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Regional Culinary Heritage Europe network as a factor of culinary tourism development – Wielkopolska Region (Greater Poland) case study

Abstract: The main objective of the Regional Culinary Heritage Europe network is to develop regions through regional food and culinary traditions. Its objective is also to show consumers and tourists how to find local and regional food in Europe. Therefore, the initiative can be considered as an important factor for the culinary tourism development.

For the purpose of this paper, the author has decided to present some network members, their functioning and local coordination activities undertaken to develop and promote the idea of the network, also in tourism, as exemplified by Wielkopolska Region (Greater Poland).

The network of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe is a well-known and recognisable initiative in the food and tourism sectors, but the author of this paper has decided to investigate, using a short interview questionnaire, whether tourists travelling around Wielkopolska are also familiar with the network's logo and objectives. Unfortunately, they are not.

Keywords: food/culinary tourism, Regional Culinary Heritage Europe, Regional Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska

1. Introduction: Contemporary tourists' interest in food

The tourists' fascination with culinary aspects of the visited places has recently become one of the trends in contemporary tourism. Cuisine magnetically attracts tourists seeking new flavours or those interested in returning to traditional tastes. As we can read in the literature of the subject: [...] *Food touches every aspect of our lives and since it is [...] more than the dishes we eat, we can be tourists by exploring these other aspects of the food systems* (Long, 2010). When travelling, tourists want to eat well but also [...] *beautifully, enjoyably, uniquely* (Stasiak, 2015). They want to meet new cultures, people and countries through their original, exotic tastes. Food is sometimes the superior motivation for travel, and sometimes it is just as important as the other motivations (however, it determines the levels of memorability and intensifies the sensations experienced by culinary and cultural tourists).

The culinary fascination stems from the fact that people today are far more concerned with and interested in how their food is pro-

duced than some years ago and because this kind of food fascination has become fashionable. Another important aspect of contemporary tourism and food is the "growing interest in authentic tourism experiences, and their links to cultural authenticity, as well as to both natural and human heritage conservation" (Bramwell, 2015). What is more, heritage is now one of the strongest links for all involved in gastronomy and visitors are keen to try a taste of history (Povey, 2011).

According to G. Povey (2011), we may say that regional flavour profiles, etiquette and regional recipes are today indeed predominantly: [...] *derived through a continuous interaction and evolution of fashion, traditions, culture and climate. All cuisines and gastronomic traditions are created through a fusion of ingredients and techniques as a result of the marrying of diverse cultures, ethnic influences and history with the restriction of product availability and know-how.*

Nowadays tourists want to experience a particular type of food or region where a specific food is produced and also understand and appreciate the origin of the food. It is important for them that [...] *tourist destinations are increasingly concerned with providing its authenticity* (Povey, 2011). [...] *As part of tourism experience, eating local cuisine is a way of breaking with standardised, everyday routine by taking the tourist off into unknown culinary realms* (Bessiere and Tibere, 2013). Moreover, [...] *consuming food, gastronomic specialties, and adopting local table manners are a step towards understanding and apprehending cultural practices, taste, all the good things the region visited has to offer* (Bessiere and Tibere, 2013). As C.T.S. Tsai puts it (2016, after: Clark and Chabrel, 2007; Sims, 2009): [...] *by participating in activities involving local cuisines, tourist taste local delicacies to satisfy their psychological functions, which arouse their curiosity about local foods. Through this process, they learn about local cultures and knowledge and acquire a sense of identification and belonging to the places. This identification very often lasts longer thanks to the fact that returning from their trip, tourists eagerly bring culinary souvenirs: alcohol, sweets, cold meats, cheeses – delicacies that remind them of holiday experiences.*

J. Bessiere and L. Tibere (2013) stated that contact with local food culture can take place through material elements that are easily identifiable in the tourist area (e.g. dishes, ingredients, plant and animal produce, utensils, tableware) but also other components that are increasingly part of the intangible (the symbolism of food, social values, hierarchy and codes, social links, culinary, cultural and craft knowledge etc.).

