

# Reflections on the Gastronomic Festival and the Construction of “Traditional” Food

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IN DOBRUJA, the gastronomic festivals (named Feast, Festival, Day, or Fair) are recent practices, not anchored and not strictly canonized in the festive calendar system, which confirm and consolidate the local or ethnic identity. Ontogenetically, they refer to a local tradition, to products or drinks made and consumed in a certain clearly defined territory and by a clearly defined community, evoking local priorities, excellence, and complementarities.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, these new holidays augment or offer an alternative to the calendar of traditions (especially during periods when significant events are scarce), being, in most cases, in direct connection with culinary tourism and local sustainable development. Because they are recent events, they do not yet incorporate strong narratives or mythological nuclei in connection with the founding moment or act.

With a limited duration, culinary festivals are usually organized once a year, showcasing certain products that are representative for a territory or a community, with the effect of raising awareness of local production and promoting a sustainable economy.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that, in the conditions of local multiculturalism, the signs of ethnicity are often overestimated, a fact visible in the very choice of their name: by explicitly joining the name of the ethnic group (e.g. Ukrainian Fish Borscht Festival, Lipovan Borscht Festival, Turkish Culinary Art Festival), on the one hand, and by using the dialectal name of representative dishes—e.g. *Sarayli* Festival, *Ghiudem* (*Sujuk*) and *Qazi*<sup>3</sup> Festival, *Neşeli Köftçikler* Festival (Cheerful Meatballs)—, on the other. Most of the time, these names identify the event, the products promoted, the date and the space in which they are organized. Thus, having a clear name, the festival promotes a specific space or community, highlighting their gastronomic particularity.<sup>4</sup>

We mention that in our approach we considered only the Dobrujan culinary festivals, whose objectives are presented as follows: the presentation of “traditional” food, the promotion of “traditional” culinary recipes, recalling the taste of “home” or the “past.” Although it seems at first sight a restrictive criterion, not including in our analysis, for example, exotic festivals dedicated to shellfish and seafood,<sup>5</sup> this operation of restricting

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the field of research-interrogation is appropriate because, at some point, the two types of gastronomic events have, among many others, different mechanisms in terms of food valorization.

More often than not, in Dobruja, the gastronomic festivals with traditional specificity are organized in medium-sized rural or urban settlements, being financially and logistically supported by the organizations of minority groups (the Union of Ukrainians of Romania, the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania, the Turkish Muslim Democratic Union of Romania), local authorities, NGOs or private entities with interests in tourism. Most events of this type are related to rurality (in its new form) and ethnicity. If the city is the exponent of cosmopolitanism and modernity (translated into sophisticated, exotic, fashionable, pan-regional products: seafood, burgers, pastas, etc.), the villages or small towns are related to local tradition, traditional products, and techniques. The necessity to invent festivals is related to the desire to escape, temporarily, from the cyclicity of everyday time, often marked by insecurity, dilution of identity, depopulation, anonymity, and to find a time of hospitality, visibility, imagining a positive alternative future, thus helping locals to cope with the uncertainty of the present and the effects of the recent social transformations.<sup>6</sup> A metaphor of the modern society, the festival draws attention primarily to the current social changes: transformations of the local economy, de-agriculturalization, modern forms of the basic occupations, tourism development, etc. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that certain foods are transformed into museum exhibits, being presented as artifacts of bygone times. Although reactualized in form, they have lost their original ritual significance. For example, the doughs related to the wedding ceremony displayed at the Ukrainian Fish Borscht Festival were eaten as (everyday) bread, even if, from an aesthetic point of view, they encode symbols that are not currently decodable by the community. This fact must be related to their disappearance from the ceremonial life, corroborated with the outsourcing of bread production, the disappearance of cereal cultivation and the destruction of ovens in the households, which practically eliminated these dishes from the local gastronomic culture. They come back to life only in the context of the festivals, sporadically and temporarily, so it is obvious that the knowledge of their realization has not completely disappeared. Thus, the festival can contribute to the rehabilitation of traditional knowledge, even if this is not its explicit purpose.

