

THE GASTRONOMIC OFFER OF THE SARAJEVO TOURIST- GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

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Abstract: The Sarajevo tourist-geographical region stands out as an increasingly popular destination for gastronomic tourism due to its rich cultural heritage, diverse gastronomic offer, and authentic ambience that attracts tourists from different parts of the world. This area is characterised by collection of traditional Bosnian dishes, the influences of Turkish and Austro-Hungarian cuisine, as well as modern interpretations of local specialties, and this is what makes it unique. This form of tourism is based on different gastronomic experiences, from small family restaurants to sophisticated gastronomic locations. This region is known for its hospitality and warm welcome to tourists, which further enriches their gastronomic experience. It is important to mention that the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region has positioned itself as an increasingly attractive destination for all those who want to explore the wealth of Bosnian cuisine and get to know its cultural heritage. This region offers a deeper understanding of local culture and identity through its gastronomic offer. The degree of valorization of gastronomic tourism in this region is at a very modest level, so the possibility of its improvement and intensive development for tourist purposes should be pointed out. The aim of the research is to provide an insight into the specifics of Sarajevo's gastronomic offer, identify the key attractiveness factors for tourists, and examine the effects of the gastronomic industry on the local economy and cultural heritage.

Key words: gastronomic tourism, Sarajevo tourist-geographical region, tradition, culture, customs

INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism is an industry that is rapidly and unstoppably developing all over the world. Modern tourism also has its new forms: health, spa, rural, cultural and historical, sports and events, educational, etc. In addition to the above, there are also specific forms of tourism: nautical, tourism of protected parts of nature, wine, gastronomic, etc.

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Gastronomic tourism is defined as "the visit of tourists to primary or secondary food producers, food festivals, catering establishments for the production and serving of food, and certain destinations for tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of regional specialties" (Hall & Mitchell, 2006).

Gastro tourism is defined as the activity of exploring and discovering a new and unknown culture and history through food, which influences the formation of unforgettable experiences. For this specific form of tourism, the most important item that interests tourists is certainly safe food, as well as an unpolluted natural and anthropogenic environment where this food is produced.

Gastronomic tourism is also called "culinary tourism" and is defined as the search for a unique experience of tasting foods and drinks to remember. Gastronomic tourism belongs to the group of vacation tourism, and of the two basic types of tourism, it belongs to alternative rather than mass tourism. Gastronomic tourism offers a wide range of choices, especially in countries with rich culinary traditions and attractions (Caffyn, 2010).

Food has become recognized in the tourism market as: part of the local culture, consumed by tourists, part of tourism promotion, a potential component of local agricultural and economic development, and as a regional factor influenced by consumption patterns and observed desires of tourists (Hall & Mitchel, 2001).

The aim of this paper is to give an overview of the most important stages of the development of the gastronomic offer through historical periods in the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region and the possibilities of their valorization, which would contribute to the development of both gastro tourism and cultural tourism, as well as the overall economic development of this region. The resource basis of modern gastro tourism in the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region needs to be methodologically elaborated on the basis of geographical, economic, and socio-cultural research, in order to obtain a complete potential tourist picture that, through the adoption of an appropriate tourism development strategy, would transform into a real and sustainable tourist offer with a focus on the development of gastro tourism, which would further generate revenues for the preservation and restoration of this unique value of Sarajevo (Bidžan, 2012).

The following general and specific methods of regional geographical research are used in this paper: the method of regional-geographical analysis and synthesis of tourist-geographical factors, the method of homogeneity in the spatial distribution of tourist-geographical parameters in order to identify the gastronomic offer, the further heritage of the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region, the method of establishing spatial-functional relations and relations primarily related to tourism activities in order to improve its development and lessen disruption to the environment.