In response to culinary interest of tourists, in many regions of the world [...] *food is transformed from local ingredient to local insight*, thus offering that local knowledge about landscapes and lifestyles (la Barre and Brouder, 2015). [...] *The tourism industry has opened up new opportunities for producers in terms of food tourism, wine tourism, and specialized niche market food production for tourist consumption* (Momsen, 2015). Through food and beverage tourism, the culinary heritage can be used effectively in promoting and building positive images of areas (in the case of characteristic regional or ethnic

cuisines), as well as in activating the economy of the whole regions (Stasiak, 2015).

As food provides a means to express local identity and culture, Bessiere and Tibere (2013) identified three profiles amongst food tourists curious to discover local produce: Profile 1: Food as a vehicle for self-discovery, Profile 2: Food as a vehicle for discovering ‘the others’ and Profile 3: Food as a vehicle for discovering a location.

As the presented paper concerns regional culinary heritage, the third tourist profile is worth being explained. The authors of the cited work claim that connecting products with the region, the locality, the *terroir* is one of the reasons for purchasing products by tourists. This link to the *terroir* is taken in a broad sense. [...] *The fact that products come from the region supersedes all other representations and globally defines this link. It is enough that the produce be seen as ‘local’; this label in itself guarantees its genuine origins. Information about the product’s journey along the local food chain translates this need for local sourcing and tourists’ heightened awareness of the issue of product ‘traceability’. Their demand expresses a need to link food to a particular space, to give it an origin, a story, to associate it with the name of a producer. This quest for information and proximity with producers is a mark of authenticity. The natural product is guarantee enough for the consumer, without any need for a quality label* (Bessiere and Tibere 2013).

Nonetheless, if such a product holds the quality label mentioned above, its value, attractiveness and authenticity strongly increase in the eyes of tourists. At present, the most important European food product quality labels, important to the culinary world and tourists, are: 1) product certificate systems, such as three European Union schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialities, known as protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), and traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG); 2) the EU organic logo and labelling – awarded for organic production; and 3) networks, such as Regional Culinary Heritage Europe.

In addition, each European country has also other quality labels – in Poland, for example, it is the List of Traditional Products of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and

Jakość-Tradycja (Quality-Tradition) Certificate, awarded by the Polish Chamber of Regio-

nal and Local Product (in Polish: Polska Izba Produktu Regionalnego i Lokalnego).

2. Area descriptions, methods and material studied

For the purpose of the present paper, the author has decided to look at one of the above-mentioned quality labels, which is Regional Culinary Heritage Europe, because its territorial range in Poland has grown considerably over the last few years and many producers and restaurant owners have decided to join the network and have the right to use the network's logo that is increasingly prominent in the tourist space. The following text explains the idea, assumptions and the scale of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe and, following the example of Wielkopolska Region

(Greater Poland), some network members, their functioning and local coordination activities undertaken to develop and promote the network's idea, also in tourism.

Regional Culinary Heritage Europe is a well-known and recognisable initiative among people working in tourism and food business, but the author of this paper has decided to investigate, using a short interview questionnaire, whether tourists travelling around Wielkopolska are familiar with the logo and objectives of the network. The results of this research are presented in this paper.

3. The Network of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe – general issues¹

The main objective of the Regional Culinary Heritage Europe network is to develop regions through regional food¹ and culinary traditions (Sieć Dziedzictwa..., 2016). Moreover, its objective is to show consumers and tourists how to find local and regional food in Europe (www.culinary-heritage.com/).

As we can read on the network's website (www.culinary-heritage.com/): [...] *All over Europe we have so many common things but also a lot of differences when it comes to language, culture and habits. The food and beverages reflects this diversity very well. Each region therefore has so much to offer when it comes to culinary contributions to consumers and tourists. As of today the traditional cooking is a very strong and important issue when it comes to preserve cultural heritage as well as to promote regional advantages on a rapidly emerging travel market.*

At present, the network has 1525 members in 44 European regions (in 13 countries: Belarus, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Sweden, Turkey and Ukraine). Ten of the regions are situated in Poland.