The new holidays, built on secular foundations, focus on certain standard dishes (which also give the name of the events), essentially non-ritual, representative and topical, even if around them can be found foods strongly anchored in ritual life—*kolachs* (braided bread wreaths) used in the calendar festive contexts, wedding bread, *Ashura*—, with which they have complementary or oppositional relations. Therefore, iconized foods appear, which are important, at some point, for the community. Moreover, we can talk about a certain specialization and excellence of ethnic groups, which outline certain demarcation lines and systems of identity marks: the best fish borscht is made by the Slavs (Ukrainians and Russian-Lipovans), the best *shuberek* is made by Tatars, the best *baklava*, by the Turks, the best lamb dish, obviously, is prepared by the Aromanians, and so on. These products become the nuclei around which the festival is built. On the other hand, the cultural landscape or its recontextualization, with the whole charge of cultural

heritage (traditions related to occupations, crafts, specific activities), is another important element in the festival's economy. For example, the Shepherd's Festival, although not strictly gastronomic, finds its well-deserved place on the map of culinary events, being organized at Sarighiol de Deal, a plateau settlement with rich pastures, where Aromanians live, a population with a long tradition in sheep breeding. The events that promote fishing dishes are almost always organized in towns near water sources, thus highlighting the existence of a specific way of life, based on fishing, but also the existence of the Slavic populations that practiced fishing in the past and are still practicing it today.

Finally, the festival is a social phenomenon closely related to the maintenance and celebration of community values, to which it adheres at some point. In addition to the social function, it has the obvious character of a commodified product, attracting the public, promoting the community, the sale and consumption of food.<sup>7</sup> Some authors point out that festivals inevitably lead to a commodification of local knowledge. Out of the desire to ensure success and economic profit, communities risk being caught in a vicious circle of re-ethnicization, in which local actors invent and enact folkloric elements to attract the public. This process involves, among others, gastronomy and the (re)construction of traditional cuisine.<sup>8</sup> Not coincidentally, certain events promote products that, until recently, did not exist in the gastronomic landscape of northern Dobruja. In these situations, the identity strategies currently applied by ethnic groups can be discussed, among which the most relevant seems to be the rallying to the current identity of the country of origin. The motivation is as simple as possible: Dobrujan cuisine, regardless of ethnicity, is austere in relation to food resources and cooking techniques, even if, precisely in these terms, it has a certain diversity and specialization. Thus, the modern Turkish cuisine, for example, a descendant of the Ottoman one, with Oriental and Levantine influences, meticulous, aromatic, colorful and spectacular from an aesthetic point of view, can become a model and even a source of inspiration at such festivals, because it exalts exoticism and the unknown and, at the same time, ensures a sense of belonging to a former imperial culture.

These culinary events can be related to the old weekly agricultural fairs and markets from the small towns and villages, where various local products were sold, in essence, community events where food culture, folklore and history intertwined. Some have become a form of celebration when the abundant harvests were often glorified. The festival involves celebration and feasting, exhibiting, in addition to food, various elements of cultural heritage, among which we can mention: local traditions, crafts, music and traditional dance.<sup>9</sup> Based, therefore, on the local cultural heritage, they incorporate elements of history, probably reinterpreted, which show the mutations of the community over time. They celebrate or revive older traditions, in the context of new ways of production and consumption.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the festival can have its origin or model in the community meals, for example the patron saint meal, with which it has, until a certain moment, some similarities: an optimal time and a reason for gathering and celebration; the public and collective character of the event; joint cooking of representative dishes, related to the local identity; commensality through the repast that brings together locals, guests from other villages, or tourists. Although the pretext of the meeting is religious, the actual festive meal is associated with secularism, joviality, and conviviality.

On the other hand, the gastronomic festival can be perceived, at a certain level, as an augmented, restructured and multiplied form of the festive meal of the past or today, undergoing, in an organized (institutionalized) frame, among others, processes (intersected on several levels) of spatial-temporal recontextualization, quantitative resizing, qualitative and aesthetic re-evaluation, cooking style adjustment, distribution and consumption of certain foods with a special symbolism for the community that has chosen to select, produce, present and sell them.

**I**N OUR opinion, the structural nucleus of this new event organized more and more often in the small urban environment, but also in the rural one, is the holiday meal. The latter is marked by a certain pomposity, being characterized by many participants and dishes, of course, connected to some extent to territoriality and seasonality, in relation to the possibilities of production, procurement and preservation of raw ingredients, which can be the subject of the so-called local food.

