romania, which impose a constant traditional / innovative dynamics of the modern techniques of consumerism, demand and offer on a market always ready for progress.

e) At the same time the entrepreneur competition and the exchange of experience between participants-providers of traditional products.

f) Another role is designing the territorial differences projection of the cultural patrimony in the perception of visitors / tourists through their participation at festivals and constituting a new mental pattern through the abilities and cookery habits as part and parcel of the individual, collective and regional construction.

## 2. Festivals – space-time distribution

A) Following the *geographical layout at country level* by consulting the site ANTREC and of others actors with the same implication (local authorities, associations, etc), a proliferation of these can be seen especially after the year 2002 connected with the revigoration of tradition through the appearance on the market of prepared / manufactured products.

Why?

1) The covering area of all traditional products is much larger than of festivals, obviously including the one indicated by certified / confirmed traditional products. According to the National Register of Traditional Products (RNTP), in the year 2014, there were 362 products alongside 25 counties after the producers'addresses of workpoint, meaning 85 localities ( out of which 62 villages and 23 towns), in the year 2015 they reach a total of 485 products ( on December 3rd, when the site was accessed) most of them located in 81 rural settlements.

2) Most festivals focus on meat and dairy products that supports the conclusion of the Romanian researchers interested in traditional jobs, according to which Romanians everywhere were great sheep, cows, horses, pigs and goats breeders. (see the map)

Through the name of the confirmed / certified product, safe tourist resource of the festival we mean:

✚ the animal category directly or indirectly through an organ ( truckle – sheep, lamb or kid skin), for example: sheep curd Raul ( 315-number of the certificate RNTP 2015) , goat curd Raul (316 number of the certificate / RNTP 2015), calf pastrami Vilica (332 number of certificate / RNTP 2015), pork pastrami Dumbrava (337 number of certificate / RNTP 2015), truckle cheese Natalia (401 number of certificate / RNTP 2015);

✚ even the traditional technological procedure according to the characteristics of the area ( the pots and tools used were different in shape and size all over the country), such as : kneaded cheese (obtained by preparing the dried / fermented/ baked curd) – kneaded cheese Delut (392 number of certificate / RNTP 2015); cottage cheese – cottage cheese Botis from Carpinis (352-number of certificate / RNTP 2015)

According to the calendar, there is a whole year distribution of festivals on each month, the date of the event being generally connected with the traditional jobs and nature cycles (doles, wedding gifts, etc), which obviously had well-meant meanings (they symbolically aim at strenghtening and maintaining the relationships within the group); the length varies between 1 and 3 days.

There are festivals from whose name results this, especially in areas such as Bucovina, Maramures-Oas, Sibiu area, the area Brasov- Harghita where Christmas and Easter are stressed upon by fully appealing to

using the traditional dishes, some already confirmed in ceremonial and festive meals. For instance, The International Cookery Festival “Pork Dole”, initiated / founded and organized by ANTREC Covasna, reaching the Xth edition in February, in 2015, under the form of a cookery competition outdoors within the Cetate complex from Balvanyos, county Harghita.

When it comes to the relationship job based on sheep breeding with the nature cycles, for example Cluttering sheep - The Festival of cheese and pastrami mark the end of pastoral year; it is celebrated in the last weekend of September on the plateau “the Queen’s Heart”, from Bran (with the support of Bran townhall, The Association of Animal Breeders from Bran and the Administration of Bran domain – Bran Castle).

The traditional tourist areas mentioned can be followed by others, some in delineation, just at the expense of tourism development, of the gourmet one, through the capitalization of the place potential given by traditional products. An eloquent example is the one of the villages Sirnea and Fundata from county Brasov, belonging to the same area, already acknowledged and registered in the tourist circuit for the natural frame as a result of their location at high altitude in the Corridor Bran-Rucar. But the appreciation of cultural implications of the traditional products and the wish to revive villages justify their being on top of traditional products (over 18). Agrotourism can be easily practiced in agrotourist boarding houses (many products belong to the same producer) and animal breeding farms, cultural tourism, tourism based on gastronomy, and other forms of tourism (sport and recreation, angling, hunting tourism ), contributing at the increase of the duration of tourism practice , of trust in attracting investments in agriculture, tourism, food and infrastructure.