[...] *Members of the network ensure that products come from the region and their culinary traditions and skills are a source of pride* (Sieć Dziedzictwa..., 2016). Chefs are obliged to use ingredients and raw materials produced in the region and prepare dishes that have a historical tradition in the region (Sieć Dziedzictwa..., 2016).

The idea of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe was developed and introduced in Southeast Skåne of Sweden and on the Danish island of Bornholm in 1995. According to the network history description: [...] *The project developed rapidly and received considerable inte-*

¹ This subchapter has been prepared on the basis of the following websites and publications: www.culinary-heritage.com/ (date of access: 20/03/2017), Sieć Dziedzictwa Kulinarnego Wielkopolska (Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska) 2016, Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Wielkopolskiego (Marshall Office of the Wielkopolska Region), Poznań-Poland.

² Regional food is understood as follows: "In short version it means that the food should be of local origin or that the major manufacturing value should come from the region. The products should also contribute to a positive image for the region. Flavourous food originated from the soil and terroir of a specific place are something truly unique – that is why each region has so much to contribute with when it comes to good food and beverages" (www.culinary-heritage.com/ (date of access: 20/03/2017)).

rest from businesses and authorities within the region – as well as from other regions in Europe. In 1997, it therefore started to expand to other regions in Europe as well (www.culinary-heritage.com/).

Regional Culinary Heritage Europe consists of regions that understand the importance of regional food for consumers and tourists. In all regions [...] activities are carried out in order to promote and enhance regional food and the regional identity thru their products and culinary traditions. This is a big strength when it comes to develop small scale businesses since a regional network between businesses are built up by this cooperation (www.culinary-heritage.com/).

The network has its trademark – the logo (Fig. 1) and all producers and related businesses can use it at the regional levels. Thanks to the logo, the products are recognized and highlighted, and it helps tourists and other consumers find places and products that offer regional specialities based on high quality local produce in Europe (Sieć Dziedzictwa..., 2016). The trademark is displayed outside the entrances to restaurants and near producers' cash registers.



Figure 1. Logo of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe (source: www.culinary-heritage.com/, date of access: 20/03/2017)

The process to become a member of the network comes in several steps. First, a regional organisation – regional authority, federation, society, foundation or association applies to the European Coordinator to join the network as a Candidate Region. When

a given region is approved by the board and pays the annual fee, it is introduced as a Candidate Region. Furthermore, it participates in the obligatory training course given by the European Coordinator to get acquainted with the concept behind the network and the trademark. Next, upon the completion of the training course, the region obtains the status of an Approved Region which grants full rights under the concept of the network, one of which is the participation in joint European activities. The Approved Region obtains a license to use the trademark for Regional Culinary Heritage Europe (the region acquires the status of the Regional License Holder). It can also give Business Members in their region the right to use the trademark and participate in regional activities. Moreover, it obtains full access to the official website of the network, which promotes the region and each individual business member. To maintain the membership in Regional Culinary Heritage Europe, the regions pay the annual fee.

Since its establishment in 1995, the network of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe has been regularly implementing various projects. The projects have been designed to develop the network and to focus on specific topics that are important to Regions and Business Members within the network. Regional Culinary Heritage Europe has been involved in projects concerning food, education, tourism, environment and rural development.

The last year's projects were as follows:

1. MEDFEST: "How to create sustainable tourist destinations";
2. BALTIC SEA CULINARY ROUTES: "The North Dignity";
3. BERAS: "Organic agricultural products processing and public education in the Baltic Sea region";
4. REGFOOD (development of the local food around the Baltic Sea from an educational and business perspective);
5. CULINARY HERITAGE EUROPE.

Except from the above-mentioned projects, regional projects and cross-border projects in the member regions are also implemented.

Every year the regions of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe meet at the Annual Forum. The event is held in a region selected within the

network. The Annual Forum is therefore a nice opportunity to show the region to the rest of

the network. In 2017, the forum will be organised in the Wielkopolska Region.

