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## Authentic food of Hungarians in Vojvodina (North Serbia) and its significance for the development of food tourism

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### ABSTRACT

The ethnic structure of Vojvodina (North Serbia) has affected the formation of diverse gastronomy. Inhabitants with their own gastronomic characteristics have helped it to become a favourable destination for the development of tourism focusing on food. Alongside with thirty nations who inhabit Vojvodina, a large number of Hungarian inhabitants highlighted the need for the research of production and preparation of authentic food in households within this ethnic group in terms of its significance for the development of food tourism in rural areas. The subject of the paper is the manner of nutrition of Hungarians who inhabit rural areas in Vojvodina, in terms of its significance for the development of food tourism. The aim of the paper is to research the level of preserved authenticity of their gastronomy, as a possibility for authentic gastronomic experience of tourists. The aim of this research by phases is to determine what kinds of agricultural crops and livestock is grown, as well as which authentic products are produced and to which extent traditional Hungarian dishes are prepared, then how well they are preserved and whether there are any differences compared to their compatriots.

**Keywords:** tourism, food, gastronomy, Hungarians, Vojvodina, North Serbia

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Vojvodina, as a multicultural region with over thirty nations, represents a unique mixture of a large number of cuisines whose importances is reflected in the development of tourism. New trends slowly redirect the focus of tourists from mass to alternative forms of tourism, thus making food and drink the main motive for visiting a specific destination (Baum, 2011; Kalenjuk et al., 2012a). The mixture of ethnic groups with their unique gastronomic characteristics has affected Vojvodina to become a favourable destination for the development of gastronomic tourism, which is defined as a tourist movement directed to food and drink tasting with primary or secondary producers, visiting food and drink festivals and consuming authentic specialties in different hospitality facilities. Since active vacation is becoming more and more popular, tourists more and more often take part in food preparation in different households or schools for authentic regional cooking (Hall & Mitchell, 2006) thereby gaining a unique gastronomic experience. Gastronomic tourism as a more and more massive form of tourist movement, focuses on the interest of villages and village households where the food originates from (Baum, 2011; Kalenjuk et al., 2014; Vuksanović et al., 2016; Kalenjuk et al., 2018).



**Photo 1.** Hungarian girl from Vojvodina  
(Autor: Bojan Đerčan, 2018)

Gastronomy is potentially most preserved in rural areas. In this regard, tourism is observed as a branch of industry with social and economic function of a specific area, contributing to a better evaluation of an agrarian environment (Henderson, 2004; Quan & Wang, 2004; Gagic et al., 2014; Banjac et al., 2016; Đerčan et al., 2017). Through the gastronomy preserved in villages, tourist can get acquainted with the culture and customs of the area they visit, as well as with characteristic flavours and scents which carry an authentic experience. Tourist organizations have recognized the potentials of gastronomy in the area where they operate and have included them in their offer, thereby developing a selective form of tourism, which is known as food tourism (Boniface, 2003) or gastronomic (Hjalanger & Richards, 2002), culinary (Wolf, 2006; Ignatov & Smith, 2006), gustatory (Boniface, 2003) and gourmet tourism.

The research of production and preparation of authentic food in the households of Vojvodina Hungarians and the significance of rural areas for the development of gastronomic tourism stemmed from the fact that Vojvodina represents a vast tourist area inhabited by about thirty nations (35% of the total population (Kalenjuk, 2017a), of which 13% is the Hungarian population) (Photo 1).

Dynamic historical events in the area of Vojvodina affected the formation of the specific tradition of living, customs, religions, ways of doing business and similar, which, combined with the fertile plain, affected the formation of the rich and varied gastronomy (Banjac et al., 2016). Some authors state that the culture of nutrition represents a reflection of complex living conditions, geographic and climate characteristics, historical and social events in a rural area, so it differs from one village to the other, and from household to household, and even among ethnic groups because of the multiplied effects of numerous factors (Stojanović & Čerović, 2008).

The popularity of gastronomic tourism has expanded in the last few decades (Santich, 2004), while Vojvodina has just recently become aware of this form of tourism and the interest is growing more and more every day (Tešanović et al., 2010; Tešanović et al., 2013; Kalenjuk et al., 2013a; Kalenjuk et al., 2013b; Tešanović et al., 2015). Food is a part of every tourism product. In the chain of successful placement of agricultural, alimentary and gastronomic products in tourism, key segments are determined by national, economic, agricultural and alimentary policies (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000). Consequently, local food can be observed as (Hall & Mitchel, 2001; Kalenjuk et al., 2012b):

- a part of local culture, which tourists spend;
- an important part of tourist promotion;
- a potential component of the local agricultural and economic development, and
- a regional factor influenced by patterns of consumption and the observed desire of tourists.