In the process of evaluating the gastronomic offer as an anthropogenic tourist potential related to the development of gastro tourism, various tourist-geographical methods and valorization factors are applied, with a very complex classification procedure (identification and analysis of attractive properties, spatial coverage, landscaping, etc.). In addition to tourist methods, the following methods were also used: analytical-synthetic, cartographic, descriptive, method of comparison, statistical, method of assessing the situation, method of classification, etc. What was indispensable in this paper was field observation, by which we saw the real situation in space and found a lot of information that was used in writing this paper.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SARAJEVO TOURIST-GEOGRAPHICAL REGION GASTRONOMIC OFFER

Sarajevo is not only the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also an example of a city whose cuisine and customs cannot be understood without knowing its historical layers. Through the turbulent history of this area, many peoples have passed, and this has influenced the formation of the unique identity of this city, but also a rich tradition has been created, as well as an authentic gastronomic offer. All these factors are the result of a rich history, but also testimonies to the long and complex history of the coexistence of different cultures in the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region. This multicultural approach remains crucial for understanding and valorizing Sarajevo's cuisine and customs in a contemporary context. Below, we will briefly describe almost all the phases of the emergence of complex Sarajevo gastronomy through historical periods.

THE OTTOMAN PERIOD

The Ottoman Empire ruled Sarajevo from 1461 to 1878, and because of such a long period of rule, they left a deep mark in terms of gastronomy in these areas. During this time, many dishes were brought, as well as methods of preparation, which were specific to the Ottoman people at the time. The establishment of many *ćevabdžinica*, *asčinica* and *kahve* brought specialties such as salty: *ćevapi*, *dolma*, *sarma*, *pilaf*, etc., as well as sweets: *baklava*, *persimmons*, *tulumba* and other cakes with *agda*. In addition to food, Ottoman culture introduced rituals of tea and coffee consumption, which became an integral part of the daily life of Sarajevans. The spirit of that time is still present today, and this is reflected in the great representation of the methods of preparation and types of Ottoman Bosnian dishes today. In today's Bosnian dishes, strong and hot spices are not used, as well as a large amount of fat. Sarajevo's tourist-geographical region is currently recognized among tourists as a tourist destination that offers an autochthonous and world-specific, but attractive gastronomic offer, and is best known for its Sarajevo *ćevapi*. Some of the most famous *ćevabdžinica* in Sarajevo are: *Mrkva*, *Željo*, *Zmaj*, *Petica*, *Hodžić*, *Kod Kurte*, etc.



Fig. 1. “Sarajevski ćevapi” from Sarajevo's ćevabdžinica “Mrkva”

Photo: Seada Gavranović

Today, Sarajevo ćevapi are a symbol of the city itself, and they were also written about on the TasteAtlas online platform, which focuses on mapping traditional dishes and gastronomic specialties from different parts of the world (Fig.1). This platform is one of the most famous, and only authentic traditional dishes are found within it. "Taste Atlas" magazine ranked Sarajevo ćevapi among the ten best dishes in the world (Official web of Tasteatlas, sarajevski ćevapi). Also, on the map where the most famous dishes of the countries in Europe are mapped, ćevapi were selected for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is also important to mention the procedure on the protection of Sarajevo ćevapi, which was launched in 2022 by the City of Sarajevo and the Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was successfully completed and implemented on August 10, 2024. Sarajevo ćevap is now protected as a brand and as a separate traditional autochthonous Bosnian product. Soon there will be protection in the European Union, and after that, the protection of Sarajevo flatbread. In order for a gastronomic tourist destination to succeed, and especially Sarajevo, it is important that we brand everything that is related to Sarajevo. With this protection, Sarajevo ćevap has received a designation of geographical origin, and this local specialty is positioned as a unique and recognizable Bosnian brand, thus confirming and increasing its market competitiveness within and outside the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. USAID also participated in the protection process with its project "Development of Sustainable Tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina", where it closely cooperated with the Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of increasing the number of products that will have a geographical indication. In this way,

USAID participated in the expansion of the tourist offer and attracting tourists to our homeland, especially to the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region.