4. The Network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska – members, numbers, initiatives

Wielkopolska is one of the largest regions in Poland (it ranks second in the country in terms of area and third in terms of population) – it covers nearly 30,000 km² and is divided into 31 districts with nearly 3.5 million residents. The city of Poznań is its capital. The region is full of history, monuments, museums as well as nature and unique landscapes. It is popular among tourists due to the rich offer promoting various forms of tourism. Regional food of Wielkopolska is also famous and appreciated.

Wielkopolska – as the Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region says – [...] *is a region of specific products and dishes that due to high quality as well as rich history are worth of being popularized* (Sieć Dziedzictwa..., 2016).

Since 2008, the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska (its logo in Fig. 2) has been part of the network of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe and has more than 120 members (Sieć Dziedzictwa..., 2016) – it is now the second largest network member in Europe. Units from the Wielkopolska Region represent the following food realms: agricultural products, fruit and vegetables, honey, dairy products, bakery products, cold cuts, oils, restaurants, shops.

In 2016, 121 members included: 49 entrepreneurs in the “Restaurants” category, 1 entrepreneur in the “Shops, retailers, wholesalers” category, and 71 entrepreneurs in the “Agricultural products, food processors, gardeners” category. Producers and food processors were represented by: 13 manufacturers of cold cuts, 15 manufacturers of food and vegetables, 10 apiaries, 4 pressed oil producers, 11 bakeries, 1 brewery, 7 organic farms and 10 dairy plants (information provided by Mateusz Sieradzki, Coordinator of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska in February 2017).

To be able to estimate the importance of the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska

in terms of food tourism development, it is necessary to describe activities and products of some their members. The reader will find below a description of seven network members from the Nowy Tomyśl district (one of 31 from Wielkopolska Province)³.



Figure 2. Logo of the Network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska

(source: www.umwww.pl/, date of access: 20/03/2017)

The author has selected this district, because she knows it from her previous research and knows that it represents different categories of the food realms network (those examples show the network’s diversity). Moreover, the Nowy Tomyśl district is easily accessible to tourists because of its location: Nowy Tomyśl – the main city of the district – is located in the western part of Wielkopolska, about 60 km from Poznań, 200 km from Berlin, and 360 km from Warsaw. The A2 highway with a highway junction goes through the district, which is a good connection with other parts of Poland. Also the international railway route Paris–Berlin–Warsaw–Moscow goes through

³ All descriptions of the network members come from: Sieć Dziedzictwa... (2016) and the website: www.culinary-heritage.com/ (date of access: 20/03/2017).

Nowy Tomyśl. The district is quite large – it covers an area of 1012 km², with a population of ca. 73,000 (<http://www.powiatnowotomyski.pl/>). Many tourists come to Nowy Tomyśl district as it is famous for wickerwork – a thematic museum is located there and thematic events and workshops are organised. It is also famous for the historical housing complexes of the 16-17th century settlers from Friesland and the Netherlands, which may still be visited by tourists. The district also offers beautiful nature and interesting history as well as local monuments in towns and villages.

The members of the Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska network located in the Nowy Tomyśl district increase the tourism attractiveness, but unfortunately no information about the network can be found on the official websites of the district (even in the section “Restaurants and Hotels”), so tourists searching for some information will now find out about this valuable culinary initiative and trademark. The above-mentioned seven network members are described below:

1. Ośrodek Szkoleń i Rekreacji “JANSOWO” Robert Jans – the JANSOWO Training and Recreation Centre in Kuślin

The JANSOWO Training and Recreation Centre gives tourists the opportunity to explore Wielkopolska traditions, including mostly the Wielkopolska cuisine. All dishes served to visitors are based on traditional recipes and made from local natural raw materials. The restaurant menu comprises a variety of regional dishes, whose names are given in the Wielkopolska dialect, including *pyry* (the regional name for potatoes), *gzik* (the regional cottage cheese), *ślepe ryby soup* (in English: “blind fish” soup), *rumpuć soup* (thick vegetable soup) and *parzybroda soup* (in English: “burning chin” soup), croquets with beans and meat, potato soup, barley soup (in Polish referred to as *krupnik*), *pierogi* (a traditional dish resembling boiled dumplings), mushroom cream soup and many more. The restaurant purchases raw materials from local producers. The Centre organises training courses, banquets and weddings according to the Wielkopolska tradition, as well as holiday stays and horse-riding workshops.