Whether it is related to calendar traditions or rites of passage (including anniversaries), the festive meal is the result of several conditionings, which can be grouped as follows: normative (fasting/non-fasting periods; taboos and food permissions), socio-economic and technical (the possibility to use certain ingredients and different cooking facilities; prestige, respect, obligation), and actantial<sup>11</sup> (preferences about taste, food consistency, spices, presentation, consumption).

It should be noted that in a festive context are consumed some dishes that are served in a daily or Sunday context, but they are invested with additional meanings, or the preparation process is more elaborate and lengthier. For example, the daily pie of Romanians, Aromanians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians and other Dobrujan ethnic groups acquires on New Year's Day divinatory or propitiatory properties, by introducing a coin and applying a special way of dividing it, doubled by certain verbal formulae, to ensure the good luck of a certain family member or of a sector of domestic and household life. A similar revalorization, in this case of the cake, occurs with the Megleno-Romanians of Cerna on Christmas Eve, when the *turta cu pană* (cake with a silver coin inside) is baked, divided and eaten, encoding auspicious properties (good luck of a family member who will take over, in the next year, the activities for the good running of the household and the field) and apotropaic (ensuring animal health by consuming it).<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the steak with potatoes cooked in the clay oven, served at a wedding in C. A. Rosetti village, requires, both because of the quantity and the desire to serve a dish with a taste from the past, a large number of cooks and operations (cooking and roasting the meat, peeling and frying the potatoes, preparing a sauce with tomato paste, lard and wine, greasing the cooking dishes, filling them with meat and potatoes, covering them, lighting the oven, baking and browning them, removing them from the dishes and mixing the ingredients, serving the steak, seasoned with pickles), all of which can be measured in time: about twelve hours. It is worth pointing out, from now on, that giving a meaning (ancestral or new) and increasing the degree of food processing are mechanisms often present in the imaginary of the culinary festivals of Dobruja.

In terms of territorial location or ethnicity, the festive meal is now much more permissive than in the past, accumulating, modifying, and synthesizing new recipes found,

tried and perfected by hosts eager to impress from a gustatory and visual point of view, these being translated in terms of ensuring their prestige and consolidating their status as good householders and refined hosts. Over time, these recipes have been internalized by the family, and, by extension, by the community, so it is no wonder that, in Dobruja, in different festive moments, the dishes prepared and eaten by all populations include the stuffed pike most likely of Jewish origin, Greek *skordalia* (mashed potatoes with boiled fish), French fruit tarts, Hungarian cakes, or Turkish baklavas. Thus, the festive meal becomes a contextual mixture between the traditional and the new, unique element, between the observance of certain norms and the desire to impress the diners, to highlight a certain social status. For example, at the two-year commemoration of A. C. in Letea, in relation to the conditions presented above, the hosts served the participants, beyond their expectation, *mizilic*/entrée (fish roe salad, olives, stockfish, marinated fish); vegetable soup, thick and greasy "as the villagers like it"; stuffed cabbage rolls with rice and mushroom filling; grilled mackerel with lemon and salad; dessert (apple and pumpkin pie, brownies, rolled cake, cake with cream, cocoa croissants, Easter cake), and a multitude of fasting sweets, offered in the alms bags. The motivation of this culinary exuberance, which contradicts the classic trinity course (soup)—second course (steak)—dessert (sweet rice), was related to the respect for the commemorated person and the possibility of preparing these products by several descendant families. Also in a festive context, on Christmas Eve, the Ukrainians in the same village, a year before, served, besides *kuhea* (boiled wheat, sweetened with sugar syrup and seasoned with nuts) and *ozvar* (dried fruit compote), standard dishes for this moment, different fish products, used until recently only by the Ukrainians in Sfântu Gheorghe: *scordolea/skordalia*, marinated mackerel salad, marinated pike, pies with fish, following the famous *pirișke* (crescent-shaped fried pie) with *vezeika* (sturgeon marrow), eaten at the evening meal by *keșmane* (the cognomen given to the inhabitants of Sfântu Gheorghe) until the moment this fish was prohibited. By extrapolation, the festival, as an institutionalized and modified form of the festive meal, often displays dishes that go beyond the boundaries of the traditional/local, bringing to the fore the mastery, modernity, and competition between chefs, but at the same time, appeals to certain culinary elements which constitute the identity marks of communities, assumed, internalized and sometimes re-signified in relation to the realities of contemporary society.