The Ottomans left a deep and lasting mark on Bosnian cuisine throughout the centuries of their rule, bringing with them a wealth of new ingredients, cooking techniques, and culinary customs that were integrated into local traditions. They introduced new foods and spices, which are today crucial for Bosnian cuisine: rice (it became the basis for many dishes, such as pilaf, and is also used in the filling of vegetables, such as sarma and dolma), pepper, ground pepper, as well as sweet dishes cinnamon, cloves, etc. They also brought new techniques for cooking and preparing food: baking in pans of various pies (Fig.2), baking and moussaka. Also, the Ottomans introduced the practice of cooking dishes over low heat for a long period of time, which led to the creation of rich and aromatic dishes, such as Bosnian pot and various types of goulash. In addition to salty dishes, numerous sweet dishes have been brought and have been preserved to this day: baklava, persimmons, ružica, tulumba, tufahija, kadaif, then zerde, hošaf, tahan halva, and the indispensable rahat lokum (Lakušić, 1999).



Fig. 2. Bosnian pie „Burek“

Photo: Seada Gavranović

Baklava is somewhat a symbol of Bosnian delicacies; however, many will say that it is authentically Turkish, but the Turks have different variations of baklava, predominantly with pistachios or hazelnuts, which are not discussed here. It's not just any cake; it's festive. Maybe that's why it's special and its own. Like its shape itself, it is quite precise; it is known

exactly what goes and to what extent, and even often housewives have special pans for baklava. Not everyone knows how to make good baklava, but Bosnian women learn it from their mothers and pass this knowledge on to their children from generation to generation.

In addition to food, the Ottomans brought the tradition of drinking coffee to Bosnia. Bosnian coffee has become an indispensable part of everyday life. Serving coffee with rahatlokum or sweet (traditional sweets) today is not only a custom but also a sign of hospitality and companionship. Bosnian coffee is always served in a cezve, on a large tray, with a small ceramic cup (fildžan), sugar or rahat lokum, and a glass of water.

The great influence of the rulers of the time is also felt through the way food is served and consumed. Meals were often rich and organized in several courses, with an emphasis on eating together. The tradition of eating together, where food is shared from one large plate, especially during festive occasions, has its roots in the Ottoman period. The combination of these influences has shaped Bosnian cuisine into a unique blend of Balkan and Oriental flavors, where elements of both cuisines have been harmoniously integrated into the daily life and traditions of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN PERIOD

The period of Austro-Hungarian administration in the area of the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region began in 1878. Year. The new government and different people bring with them a different culture, customs, and politics, but also a gastronomic offer. Bosnian gastronomy at that time was influenced by Western European culinary traditions, and the results of this influence are still visible today. This government has brought modernization throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and especially in the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region, in all segments. In the past, the central gathering places were houses, and in this period they are starting to be cafes. As far as the gastronomic offer from this period is concerned, cakes such as e.g. Sacher and others, and from savory dishes, Viennese schnitzel. Today, the best reviews for the Sacher cake have the pastry shop La Delicia Sarajevo (Official website of Tripadvisor, Pivnica Sarajevo and La Delicia pastry shop).

The Austro-Hungarian Empire also brought a number of new foods and spices that enriched the cuisine of Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as potatoes, although potatoes arrived in Bosnia earlier, in this period they became significantly popularized and became a staple food in many households. It also brought the European baking tradition to our region, including various types of pastries and desserts such as rolls, croissants, various types of bread, etc. We should mention that these pastries were filled with various ingredients, such as walnuts, jam, or poppy seeds. Cakes such as strudels, cakes, and various biscuits have become part

of Bosnian cuisine. Traditional Bosnian desserts are enriched with techniques and recipes from Central Europe.

Furthermore, this government brought changes in the way of serving and the aesthetics of food; more precisely, porcelain and other dishes began to be used. This style has become popular in urban households and has given a refined look to dining tables, especially in urban areas. Meals are also multi-course, as Austrian cuisine emphasized the consumption of multi-course meals, which included an appetizer, main course, and dessert.