2. Ekologiczne Gospodarstwo Rolne Damian Nowak – Damian Nowak Ecological Farm in Zębowo

Damian Nowak’s Ecological Farm is famous for rye bread that has been traditionally baked by the Nowak family at the ecological farm in Zębowo for many generations. It is made exclusively of rye flour and sourdough according to a traditional recipe. The existing bread stove in which the bread is baked comes from before the 2nd World War.

Rye bread from Wielkopolska is also inscribed on the List of Traditional Products drawn up by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and won many awards in categories of the best Polish regional food product.

The farm also bakes spelt bread, pumpkin purée bread and rye brown bread.

3. Folwark Wąsowo – Wąsowo Farm

The Wąsowo Farm is a private agricultural enterprise and highly qualified agritourism farm. The enterprise is famous for selling (with delivery) of many products to individual customers in the Wielkopolska region (e.g. pickled cucumbers, beetroot with honey, apple and vegan beetroot), manufactured according to traditional family recipes, without preservatives, improvers or chemical additives. All vegetables, herbs or additives originate from ecological cultivations. The farm also consists of 15 historic buildings and a 5-acre cobblestone courtyard from the 19th century. The restored stone barn hosts weddings and other events, and the complex also comprises a café, rooms for guests and a small shop with farm’s products.

4. Gospodarstwo Rolne Mariusz Tadeusz. Przedsiębiorstwo Handlowe TMT – Mariusz Tadeusz Farm and Enterprise in Troszczyń near Opalenica

Within the farm there is an ecological chokeberry plantation with an area of 15.4 ha which was created in 2005. Chokeberry fruit is used for production of ecological squeezed juice called “Chokeberry Field” as well as chokeberry and apple jam. This juice is cold-pressed. This is one of the rare sugar-free juices that can be used to prepare a home-made tincture and jam as a great additive for home-made bakeries.

5. Obiekt Rolny Linie Marek Grądzki – Marek Grądzki Farm in Linie

The farm produces goat cheese on the basis of unpasteurised milk obtained from goats fed during the grazing period on green fodder that comes only from farm's ecological meadows, and during the winter season – on hay and kibbled grain from farm's fields. Goats are hand-milked. Cheese is produced as a result of adding special cultures of bacteria, after which milk is curdled with original plant or animal rennet. After the brine bath, cheese ripens for three months in properly prepared basement spaces. People can buy cheese from the farm by mail order. The farm also organises farm stays for cheese tourists, including 2-day workshops of cheese production, accommodation and sustenance.

6. Rzeźnictwo-Wędliniarstwo Stefan Słociński – Stefan Słociński Butchery and Cold Meats Production in Bukowiec

The meat processing plant is a family business producing traditional and regional foodstuffs in accordance with old, well-tried recipes passed down from generation to generation. Products used in the meat processing come from producer's own farm, where pigs of native breeds are fed on livestock feed and slaughtered in the nearby slaughterhouses. The products are of the highest quality, which allows for the production of tasty deli meats that are characteristic of western Wielkopolska.

Meat smoking takes place in a traditional alder and beech smoking chamber. Any phosphates or soya or any other functional additives are not used in the production process.

Stefan Słociński's specialty is a roasted leg, Nowy Tomyśl-style ripening sausage, ribs and smoked Wielkopolska *leberka*, all of which have been entered on the List of Traditional Products of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

7. Okręgowa Spółdzielnia Mleczarska TOP-TOMYŚL – Regional Dairy Cooperative in Nowy Tomyśl

This Regional Dairy Cooperative has been operating in western Wielkopolska for 60 years. From its beginnings, it has manufactured an array of products related to the local tradition. Their preparation is based on traditional



Figure 3. Fried Cheese produced by TOP-TOMYŚL – a product in the Register of Protected EU Geographical Indication

(source: www.gloswielkopolski.pl/, date of access: 20/03/2017)

methods and the products contain only natural 100% milk-derived ingredients. Their top quality has made them popular both in this country and abroad. The procured milk comes from the farms located in the western part of Wielkopolska, whose owners are the Cooperative members.