The culinary festival is therefore based, to a large extent, on the process of recontextualization, from several perspectives. Firstly, there is an outsourcing and relocation of the cooking and consumption space, practically producing a transition from the intimate space of the house/hearth, marked by certain relationships, customs and internal habits that outline a typical idiosyncratic food, to an open and public space, in which mechanisms centered on a collective guest (target audience, group of tourists and potential buyers) are generated and maintained. In this context, the numerous, curious, and pretentious public, unlike the guest at home, has the possibility to choose and refuse at the same time certain products offered by the local community. From the perspective of time, the festival is related to the seasonality of resources (e.g.: optimal mackerel fishing period, legal fishing period—for the Blue Mackerel Festival<sup>13</sup> and the Ukrainian Fish Borscht Festival; ripening of the earth's fruits—for the Autumn Festival—Harvest

Day), having, at the same time, a complex and diffuse connection with the festive time. Although non-religious par excellence, these events do not completely exclude sacredness, even if the deliverer of blessings or auspicious discourses, for the smooth-running of things, is not always the priest. His place can be taken by the representative of the organizing authority. On the other hand, being built and taking place at an optimal time (the weekend, in favorable weather conditions), festivals of this type do not have a fixed and memorable date.<sup>14</sup> Although festivals are “a time out of time,” as recurring events, they are included in the local community’s calendar, thus keeping the routine. Moreover, by affirming and consolidating community identities, they belong, to a certain extent, to everyday life. Although it seems contradictory, festivals belong both to the everyday and to experiences outside it<sup>15</sup>. During the festival, everyday activities such as eating and cooking are temporarily reformulated: there is permission to evade the behavioral food canons, allowing excessive and diversified consumption, exotic or lesser-known food, spectacular cooking through competitions.<sup>16</sup>

From the perspective of the exhibited food, the festival can bring together several daily and festive contexts and time frames. Thus, at an event for the presentation of local Ukrainian gastronomy, in addition to fish borscht, the basic dish that gave the name of the event organized on 31 July 2021, other courses were added, such as Christmas *kolachs*, Easter cake, wedding *şeşke* (small bread for participants), daily *pirişke* etc., giving the impression of a summum of meals and temporalities. Also, the Turkish Culinary Art Festival, organized in Tulcea on 30 September 2017 by the Turkish Democratic Union of Romania, displayed *Aşure çorbasi* (a dessert porridge that is made of a mixture consisting of grains, nuts and dried fruits), traditionally consumed on 10 Muharrem, *çörek* (round bread) usually baked on *Hıdırllez Day* (6 May), *krygaşa*, a fried flattened donut, shared on the occasion of the commemoration of the dead, *tulumba* (deep-fried dessert) and *baklava*, consumed mainly for holidays, engagements or weddings, so that, at least structurally, different types of meals and celebratory contexts were multiplied, overlapped and intersected. This creates a culinary heterogeneity in which the foods are in a certain way in agreement with the others, but still contradict them.<sup>17</sup>

In this situation, in relation to the community-public doublet, food becomes the subject of a double choice based on selective offer, on the one hand, and the selection of offer, on the other. In other words, the community chooses to bring to the forefront food considered representative (inherited from generation to generation or which expresses their identity) and able to impress and attract the public, and the public, in turn, will choose from the dishes prepared, those that meet their socio-cultural and dietary needs: authenticity, quality natural ingredients, products made by local producers, unprocessed industrially, products reminiscent of the taste of childhood or which taste like “grandmother’s cuisine.” We believe that “traditional” food is constructed precisely around this axis of values outlined around the two main actors and put under the following coordinates: the importance and commitment of the community (historical and geographical connection; identity marker; emotional connection with personal or collective past); the quality of taste and shape; the natural character, as close as possible to the type of pre-industrial sustainable production. This does not preclude possible newer or more elaborate foods, if they have more of the above qualities and are linked, in principle, to

the concepts of territory (local or country of origin) and identity, which in Dobruja is in a deep correlation with multi- and interculturality. Even if, more often than not, the traditional-type festival includes fashionable foods (e.g. pan-fried mussels, in tomato sauce, seafood), they are not perceived as traditional marks, because they are not clearly anchored in the local territory and belong to a different culinary identity.