During the Austro-Hungarian period, wine production was significantly improved, especially in Herzegovina, where vineyards expanded and wine quality improved. The establishment of breweries, such as the Sarajevo Brewery in 1864 (which operated under Austro-Hungarian administration), brought the popularization of beer as a beverage in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Beer has become an integral part of the culture of drinking and social gatherings.

Austria-Hungary also influenced the way households within Bosnia and Herzegovina organized meals and meal schedules, and although the tradition of communal meals existed before, Austro-Hungarian influence led to more formal dinners and gatherings, with an emphasis on family and social dinners.

PROMOTION OF GASTRO TOURISM IN THE SARAJEVO TOURIST- GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

Gastro tourism represents a significant segment of the tourist offer, especially in destinations with a rich cultural and culinary tradition, such as the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region. This area has an extremely large potential for the development of this specific form of tourism, but the disadvantage is the practical offer and the fact that the tourist board is not able to present such potentials in the right way.

The Sarajevo region works on the promotion of gastro tourism through various projects, involving tourist boards, travel agencies, numerous organizations, and even volunteers who want to gain some specific experience in their field through practical work. We should especially highlight the "Sarajevo Destination Festival", which was held for the first time this year and had a large number of visitors. The goal of this festival was to bring together all travel agencies throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as agencies from the region, to place attractive tourist offers to visitors, but also to make Sarajevo stand out from the rest as a tourist destination.

The best tourist promotion of a destination is through various festivals, events, digital media, which are the most important in tourism today, and in this way we can connect with tourists

or future tourists around the world and interest them in visiting Sarajevo. In addition, what wins tourists over again to come to a destination, is certainly hospitality, which tourists certainly point out in the Sarajevo region, as a beautiful experience.

In addition to domestic promotion, Sarajevo as a tourist destination is doing a lot to promote itself in countries around the world, one example is the promotion of tourism of the Sarajevo Canton at the fair in Paris in 2023. The Sarajevo Canton Tourist Board presented "Visit Sarajevo" for the first time in the tourist offer at the prestigious fair "IFTM – International & French Travel Market", which was held in Paris from October 3 to 5. This fair features multiple segments of travel and tourism, including leisure tourism, business travel, group travel, and MICE tourism. This year's edition of the fair brought together nearly 30,000 tourism professionals, presented 170 destinations from all over the world (including Sarajevo), and held 80 thematic conferences on the leading trends and challenges that the tourism industry faces globally. By presenting Sarajevo's tourist offer at this fair, he aimed to attract potential tourists from France in as many numbers as possible, as well as tourists from other emitting markets. Exhibitors and visitors to the fair are generally familiar with the destination of Sarajevo, and as a particularly interesting and recognizable tourist attraction, they pointed out Baščaršija (Oficijalna stranica Visit Sarajevo).

One of the biggest problems when it comes to the promotion of gastro tourism in the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region is the lack of brochures for the presentation of this form of tourism in our country. Travel agencies are trying to organize certain projects in agreement with rural households, which they would market to tourists. Such a positive example is the village of Lukomir on Bjelašnica, where the local population offers tourists gastronomic specialties of this region.

However, it is important to mention other events that contribute to the promotion of tourism in the Sarajevo region, such as: Street Food Market, Gastro Eco Fest food with sevdah, Beer and Food Days, etc. A positive example of the presentation of gastronomy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the association of gastronomes that was founded under the name "Gastro Corner". This association is trying to bring back the traditions of the caterers of this area. Also, they promote the gastronomy of the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina through television shows, with the aim of promoting traditional cuisine through the preparation of traditional Bosnian specialties. Through the organization of fairs, this association tries to present our gastronomic offer as much as possible.