Fried Cheese, entered by the European Commission in the Register of Protected Geographical Indication, is one of the key products manufactured by the Cooperative (Fig. 3). It is based on a recipe passed down from generation to generation.

Other specialties manufactured by the Cooperative include Wielkopolska Gzik cheese, Wielkopolska extra-quality butter, yoghurts, cottage cheese, buttermilk and cream.

The coordinator of the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska, which is the Subdivision for Agriculture and Rural Tourism Promotion at the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Region (Oddział ds. Promocji Rolnictwa, Żywności i Turystyki Wiejskiej w Depart-

tamencie Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi UMWW), is very proactive and undertakes various initiatives to promote, popularize, and develop the network as well as to provide information about network activities. To achieve this objective, the regional network coordinator cooperates with different media: TV, radio, newspapers. Information about the network is also published via the internet and social media. Moreover, the Marshal Office of Wielkopolska actively promotes the idea of regional food through participation in big and well-known national and international events (fairs, markets, festivals), like: Targ Śniadaniowy – Breakfast Market in Poznań, Smaki Regionów – Tastes of Regions in Poznań and Festiwal Dobrego Smaku – Good Taste Festival in Poznań (in Poland), Grüne Woche in Berlin (Germany), Tutto Food Milan (in Italy). The network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska also participates in a national competition called “Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo. Smaki Regionów” – Our Culinary Heritage. Tastes of Regions. In 2016, the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska was also present during smaller local events in Poland, such as: Piknik nad Odrą – Picnic by the Oder River in Szczecin, Dni Obornik – Oborniki Town

Days, Wielkopolskie Dożynki Wojewódzkie – Wielkopolska Province Harvest Festival in Liskowo, and also at the Christmas Market in Neustadt in Germany. The scale of the network promotion and its effect vary depending on the range of an event during which the promotion takes place. For example, Smaki Regionów – Tastes of Regions Fair in Poznań were visited in 2015 by 60 thousand visitors. Visitors were able to get familiar with culinary heritage of Wielkopolska, represented by 41 exhibitors (Fig. 4) (information provided by Mateusz Sieradzki, Coordinator of the Wielkopolska Network of Culinary Heritage in February 2017).

Every year the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska participates in the Annual Forum of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe (e.g. in 2016, its representatives went to Oslo). It also organises the Wielkopolska Culinary Heritage Forum – in 2016, the event was hosted by Tłokinia Kościelna Palace & Restaurant.

The major promotional activities organised by the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska, e.g. in 2016, include:

- Website design – www.sdk-wlkp.pl;
- Publication of two editions of promotional articles about the Wielkopolska network in



Figure 4. Stand of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska at Smaki Regionów Fair – Tastes of Regions in Poznań in 2013 (source: www.umww.pl/, date of access: 20/03/2017)

- 26 regional weekly magazines and 4 web portals;
- Publication of a brochure related to the Wielkopolska culinary route;
- Validation of the Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska 2016 catalogue;
- A 3-minute TV spot about the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska;
- Purchase of new roll-ups to promote the network;
- Preparation of new network promotional gadgets.

Among various local promotional activities organised by the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska in 2016, the following can be mentioned: financing of awards for the youth culinary competition held in the school complex in Nietążkowo, co-organization of the "Pyra i Korbol" culinary competition ("Potato and Pumpkin" – Polish names are in the local dialect) for Country Housewives' Clubs (in Polish: Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich), organization of a culinary tour for pupils from the school complex in Liskowo.

The network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska is represented also some agritourism farms that hold the title: *The best tourism in rural areas in Wielkopolska*, awarded in the contest organised by the Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Region in 2007-2016 (they account for 20% of all 122 farms awarded) (Najciekawsze..., 2015). The coordinator of Culi-

- I have never seen that sign before.
- I have seen that sign before but I do not know/remember exactly what it means.
- I know that sign and its meaning.