The length of the festivals varies between 1 – 3 days. Few of them unfold on 2 or 3 days. This situation already reflects what some studies signal and the experience of a country in this domain, i.e. the focused effort of the actors involved in the extension of the length of tourists’ stay on convincing visitors/ tourists to buy local agrifood products, of increasing the amount of money spent not only on products but also on other tourist activities during the remained visit. The positive effects are obvious.

In this way, many rural settlements, “host settlements” of the festivals, advantaged by the infrastructure (tourist and general) and by geographical location (on roads of European interest, not far from the capital of the country or great urban areas) will turn from the stage of “stopover places” to “tourist destinations”. For example, it was announced that only in 2015 on the event “ Haferland Week” ( of Oat Country), annually organized in German villages between Rupea and Sighisoara, the traditional houses in the area, turned into units of welcoming tourists, ensure the accommodation between 150-200 tourists.

*The place of unfolding the gourmet festivals either is kept, staying the same every year, or changes at the level of the basic area / administrative- territorial; such as „ The Festival of Headcheese” took place in turn in Arcani, Pestisani and Tismana, county Gorj, localities considered standard for the hospitality of rural boarding houses from Gorj.*

In the case of *the festivals with reference to confirmed products*, from the correlation between the name and their venues according to the Cookery Calendar 2014 and of other materials on the sites of decisional factors at local or national level with their name and the manufacturing place as they appear in RNTP, results:

- ✚ festivals from the villages / towns registered in RNTP with traditional confirmed products: The Festival „Bradulet Cheese” , Bradulet (Bradetu is the name of the product village), county Arges; normally the product reflects the characteristic of the place, and the event is organised in its honour.
- ✚ festivals which reflect the name of the confirmed product ( see 374 the number of certificate / RNTP 2014 ) but in order to ensure the breadth and medieval atmosphere they take place in the residence of the county – The Virs Festival – medieval and cookery at Corvinilor Castle „

### 3. The gourmet patrimony of a community – diversity and significances

The traditional products form the gourmet patrimony , constitute the *essential resources* of gourmet festivals. They are food products prepared / manufactured on Romanian national territory in a traditional manner and for which local raw materials are used. In diversifying the traditional cuisine an important role had the contact between the local people of Romanian origin and other population assimilated within the Romanian space. Thus the Germans, Hungarians, Russians , Ukrainians, Greeks , Jewish , Turkish that have been living on these territories for a long time had their own contribution in developing traditional cookery recipes. So, they formed a traditional Romanian cuisine with strong ethnic influences, which is also undisputable today because it remained regionalized, with all cookery imports. Nevertheless, a merit of Romanian gastronomy , in what regards the influence of other foreign products, is the fact that they have acquired only those dishes that could adjust to Romanian tastes and customs .

- ✚ *Many of these dishes are under confirmation certificate*, being found in The National Register of the Traditional products (RNTP), represent a greater food safety and which according to the legislation in force, *do not have food additives in their composition, present a traditional recipe, a way to produce or/ and also process and a traditional technological procedure* and they distinguish from other similar products belonging to the same categories.

We consider traditional certified products obvious reminiscences of an ancient food system, by following the tradition trail, with certain certification by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development just like a reaction to the preservation of some reserved attitudes towards new in food way (with the registration of specific receptivity) and to the appreciation of the persistence power of the traditional life style. In the case of Romania, gastronomy, as well as crafts represent an element of the concept of rural tourism.

✚ Traditional products are *the expression of the Romanian civilization, especially the rural one, as a complete bearer of some old traditions and local experiments, always renewed but every time giving the same local specific*. Ever since the interwar period Romania has been known at world level as an eminently agricultural country, the small industry knowing a development also in the rural environment, by creating some workshops, factories in which the agricultural products were produced.

Even though the reduction of the economic role of the traditional household was obvious parallel with the increase of the effects of urbanization, deeply experienced in strongly industrialized pretown areas, the villages farther than great urban centres and/or in areas harder to access or situated in disadvantaged areas somehow proved a maintenance of a traditional feature, mainly in ceremonial and festive eating. In fact, today these are the places of highlighting traditional products through festivals it has thus arrived to a rediscovery and turning to advantage of peasant cuisine, „that the great peasant cuisine from Romania is still undiscovered!”, Radu Anton Roman (famous in dishes and Romanian customs) once said.

✚ The traditional products were *symbols of economy and culture in which the image of Romania has reflected abroad, no matter the time and space, through fairs, universal and international tourism exhibitions*.