Unlike typical tourist movements where seasonality is expressed, gastronomic destinations are available all year round, at any time of day and in all weather conditions (Richards, 2002), which is a significant advantage for the development of this form of tourism (Kalenjuk et al., 2012c; Kalenjuk & Tešanović, 2013c), provided that these are easily accessible locations.

The subject of this paper is a preservation of the national cuisine of the Hungarian as the dominant ethnic group in the rural areas of Vojvodina, in terms of its significance for the development of gastronomic tourism. The goal of the research is to examine the level of

preservation of the national cuisine of Hungarians who inhabit this region, as a possibility of a tourism offer. The aim of the research is to answer the following research questions:

- What plant species are independently grown?
- What products are independently produced or processed?
- To which extent do they prepare dishes according to the recipes of their ancestors?
- How do they assess preservation of traditional dishes in their household, the household of their descendants and fellow countrymen?
- Which dishes do they consider being representative of their cuisine, what is the difference between their cuisine and cuisines of other ethnic groups and which dishes have they acquired from their fellow countrymen in Vojvodina?

## **2. THE CUISINE OF THE HUNGARIAN IN VOJVODINA**



**Photo 2.** Hungarians paprikashe and strudels  
(Autor: Bojana Kalenjuk, 2017)

The Hungarian cuisine is basically of high calorie value, known for being very spicy and piquant. Basic ingredients are of animal origin, primarily pork, beef, veal, as well as poultry. The most significant representatives followed by sweet dishes are goulash, pörkölt and fish broth. In the process of food preparation they use lard, goose grease, garlic, onions, cream, full-fat cheese, walnuts and poppy seed. Besides goulash which is prepared exclusively from beef, pörkölt and paprikashes are very popular. Among the desserts there are apple pies, walnut pies, poppy seed pies and cherry pies, then widely known Dobos torte cake and Esterhazy torte cake, which are original products of old Hungarian pastry chefs, then there are Kurtoskalacz (Chimney cake), Somloi galuska, crepes, compotes, strudels with poppy seeds and walnuts, etc. (Kalenjuk, 2017b) (Photo 2).

### **3. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research was conducted among the inhabitants of rural areas using a survey questionnaire. Villages with the Hungarian majority were targeted in the following municipalities: Subotica, Sombor, Zitiste, Coka, Ada, Senta, Backa Topola and Kanjiza. The questionnaires were personally handed to people of the Hungarian ethnic group with the focus on people older than 50. In order to receive the data, 120 questionnaires were given, of which 93 were properly filled in and statistically processed. For the purposes of this paper, the questionnaires were processed using descriptive statistics. The obtained data are graphically shown in the paper.

### **4. THE RESULTS OF THE WORK AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4. 1. The analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