A specific process of the festival, compared to the festive meal, already oversized as compared to the daily one, is that of quantitative resizing. It produces significant amounts of dishes, in direct relation to the size of the public, which leads to excessive consumption, sometimes followed by food waste, less present in the traditional framework, in which other loss reduction mechanisms work—transformation of some foods into new dishes for food diversification or preservation: marinating fried fish or using it for fish stew, using the fish from *malasolka* (boiled salted fish, eaten with boiled potatoes and garlic sauce) for *scordolea*, using meat from the previous day's steak in *köbete*,<sup>18</sup> using cut edges from *shuberek* for preparing *kıkırdak*; sharing with neighbors, relatives or giving away to poor people; feeding animals with leftovers, etc. Thus, a culinary event is characterized by opulence and excess in terms of the amount of food and the number of cooked products, in the situation where consumption is often concomitant rather than successive, as it happens, for example, at a festive dinner. A normal finality after such an experience is satiety. At the Ukrainian Fish Borscht Festival, 11 cauldrons of borscht were cooked (the audience was relatively small, the surplus was capitalized at the inn which hosted the event), and at the Turkish Culinary Art Festival about 100 Turkish dishes were presented. The foods were local, taken from the mother country or inspired by Balkan, Oriental and Ottoman cuisines, including: *Aşure*, *yaprak sarması* (vine leaves rolls), *biber dolması* (stuffed peppers), *patates dolması* (stuffed potatoes), *kuru fasulye* (stewed bean dish), *pişmiş kabak* (boiled pumpkin), *karpuz tatlısı* (watermelon dessert), *şeker*,<sup>19</sup> *İmam bayıldı* (stuffed eggplants), *karnıyarık* (stuffed eggplants with minced meat), *patlıcan musakka* (eggplant moussaka), *saraylı*, *kurabiye* (shortbread-type biscuit), *tulumba*, *pide* (cheese leavened pie), *saç pidesi* (*gözleme*) (stuffed flatbread), *patatesli sarburma* (potato spiral pie), *sigara böreği* (cigarette-shaped pie), *ev bisküvisi* (homemade biscuits), *sütlaç* (rice pudding), *güveç* (vegetable stew), *ayva tatlısı* (quince dessert), *bazlama* (single-layered, flat, circular, and leavened bread), *revani* (sweet syrup-soaked semolina cake), *hurma dolması* (stuffed dates), brownies, and sponge cake. On the same note, at the Shepherd Festival in Sarighiol de Deal, although it cannot be strictly included in the category of gastronomic festivals, but it has an obvious culinary component, several pigs and a calf were slaughtered, baked lambs were prepared and many trays with pie were baked. Thus, in the light of this criterion of analysis, other coordinates that build and shape, from a social point of view, the "traditional" food can be deciphered: it must be plentiful or at least sufficient to satisfy the diner, it must be diversified in a real or apparent way, and it should not be wasted, but reused later, in one form or another.

Under the same magnifying glass of quantitative oversizing comes the problem of simple and efficient portioning, which meets the principles of equality and equity. In the case of pies, the cutting method follows the pattern imposed by tradition, depending on the modeling, or folding of the dough, usually resulting in square, rectangular or triangular shapes. The round pies follow either a square or rhomboidal grid, or are di-

vided into circular sectors, like a cake. Liquid and semi-liquid products (soups, borsches, stews) are served with the ladle, in standardized dishes, solid foods with relatively small and equal dimensions—meatballs, *sarmale*, *mititei* (grilled minced meat rolls)—are distributed apiece. The dilemma arises in the case of auspicious ritual foods, the public distribution of good luck raising certain ethical issues and requiring practical solutions. Thus, in a cultural event that presented in 2011, among others, the food of the Megleno-Romanians in Cerna, *turta cu para*, presented above, was not baked with the lucky penny inside, but was meant to offer good luck to each participant who tasted it, regardless of the chosen piece.