Externally, the inter-war period was decisive in some ways, when the Whole Romania had another „profile” (surface, population, economy etc), which allowed it an acceleration of development and modernization, of integration in civilized Europe, an active involvement in the life of the continent, in international politics and a building of the image of its identity through continuing the values, increasingly qualitative and quantitative, already validated by the participation at exhibitions from the second half of the XIX th century and the beginning of the XXth century.

The efforts of the external propaganda mainly focused on cultural, economical and tourist coordinates with strong support in the potential of natural frame and people history, which define and promote the rural and urban-industrial, that is why the essential elements were among others, the products of the domain of economic excellence of the era, agriculture such as maps, photos, films, ethnographic brochures, illustrated booklets that showed the impressive diversity of the natural landscapes, the numerous and valuable historical holdovers or „extremely alive” popular artistic traditions”. Romania became known through a great success on participating at the first exhibition of great proportions – The Universal and International Exhibition from Paris in the year 1937 (for which the preparations started in 1934) – through :

- ✚ the most attractive point of the Romanian Pavilion (furbished on the principle „ Contemporary Romania”), but of the whole Exhibition namely the *restaurant-pavillion*, „instrument of propaganda through excellence”, with lists of menus printed daily, with orchestral and folk music, with calusari dance, with the distribution of *Romanian cookery books* etc;
- ✚ the section tourism, where for the first time „The Tourist Map of Romania” size 50 / 70, with text on the back, in a million copies, the booklet „Tourist Romania”, size 33/44, one million copies.
- ✚ the traditional certified products are *elements that contribute to the revival of tradition through agricultural and non-agricultural* come as an alternative solution, especially supporting the Romanian village to ensure its sustainability after a period of more than half a century when the processes of collectivization, urbanization and massive industrialization between 1950-1970 radically transformed the economic activity, the lifestyles and customs from the villages of Romania, which put into obscurity the traditional form of social life organisation.
- ✚ they are the consequence of the *implementation* of nationally and locally programmed documents, in accordance with the EU policies.

Among „The National Strategic Frame for the stable development of the agrifood sector and of the rural space between 2014-2020-2030 ”, „The national strategic orientations for the stable development of the disadvantaged mountainous area (\*2014-2020)” and many others, an important role was played by the national Panels of rural development that took into account the major change brought by the Common Agricultural Policy (PAC) in 1999, when it introduced the objective for the development of rural areas , which encouraged the tourism more.

For example, PNDR 2007-2013 in the sight of development of non-agricultural activities through the Axis 3 – „ The quality of life in rural areas and the diversification of rural economy” and of the three measures within it: Measure 312 – „ Support for creating and developing the microenterprises”; Measure 313 – „Encouraging the tourist activities” and Measure 322 – *The renovation, the development of villages, the improvement of the basic services for rural economy and population and turning to advantage the rural inheritance*”, under the afferent sub-measures.

In continuation, the implementation of the *National Programme of Rural Development 2014-2020* will come to support the needs selected through the priorities of *rural development*. For example, through the PNDR 2014-2020 objectives they aim at:

i) *the increase of competitiveness of agriculture and food sector*, beside the forest one, as being *essential for the economic development of rural areas and for creating the workplaces and as a result representing the central element of this strategy*; there is potential for the increase of productivity, a better integration on the market of the agricultural manufacturer, the substitution of imports, the increase of exports of added value products and modernization of the processing sector of agricultural products.

ii) *promoting the continuous use of agricultural lands in the areas less attractive for agricultural activities*, is a challenge from the perspective of maintaining the traditional landscapes specific to the Romanian rural space, but of the stable management of natural resources, also answering these needs.

iii) *the diversification of economic activities, creating the workplaces, improving the infrastructure and the services for the improvement of the quality of life in rural areas*.

It should be mentioned that the food products made after the concept „*Romanian established recipes*”, even though they have been made for some time, differ from the ones made after a *traditional recipe*. They are „*food products manufactured respecting the composition used more than 30 years before the date of enforcing the Order 394/2014 regarding the certification of the food products obtained according to Romanian established recipes*”. For consumers it is sometimes harder to differentiate the products after these types of recipes but their names help them do.

At the level of Romania there are chances in the proliferation of the number of certified traditional products which will lead to the completeness of the image of certified gourmet patrimony, through the registration of traditional products as trademark, at highlighting its zoning and tourism development.