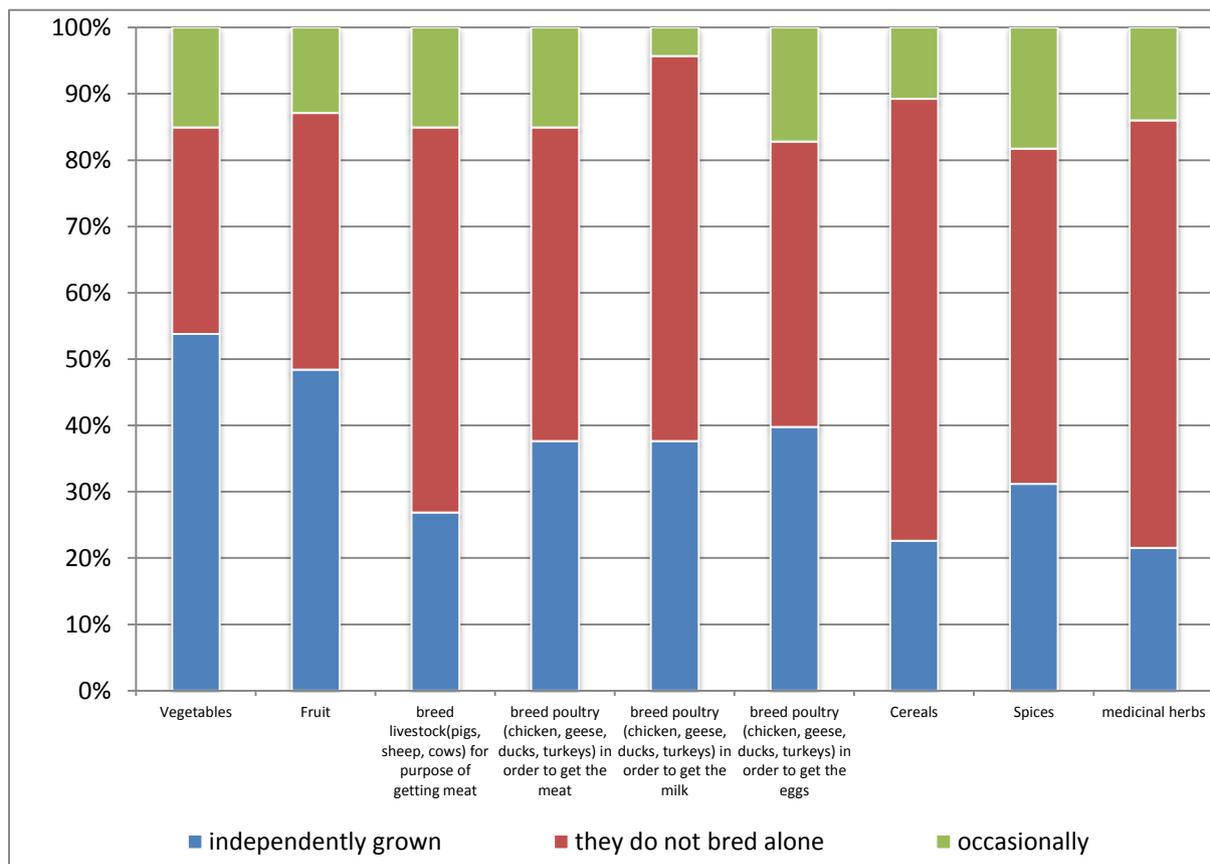
As already mentioned, the research included a total of 93 respondents, most of the respondents were women 66.67%, whereas the rest were men. Most respondents were between 51 and 60 years of age with the share of 45.16%, whereas the respondents between 61 and 70 years of age constituted the group of 31.18%. The rest of the respondents were older than 70. The research included 51.61% of respondents with secondary school education, while 32.26% were those with primary education.

The largest share of respondents were pensioners with 48.39%, while 32.26% belonged to the population who were still employed and 19.35% were respondents who did not work (the unemployed). With the aim of obtaining data about the real values of household budget which can correlate with the manner of obtaining food (independent growth and production), the average incomes according to the number of household members are researched.

The percentage of respondents who had the average income between 20,000 and 40,000 RSD is 46.24%, but the significant share belonged to the respondents with incomes up to 20,000 RSD, 44.09%. In the survey participated 44.08% of respondents from agricultural households.

#### 4. 2. The analysis of independently obtained agricultural and alimentary products in Hungarian households in Vojvodina