Qualitative and aesthetic re-evaluation is another process often encountered in festivals, being the result of the need to ensure a quality culinary experience for visitors. The process is rooted in an amalgam of elements, among which the most important are the selected foods and the cultural landscape.<sup>20</sup> It is no coincidence that on this occasion, a real gastronomic scenography appears, which, depending on the case, must highlight the main dish that complements others, or highlight, equally, foods with the same value. On the other hand, some exhibited products tend towards decorativism (e.g. ceremonial *kolachs*, sweets), being prepared with great care from an aesthetic point of view, competing with those sold in specialty stores. Not infrequently, certain dishes are improved compared to the original recipe, much more austere, the taste, smell and color being ennobled with various spices, exotic fruits, food coloring, etc. For example, *baklavas* and *saraylis* presented at such events have diversified their shape, color, and aroma: rhombic or square *baklavas*, rose-type *baklava* (*gül baklava*), mussle-type *baklava* (*midye baklava*), chocolate and glazed *baklavas*, *saraylis* with cocoa, pistachios, almonds, assorted *saraylis*, arranged in the form of the solar disk. Ashura, in turn, modified and amplified the composition required by tradition, by adding pomegranates, papaya and candied kiwi, almonds, dates, cranberries, pistachios, cloves, cinnamon, allspice, vanilla, rose water, etc., to the detriment of chickpeas, wheat or beans, practically producing an exoticization of the recipe. The increase of the number of ingredients used both in the preparation and decoration of the final product is related to the possibility in the contemporary period to easily buy certain exotic ingredients and fruits, impossible to grow naturally in the temperate-continental area and difficult to procure in the past. In this process, the construction of traditional food considers the following line of demarcation: the food must be tasty, with a pleasant aroma and an appetizing appearance. This fact allows for a more flexible way of thinking about choosing new ingredients or those that are brought to distant countries, so that the product does not lose its traditional character, being only refined and adapted to new cultural and economic realities. The pie made with market-bought phyllo or the borscht with frozen fish or African catfish does not lose, in essence, its traditional specificity, just as the bread with bought yeast is not perceived completely differently from the one made with patties of ground corn, hops or wine fermentation mousse. Obviously, there are unmistakable differences in flavor and consistency, but they do not turn those foods into other new products, which relate to other types of cuisines. Moreover, in the case of some ethnic or ethno-cultural groups established over time in Dobruja, for example Turks, Tatars, Italians, Greeks, Megleno-Romanians, the possibility of purchasing Oriental or Mediterranean ingredients reopens the proximity to food



in the areas of origin, which used and still use these ingredients. Thus, the following questions arise: How traditional was the food of the past of these populations, given the adaptation to restrictive environmental conditions and the lack of resources used by their ancestors and how traditional is the food of the present, given that these resources are easy to find, but are considered exotic or imported?

**A**LTHOUGH WE have previously highlighted some ideas, the festival usually involves complex processes of adjusting the way of cooking, distributing, and consuming the food prepared by the organizers. First, the quantity dictates the use of high-capacity containers, or more modern fire maintenance facilities for frying, roasting, boiling, and baking. Suitable materials in the food industry tend to replace wood, cast iron, *seabla* (tin sheet), which can slightly change, but do not alter, the taste and flavor of the resulting food. But this is not a big problem in terms of the perception of food. On the contrary, overall, the festival food, even with the necessary changes, is defined in relation to the terms "from childhood," "like my mother's cooking," "like my grandmother's cooking," "like in the countryside," "like in the past," as opposed to the regular food, served in the city or ordered from catering companies, pizzerias, or restaurants. The quantity, the multitude of ingredients, the diversity and the uniqueness of the dishes are certainly enhancers of this perception of taste.

In another train of thoughts, the norms of distribution and consumption at festivals are adapted to the space and the conditions dictated by the social and economic relations intertwined here: disposable, standardized dishes; relatively small portions, to give the opportunity to buy and taste as many products as possible; competitive prices. The starting premise for the communities participating in such an event, in competitive relations, is that the public is hungry, and we are not talking about a strictly physiological hunger, but rather about a hunger "for memory and culture" related to the taste of bygone times, not to be found today anywhere, the curiosity of knowing a local gastronomic culture. In this attempt at abundance, it is not surprising that sweet, liquid, then salty, sour, solid, spicy, and sweet dishes are consumed anyway or mixed. Consumption no longer follows the clear lines of family life, there is no longer a succession and hierarchy of dishes (first course, second course, dessert). Consumers eat a little of each, evaluate and certify or reject certain courses, in relation to their own tastes, expectations and requirements. In this context, there is no longer a standardization of the dishes eaten, the order in which they were consumed, the relationship between expectation and satisfaction. In these conditions, of food feast and excessive (including financial) consumption, the festival is, in the end, validated or not by the public.