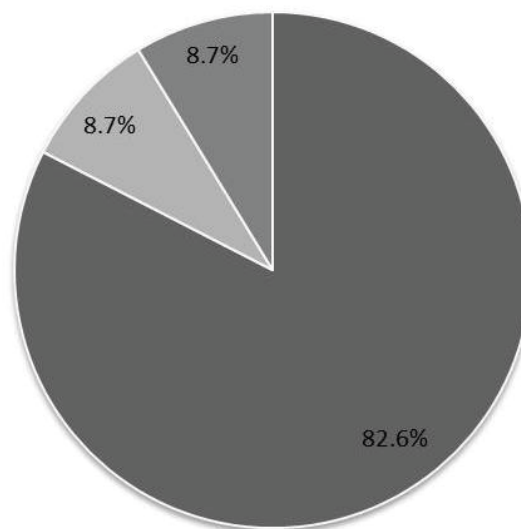


Figure 5. Knowledge and experience related to Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska among habitants of the region – local tourists, n = 218

(source: own research)

nary Heritage Wielkopolska always controls whether the network logo is present next to farms' descriptions in the annual contest catalogue, to emphasize the culinary uniqueness of those places.

5. Tourists' knowledge about the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska – research results. Its importance for the food tourism development

As explained at the beginning of the paper, Regional Culinary Heritage Europe is a well-known and recognisable initiative among people working in tourism and food industry, but the author has decided to investigate whether also tourists travelling around Wielkopolska are familiar with the logo and objectives of the network.

A short questionnaire was prepared for the purpose of the research. The surveyed people were shown the logo of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska (Fig. 2) and asked two questions: 1) Have you ever seen this sign/logo before? If so, where was

it? 2) Do you know what it symbolises? Respondents were asked only for their gender and age.

The research was carried out in February 2017 by twelve students of tourism and recreation from Poznań (who had completed the course of *Cuisine and culinary art as tourism attraction* at Poznań University of Physical Education) – each of them interviewed, using the above-mentioned questionnaire, 15 accidentally encountered people from the Wielkopolska region (who travel around the region at least once a year and eat lunch or dinner during that trip). They collected 218 answers.

In total, 58.3% respondents were female and 41.7% were male. They represented the following age groups: up to 18 years of age: 3.2%; age 19-25: 35.5%; age 26-35: 26.3%; age 36-50: 21.7%; age 51-70: 11.5%; age over 70: 1.8%.

The research results are not representative and they are only preliminary. Nonetheless, they indicate the need for further, more comprehensive research.

The results of the survey (Fig. 5) show that the significant majority of respondents (82.6%) have never seen the logo of the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska before. Almost every other person (8.7%) has seen it before but did not know or remember exactly what it meant. The same percentage of Wielkopolska's inhabitants – local tourists (8.7%) know the logo and its meaning.

Half of the respondents who knew the network logo and its meaning were men and half were women.

Young respondents, at the age of 19-35, were the strongest group (79%) that recognized the logo properly. Another 20% of the good answers belonged to people at the age of 36-50 and 51-70 (10% each).

People who have never seen the logo before had different opinions about it. One person said that the colours of the sign are very nice, and the logo has a simple form that may encourage tourists to enter the place, e.g. a restaurant, while another one found the logo not modern enough and absolutely not clear. Some people mentioned that it looks more like a T-shirt or an apron, but not a chef's hat. A few people mistook it with the EU logo or with UNESCO activities or Michelin designation.

6. Conclusions

The author concludes that initiatives such as the network of Regional Culinary Heritage Europe are nowadays undoubtedly interesting and necessary because people who are interested in healthy, regional, authentic food need reliable signposts of what and where to eat. The network member regions, like the network of Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska, is such a signpost. The network develops in the region very fast and undertakes many actions to promote, popularize, and provide information about its own activities. Certainly it has

become a culinary trademark, which is very well recognizable, mainly by food and tourism sectors. Unfortunately, it is not widely known in society, even among current and prospective tourists.

Culinary Heritage Wielkopolska has so far done a lot to develop the network and to provide information in the community but probably now it is time for new ways of promotion, targeting new groups, presenting the network with a fresh look, so the information will reach more and more tourists.

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