### **3. The main and frequent actors in organizing and undergoing of the gourmet festivals**

From consulting the sites of nongovernmental associative forms, ministries and local authorities it results that the responsables and main participants at organizing and undergoing gourmet festivals are the local communities, the entrepreneurship with traditional products and The National of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism (ANTREC).

#### **The local community**

Many inhabitants from the locality and administrative unit the festival unfolds on or outside it, from much farther spaces, participate as volunteers with crafts and presentations with all kinds of gourmet dishes after old recipes. Most of these are women and they can be a force especially in developing Romanian rural tourism through festivals.

Also in Romania about 10 years ago, the repartition on averages of the structure on ages and sexes of the population disclosed an accentuation of aging and feminization of the population from rural space, shortly after the census from 2002 some analysts on population matters announced the acceleration of the speed of the aging process after 1992 and reaching higher values not in too many years. Taking into account the fact that most villages from the case study are in disadvantaged mountainous areas, with bumpy relief, generally isolated, the development of rural tourism is a good option for women, even for the younger ones, with another degree of mobility

The application of some European programmes, as it happened in countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece for the development of the tourism from rural areas or meant to give women (\* some from farmers' families ) the chance to get additional workforce and income , would increase the woman's role in tourism so as to promote the values of local culture and of protecting the environment.

Taking into account woman's role in food patterns, she can be assumed the right and priority in practicing and developing the tourism based on traditional cuisine. She can generally be considered the author of the traditional products, inclusively the ones already certified or probably those ongoing confirmation.

Woman's role started to become visible in Romania right in the accommodation units – their traditional houses, agritourist boarding houses – from the villages with a better capitalization of the tourist potential etc.

The development of rural tourism is seen in many scheduled documents as a stop of migration and even of the process of depopulation of villages. Other views expressed would be that tourism can also be an alternative of keeping the youngsters in rural areas if they reach wellbeing conditions comparable with the situation in which they would migrate.

#### **The entrepreneurship**

A part of the participants bidders of certified traditional products within the cookery festivals constitutes the entrepreneurship, which also has role of determinant factor in stable development, especially through their location in disadvantaged areas and / or in protected natural areas . The best example is Fundata with farm under the commitments of agro-environment with 20 certified traditional products.

The entrepreneurs are oriented towards the marketing of traditional products within the agricultural festivals, fairs and exhibitions, specially furnished markets in towns or provide the products to visitors / tourists directly at the farm.

The stage of involvement of entrepreneurship already announces the increased turning to profit of the gourmet patrimony and of the tourism development after the model of rural France, meaning:

- ✚ with fresh or processed farm products sold by farmers, either directly to the consumer (street markets, post order, and in most cases on the farm) or through intermediates (supermarkets, restaurants)
- ✚ with fermes-auberges, which accept guests for having meals;
- ✚ with snacks on the farm, afternoon snacks prepared from fresh farm products and often followed by a visit on /at a farm and a recreational activity.

Thus, agrotourism acts as a motive force for the development of tourism in rural areas and promotes rural development, allowing entrepreneurs to supplement the agricultural income afferent to tourist activities.

### **The local authorities and ANTREC**

The local authorities have the role and well defined responsibility through direct participation at change and innovation, being aware of the importance of festivals in the stable development of their local communities and space. They represent the decision actor in organizing and undergoing the tourist event of tradition.

ANTREC, member of the European Federation of Rural Tourism – EuroGites, founded in 1994, is a permanent actor present through different actions at national level in order to promote and develop the rural tourism and agrotourism. Through festivals it supports the local gastronomy, revives the habits and customs so that the Romanian tourists remember who they are, where they came from and which are our values as a people.

### **Conclusions**

1. the proliferation of gourmet festivals and the extension of their length as a result of their attractiveness and an increased discovery of their role in the stable development;
2. the geographical distribution stresses the relationship between the place / locality of undergoing and way of eating kept in time and differentiated according to the zonal characteristic of the Carpathian and adjacent space; here the human race has continuously developed under the increasing impulse of the climatic, socio-economic, political factors of each historical age , always providing people favourable conditions with generosity , leaving its mark on the entire lifestyle
3. the existence of an entrepreneur network already formed but in a continuous development which contributes to :
  - tourism development and promoting tradition in rural space
  - ensuring the resource in the undergoing of the tourist event and the increase of the size of gourmet patrimony highlighting and stressing the regional differences
  - the consolidation of a tourist manifestation / event , as a form of promoting their own products altogether
  - the stable development of those communities and spaces of which they either belong or not.

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## Appendix