Following some of the characteristics of the culinary festival, which brings it closer to and distinguishes it from the festive meal, we were able to outline some directions in the construction of the "traditional" food, to which it deliberately links its purpose. From the perspective of several convergent criteria, we can conclude that the "specific" food is appropriated by the community that produces and maintains it, is made from mostly local natural ingredients, using newer or older techniques, respects to a certain extent patterns inherited transgenerationally, but can be improved from an organoleptic point of view, has a high degree of authenticity and uniqueness, is diverse and nourishing,

good in taste and with the potential for refinement, reminds of something or someone through emotional ties which creates and maintains them, is not greatly affected by industrialized processing, and the people who prepare it have a high degree of mastery and know-how.



## Notes

1. O. Hedeşan, "Zile și munci: Variantă recentă," *Orizont* (Timișoara), new ser., 26, 10 (1590) (2014): 11.
2. J. A. Folgado-Fernández, E. Di-Clemente, and J. M. Hernández-Mogollón, "Food Festivals and the Development of Sustainable Destinations: The Case of the Cheese Fair in Trujillo (Spain)," *Sustainability* 11, 10: 2922 (2019): 1.
3. Ghiudem-like dish, flatter, with pieces of meat and lard.
4. M. F. Fontefrancesco and D. M. Zocchi, "Reviving Traditional Food Knowledge through Food Festivals: The Case of the Pink Asparagus Festival in Mezzago, Italy," *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 4: 596028 (2020): 1–2.
5. At such a culinary event, organized in Tulcea in 2018, shrimp, lobster, octopus, squid, sea bream, paella, etc. were cooked.
6. M. F. Fontefrancesco, *Food Festivals and Local Development in Italy: A Viewpoint from Economic Anthropology* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 23.
7. P. Cleave, "Community Food Festivals and Events in the South West of England, UK," in *Managing and Developing Communities, Festivals and Events*, edited by A. Jepson and A. Clarke (Houndmills, Basingstoke–New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 180.
8. Fontefrancesco and Zocchi, 2.
9. Cleave, 183.
10. *Ibid.*, 182.
11. We have included in this category all the conditions that are related to the participants in the festive meal who consume the products cooked by the guests. By extension, the category can refer to a community, a nation, a conglomerate structure, etc.
12. I. Titov, *Relația majoritari–minoritari etnici în Dobrogea de Nord* (Constanța: Dobrogea, 2015), 112.
13. The name of the festival is not entirely in accordance to the culinary realities, the central fish of this event being the Danube mackerel and not the blue mackerel.
14. Hedeşan, 11.
15. P. Adema, *Garlic Capital of the World: Gilroy, Garlic, and the Making of a Festive Foodscape* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 34.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Fontefrancesco, 38.
18. *Köbete* has several variants, depending on the composition or the folding and placement in the tray: two thicker layers of dough, whose edges are glued, and between a filling consisting of pilaw and pieces of chicken, beef, or sheep; several alternative layers of dough and filling; the dough is folded into triangles, which contain minced meat filling, with or without rice.

19. Generic term meaning sugar. In this case, it refers to Turkish candies made from sugar, shaped by hand.
20. Fontefrancesco and Zocchi, 2.

### **Abstract**

#### **Reflections on the Gastronomic Festival and the Construction of "Traditional" Food**

In Dobruja, the gastronomic festivals are recent practices, not anchored and not strictly canonized in the festive calendar system, which confirm and consolidate the local or ethnic identity. These events are organized in medium-sized rural or urban settlements, being financially supported by the organizations of minority groups, authorities, NGOs, or private entities with tourist interests. The gastronomic festival can be perceived as an augmented, restructured, and multiplied form of the festive meal, undergoing, in an organized frame, processes of spatial-temporal recontextualization, quantitative resizing, qualitative and aesthetic re-evaluation, adjustment of the way of cooking and consumption of certain foods. Following some of the characteristics of the culinary festival, which brings it closer to and distinguishes it from the festive meal, we were able to outline some directions in the construction of "traditional" food.

### **Keywords**

Dobruja, festival, traditional food, festive meal, spatial-temporal recontextualization, quantitative resizing, qualitative and aesthetic re-evaluation