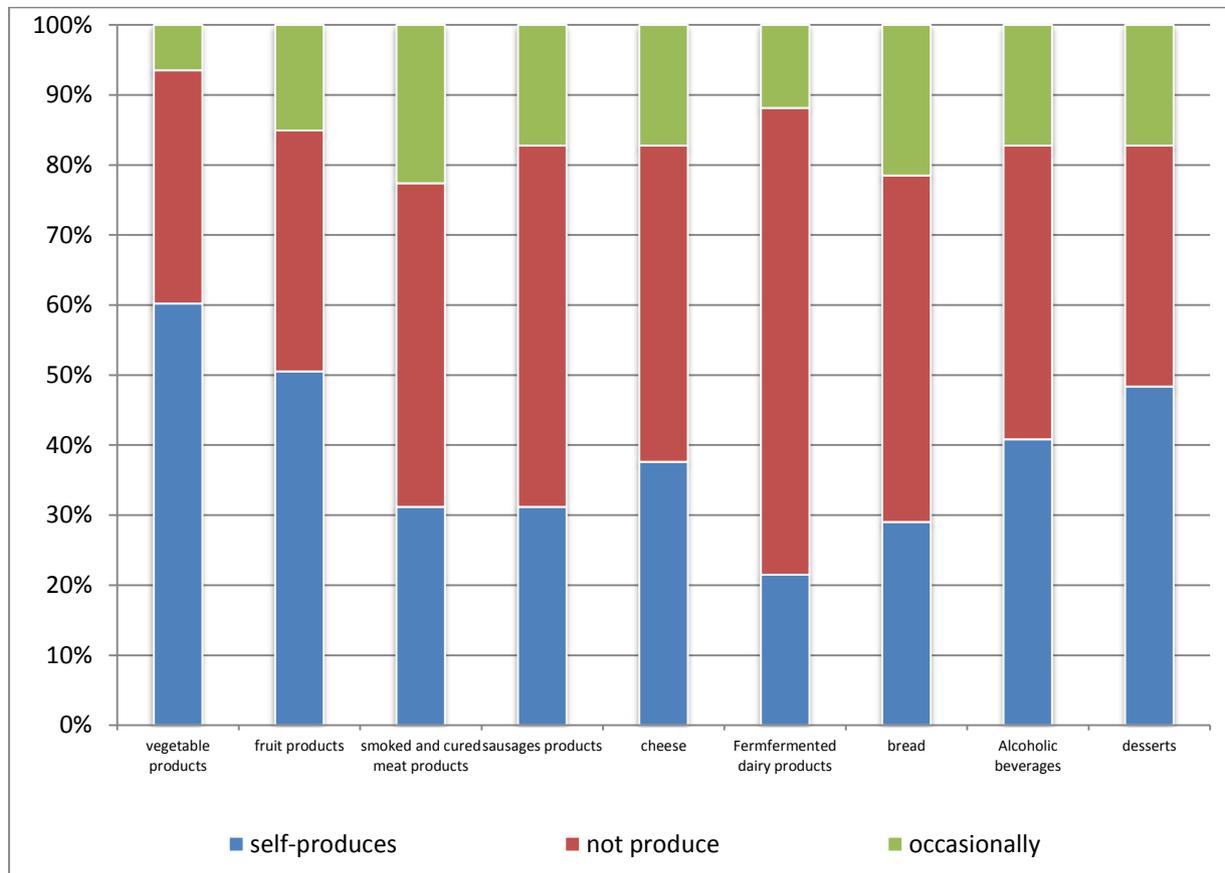
The survey in households which independently produce food provided significant data shown in Figure 1, where it states that 53.76% of respondents independently grow vegetables for their own nutrition, and 48.39% grow different kinds of fruit. Only 26.88% of respondents breed livestock (pigs, sheep, cows) for the purpose of getting meat, i.e. 58.06% do not. A somewhat larger number of respondents, 37.63%, breed poultry (chicken, geese, ducks, turkeys) in order to get the meat. In order to obtain milk, 37.63% of respondents breed livestock, which is a significant percent compared to those who breed livestock to obtain meat. The percentage of respondents who breed poultry for the eggs is 39.78%. If we observe the field of agriculture, only 22.58% of respondents grow cereals, 66.67% do not deal with this form of food production. A small number of respondents grow spices (dill, celery, parsley, paprika) and medicinal herbs (mint, St. John’s worth) independently, while more than a half of the respondents do not grow independently these two groups of products, but buy them according to their need.



**Figure 1.** Independent growth of plant and animal species for obtaining traditional food

Based on the data shown in Figure 2, we may say that 60.22% of respondents prepare their own vegetable products, i.e. winter preserves, and 50.54% prepare their own fruit

products (jam, marmalade, sweetened fruit, juices). Only 31.18% of households prepare their own smoked and cured meat products and sausages, while more than 40.00% obtain ready-made products.



**Figure 2.** Independent production of traditional alimentary products

All households that have livestock for getting milk deal with the production of homemade cheese (37.63%), and 21.51% of households produce their own fermented dairy products such as yogurt and soured milk. Bread and similar baking products are prepared independently for their own household by 29.03% of respondents. Alcoholic beverages such as fruit brandy (rakia) and wine are independently prepared by 40.86% of respondents and 17.20% of respondents sometimes prepare them depending on a number of factors (season, conditions for production, financial means). Homemade desserts are independently produced by 48.39%, whereas 34.41% of respondents buy pastry products from local producers.

#### 4. 3. The analysis of preparation of dishes according to recipes of Hungarian ancestors

Preparation of authentic dishes is one of the most important segments in the development of tourism. The level of preservation of traditional recipes in Hungarian households is shown in Table 1. Based on the obtained data, we may state that 20.43% of respondents prepare all soups and broths, 19.35% prepare all dishes with meat of the livestock

(goulash, paprikash, porkolt, tokany). All poultry dishes are prepared by 17.20% and 15.06% prepare desserts and winter preserves according to recipes of their ancestors. This is by all means a small share of traditional dishes in households.