GASTRONOMIC DESTINATIONS IN THE SARAJEVO TOURIST-GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

Sarajevo is known as a special cultural and historical core in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there is a combination of various already mentioned influences, it represents a real fusion of different specialties such as ćevapi, pies, dolmas, schnitzels, numerous desserts, and the like. Many restaurants and cafes in the city promote traditional dishes, often using locally grown ingredients, thus contributing to the sustainable development of regional and local agriculture. However, in addition to traditional dishes, there are also many dishes popular around the world, and in this area they have become widespread due to the influence of westernization. We will single out a few specific gastronomic destinations in the Sarajevo region, which are visited by tourists, and these are:

- Baščaršija
- Obala Kulina bana
- Marijin Dvor
- Sarajevo City Center (SCC).

Baščaršija is the cultural center of this region, but also the most important gastronomic destination in the city itself, where there is a combination of different cuisines. The recognizability of the area itself is its narrow streets and traditional crafts, where a wealth of culinary delights is offered, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and diversity of local cuisine. The basis of Sarajevo cuisine is predominantly Ottoman, but you can also feel the influences of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Baščaršija offers a wide range of traditional Bosnian dishes such as ćevapi, pies, dolmas, and various meat and vegetable specialties, as well as numerous desserts: baklava, tufahija, etc. Restaurants and local taverns (traditional Bosnian inns) are often located in old oriental houses or hans, providing an authentic experience. Tourists most often decide to visit restaurants such as "Ćevabdžinica Željo" (rating 4.4),⁴⁸ "Kuća sevdaha" (4.7), or "Restoran Morića Han" (4.6), which are known for their authenticity and long tradition of serving delicious Bosnian dishes (Official website of Destination Sarajevo, Baščaršija).

The "Obala Kulina bana" runs from west to east and upstream, i.e. parallel to the right bank of the Miljacka River, from the Skenderija Bridge to the Šehar-ćehajina Bridge. On the Miljacka Coast and in the surrounding areas, there are numerous restaurants and cafes with beautiful views of the river and the surrounding hills. These restaurants often offer a variety of traditional Bosnian dishes as well as international cuisines, making them popular among tourists who want to enjoy food with a nice view. Of the more famous restaurants in this

⁴⁸ Ratings are taken from the official websites, tasteatlas or tripadvisor (detailed pages are in the references)

area, "Konoba Luka Sarajevo" (4.5), "Bistro Obala" (4.5), etc⁴⁹ stand out (Official website of Destination Sarajevo, Obala Kulina bana).

Marijin Dvor is the political and business center of Sarajevo. The largest hotel in Sarajevo, the Holiday Inn, is located here and was built on the occasion of the 14th anniversary of the Holiday Inn. the Winter Olympics. Within a radius of 500 m, there are three retail commercial centers: Alta (3.5), Sarajevo City Center (4.0), and Importanne (3.5). When it comes to gastronomy, reputable restaurants and cafes offering a variety of gastronomic specialties are available to tourists. These establishments often combine modern cuisine with traditional Bosnian dishes, adapting to the urban environment. Among the restaurants, the following stand out: "Piccolo Mondo" (4.5), pizzeria and restaurant, then "Pivnica Sarajevo" (4.0), "Spazio Gourmet" (4.0), etc⁵⁰. (Official website of Visit Sarajevo, Marijin Dvor).

Sarajevo City Center, better known as SCC, is one of the largest shopping centers in Sarajevo, located in the center of the city, and is a popular destination for shopping, entertainment, and gastronomic delights, both among locals and tourists. The gastronomic offer of SCC is diverse and includes a variety of restaurants, cafes and fast food, which satisfy a wide range of tastes and preferences of all visitors. Within this shopping center, you can find traditional Bosnian dishes, as well as international cuisine. A wide range of Italian, Asian, and American cuisine is available to tourists who come to it. Restaurants often have a modern atmosphere, and the interior itself is adapted to today's trends, which especially attracts young tourists to visit these establishments. Also, there are mini stalls selling natural juices, fruits, as well as vegan products, and thus the gastronomic offer of this space is further enriched. In just a few meters there are traditional restaurants such as ćevabdžinica "Mrkva", then American food such as "KFC", but also the Asian restaurant "Kimono" (3.5)⁵¹, which certainly makes this space very attractive and tempting for all visitors, whether they are domestic or foreign (Official website Visit Sarajevo, SCC).