**Table 1.** Preparation of dishes according to traditional Hungarian recipes (in %)

DISHES	they do not prepare dishes	almost nothing is being prepared	they prepare half	almost all dishes are prepared	prepare all dishes
COLD HORS-D'OEUVRE	32	32	15	9	5
SOUPS AND BROTHS	10	26	10	28	19
DISHES MADE OF DOUGH	9	22	14	39	9
HOT HORS-D'OEUVRE	24	20	16	20	13
DISHES WITH MEAT	24	12	23	16	18
POULTRY DISHES	35	10	18	14	16
RIVER FISH MEAT DISHES	22	24	26	12	9
SALADS	29	19	18	22	5
DESSERTS	24	16	24	15	14
SAUCES	25	22	25	9	2
WINTER PRESERVES	26	23	17	13	14

We observed the presence of preparation of dishes from the group of cold starters according to recipes which are not characteristic for the Hungarian cuisine (34.41% each), which is somewhat justified because these dishes are not characteristic of the Hungarian culture (Hargittai, 2003), it is similar with the warm starters as well. When it comes to preparing warm starters according to the traditional recipes, 21.51% prepare almost everything, only 13.98% prepare all dishes, and as many as 25.81% do not prepare anything. As many as 41.94% of households prepare almost all dishes made of dough and pastry according to traditional recipes, and these are different variations of pasta with cheese and leavened dough (salty and sweet).

A significant 27.96% of respondents stated that they prepared a half of river fish meat dishes, with fish characteristic for this region, according to the traditional recipes, 26.88% still prepare a half of the sauces in the same manner as their ancestors, while the share of households where the mentioned dishes are largely and completely prepared is small, as we can see in Figure 3. Most households completely prepare dishes which are not according to their ancestors' recipes such as: salads, meat dishes, winter preserves, sauces and desserts.

On average, only 12% of Hungarian households prepare all dishes according to traditional recipes, 20% prepare almost all dishes and 20% half of them. Such researches would require more complex statistical analyses.

#### **4. 4. The analysis of preservation of preparation of dishes according to traditional Hungarian recipes in Vojvodina**

The respondents had a task to assess how preserved traditional Hungarian dishes were in their own household, in households of their descendants and fellow countrymen. By observing the obtained results when assessing the preservation ranging from 1 to 10, we have learned that the respondents assess the preservation in their household with the average mark of 6.08. Whereas they give a lower mark to their descendants, i.e. younger generations (5.03). The obtained results differ from the preservation that they see with their fellow countrymen giving them a lower average mark of 5.10, which would also require additional research on other ethnic groups based on this one.

#### **4. 5. The analysis of representatives of the Hungarian cuisine and the segments adopted from other ethnic groups in Vojvodina**

In the last part of the research with an open questionnaire we have learned which dishes the Hungarian population regards as real representatives of their cuisine, what the most important differences are compared to cuisines of other ethnic groups and which dishes they have adopted from their fellow countrymen.

The respondents were asked about which dishes they regarded as real representatives of the Hungarian cuisine, and most of them answered that those were dishes made of dough such as noodles with cheese, mekika (sr.) – langosh (Hungarian fried dough) and sweet dishes (Hungarian plum dumplings, Dobos cake), stuffed peppers with added sugar, meat dishes (goulash, paprikash), fish dishes, roast rabbit or goose liver with apples and vegetables. This list contains dishes which are not originally Hungarian, but which became naturalized throughout history as well as those which can be found, under a similar name or with similar ingredients, on tables of other ethnic groups in Vojvodina.

With the aim of learning what makes Hungarian cuisine different from other cuisines the respondents stated the usage of spices in the process of preparing dishes, the piquant flavour and the mixture of hot and sweet. The answer to the question which dishes they adopted from their fellow countrymen and which they gladly prepared in their household included dishes based on minced meat, chevapchichi, hamburgers, sarma (cabbage rolls), mousaka, grilled dishes, different kinds of cold starters and dishes made of dough.

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the conducted research whose aim was to examine the level of preservation of the national cuisine of the Hungarian who inhabit rural areas, as a possibility of expanding the offer of authentic gastronomic experience in tourism, we have reached the conclusion that traditional segments significant for attracting gastronomic tourists are preserved well enough to be implemented in the rural area tourism through different offers.

The application of the obtained results could be seen in the expansion of the gastronomic offer in cooperation with hospitality facilities. The existing offer can be enriched with precisely those dishes which are regarded by the respondents as typical representatives of the Hungarian cuisine such as noodles with cheese, langosh, Hungarian plum dumplings, Dobos cake, goulash, paprikash, fish dishes or goose liver with apples. In this way, the demand for authentic products would increase, so the production would intensify affecting not only the development of gastronomic tourism, but the overall economy of rural areas as well. Also, the production and preparation of authentic food in Hungarian households of Vojvodina could be made available to tourists and in that way contribute to the development of gastronomic tourism, as well as the promotion and popularization of their national specialties.

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