⁴⁹ Ratings are taken from the official websites, tasteatlas or tripadvisor (detailed pages are in the references)

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FUTURE TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRO TOURISM IN THE SARAJEVO TOURIST-GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

Global trends and key parameters for the success of the Sarajevo region as a gastronomic destination should include its development through the following elements, which are:

- Growth of the gastronomic tourism market - an increase in world gastronomic tourism, which the Sarajevo region urgently needs to join. This is one of the most dynamic segments of the tourism market.
- The product is the basis of gastronomic tourism – Sarajevo's natural resources that are converted into tourist products will enable the identification of this territory with the original Sarajevo products.
- Cultural heritage – Sarajevo culture is a set of unique behaviors, knowledge and habits that Sarajevo society shapes, which is based on the feeling of belonging to the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region.

The gastronomy of the Sarajevo region allows tourists to gain insight into the cultural and historical heritage of this tourist destination through various testing, gastronomic experiments, and the purchase of local products. This cultural approach will allow for a more participatory and experiential way that will not be purely observational. We must also take into account the emergence of new cultural values that enhance the richness and cultural diversity of the Sarajevo region. In this sense, Sarajevo's tradition and innovation coexist in a natural way.

Today, the travel experience has changed and is no longer limited to the days spent on the road but begins much earlier (tourists are inspired, collect information, compare, buy) and ends when tourists rate their experience and share it through social networks. The key role in this process in the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region should be played by the following elements: amazing chefs who are starting a revolution in the segment of luxury kitchens, media (especially television), guides, blogs on the topic of local food and social networks. All this will help to create a favorable image for choosing the Sarajevo region as a favorable tourist destination.

For the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region, it is important to mention that one of the key trends in the future is its focus on sustainability and the use of local products and the placement of traditional Bosnian food and drinks to tourists. Tourists are increasingly appreciating dishes prepared with fresh, locally grown ingredients that provide an authentic experience and support the local economy. Sarajevo restaurants can take advantage of this trend by collaborating with local farms and producers to offer seasonal Bosnian dishes and promote a sustainable approach to food preparation. Also, one should not shy away from the marketing of modern cuisine, but the Sarajevo region should create new authentic products from local ingredients with global culinary techniques, which will be offered to visitors. This

blend of tradition and modern cuisine can create unique gastronomic experiences that will attract an increasing number of tourists again and again.

CONCLUSION

The development of gastro tourism in the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region has significant potential for the future development of this great tourist offer. By analyzing the current state of gastro tourism in the Sarajevo region, it was determined that this segment not only reflects the rich cultural and historical heritage of the city, but also contributes to its attractiveness as a destination. Also, it affects the development of the brand of this tourist destination and with its diversity and authenticity, it provides a unique experience that can significantly improve tourist activities and attract tourists from different parts of the world. The importance of promoting local food as a key element in attracting tourists has been recognized in the Sarajevo region, so the promotion of Sarajevo's culinary specialties, together with the organization of gastronomic events and tours, can play a key role in increasing tourist interest and extending the duration of stays in this region. In addition to the identified challenges, such as the need for greater coordination between the tourism and gastronomy sectors, as well as the improvement of infrastructure, it is necessary to implement strategic recommendations. The Sarajevo region needs to focus its marketing activities on a global audience, then it needs to increase support for innovative projects in gastronomy and more develop educational programs that will enrich tourist experiences. Also, in the future, further research and continuous efforts in the promotion of gastro tourism can significantly contribute to strengthening the position of the Sarajevo region on the global tourist map. Sarajevo's gastro tourism has the potential to become not only a recognizable part of the tourist offer, but also a key factor in creating a sustainable and dynamic future tourism sector.

The time of gastronomic tourism in the Sarajevo tourist-geographical region is yet to come, and this form of tourism has yet to become a real motive for many international tourists to visit, all because of their desire to experience something new and something authentic.

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