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Mouthful Hungary – overview of Hungarian cuisine and culinary tourism

Abstract: Cuisine plays an increasingly important role in our daily life. We do not eat just to survive, but first of all we choose healthy and delicious food. This trend is also observed on week days and holidays. Moreover, the desire to discover traditional, regional dishes or other nations' culinary culture become a strong motivation for tourists. Many travellers arrive in Hungary with various stereotypes and misinformation, and they leave with a wealth of experience.

Hungary is located in the Carpathian Basin and its environmental features (temperate climate zone, 2°C positive temperature anomaly due to the distance from the oceans, four seasons, pedo- and biogeographical richness, etc.) determine the agricultural potential. However, the culinary culture of the nation, customs and development of cuisine are also closely related to the history of the country. Centuries-long migrations of proto-Hungarians and their arrival in the Carpathian Basin have resulted in the continuous adaptation and mixing of traditions, ways of life and methods of various nations (e.g. Inner and Central Asian people, Germans, Italians and Balkan nations). All these factors have enriched and distinguished the Hungarian cuisine.

Labels and titles (e.g. "Hungarian Speciality", or the so-called HÍR trademark) can guide a foreigner among the abundance of products. Thematic routes of wine, pálinka and others help while traveling in Hungary. Although the majority of tourists will taste stereotypical dishes (paprika, goulash soup, etc.), more inquisitive ones can get acquainted with the cuisine having a more colourful tradition (e.g. seasoning and variety of cooking methods).

Keywords: gastronomic tourism, culinary tourism, Hungarian cuisine, culinary traditions, Hungary

1. Introduction – Gastronomic stereotypes about Hungary

When we ask foreigners what first impression or words come to their minds when they hear the word "Hungary", the most common answers are goulash, Lake Balaton, cheap holidays, Hungaroring, wines of Tokaj, paprika, Sziget Festival, fun, Sound Festival and pálinka (Borsod Online, 2015). These are the attributes that define the image of tourism in Hungary, which after several years of experience is not so appropriate, to say the least. A tourist arriving in Hungary, full of stereotypes yet unversed, may experience a cultural shock in terms of cuisine. Sometimes this is due to the use and combination of typical and high-quality but unusual ingredients (e.g. offals and

chitterlings, chocolate coated cottage cheese finger). In other cases, the traditional method of food preparation leads to consternation (e.g.: pig slaughtering), and visitors could feel that food is above all. The question: "What's for lunch?" is very common and important but not a simple one. Yes, we like to eat and drink, but it does matter what we eat. Those who join us will be able to taste the spicy and high-quality Hungarian food.

The main characteristics of the Hungarian cuisine are currently (Tusor, 2002):

- pork fat, onion and red pepper used together;
- dominant use of pork and pork fat;
- extensive use of sour cream;

- specific preparation methods (e.g. stew-stock, thickening);
- eating calorie-rich delicacies.

The aim of our paper was to overview the historical background of Hungarian cuisine, the current trends and to overthrow some stereotypes.

2. Environmental features as a factor determining the development of food culture

Apart from a specific geological structure and topography, the natural resources of Hungary are determined by two basic characteristics: the transitional nature of climate, soils and vegetation, and location in the basin.

Hungary is located in the central and western part of the Carpathian Basin (Fig. 1) and belongs to the temperate climate zone. Despite the relatively large distance from the Atlantic Ocean (1300-1700 km), most precipitation is of oceanic origin. A 2°C positive temperature anomaly, which increases the duration of the vegetation period, is also due to the oceanic effect. The influence of continental air masses result in warmer and drier summers and colder and drier winters in the eastern part of the country. The proximity of the Mediterranean Sea is partially reflected in the rainfall drifted by Mediterranean cyclones, providing favourable precipitation (rich, but not too significant: 700-800 mm) in the south-western region of the country. In the eastern and central part of the Carpathian Basin, partly due to the increased distance from the ocean and partly due to the basin effect, the precipitation rate decreases below 500 mm. However, the reduction of the

cloud cover from 66% to 54% and incremental amount of sunshine towards the centre of the country result from the country's basin location (1950 to 2105 hours/year) (Bartholy and Weidinger, 2012). The number of sunshine hours increases with the steadily manifested air masses of the Mediterranean origin (the so-called Indian summer), which improves the quality of crops harvested in autumn (e.g. grapes).

The transitional character of vegetation and soils in the Carpathian Basin is due to the simultaneous presence of 'forest climate' (>500-550 mm precipitation/year) and the so-called 'steppe climate' (<500 mm/year). Therefore, brown forest soils (Luvisols, Cambisols) and broad-leaved forests occur in the wetter western and mountainous parts of the country, while the eastern part, e.g. the Great Plains region, is characterized by steppe soils (Chernozems, Phaeozems, Kastanozems), and steppe and forest-steppe vegetation. The pedo- and biogeographical richness will be further increased by alluvial soils and ecosystems associated with the dendritic riverine network.

More than half of the territory of Hungary lies below 200 m a.s.l., and 31% of the area is covered by hills. As a result, a large part of arable lands can be included in the agricultural production and pastoralism, which has a centuries-old tradition. Hills and mountains with their various meso- and micro-climatic and soil characteristics increase the variety of agricultural products serving as the basis of cuisine. In the Carpathian Basin, heat-loving wheat and corn are grown on suitable fertile steppe soil, while barley or rye and potatoes (demanding wetter and cooler climate) are grown on less fertile soils. Moreover, apricots and peaches originating from Persia, melons and vines from Central Asia, as well as subtropical peppers are also grown (Kiszely, 2001).

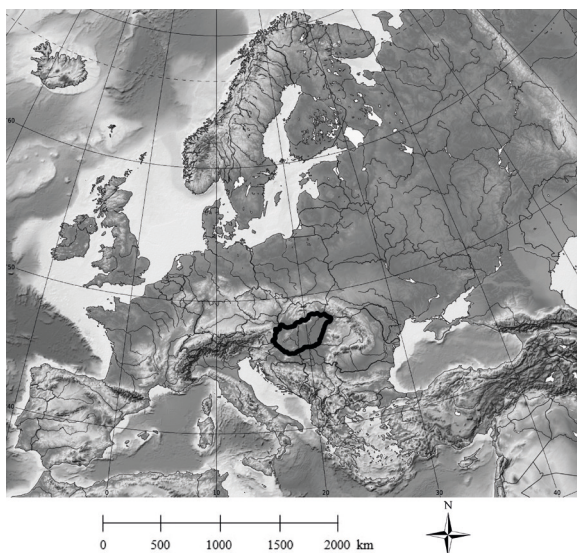


Figure 1. Location of Hungary in the Carpathian Basin

Several agricultural products of the Carpathians reached different parts of Europe already in the Middle Ages. In addition to Hungarian grain and grey cattle, Tokaji Aszú, the Danube sturgeon and sterlet caught in the Tisza River were valuable commodities on the markets of wealthy European cities. Even if today's Hungary is not the "Monarchy's or COMECON's¹ pantry" anymore, a wide

assortment of ingredients and a variety of traditional ways of preparing food still remained. Traditional farming characteristics associated with the four-season climate also contributed to this diversity. Due to the seasonal availability of cooking ingredients, various preservation methods are essential, which results in additional, unique gastronomic products.

3. Cultural impressions

A nation's culinary culture, customs and development of cuisine are closely related to its history. The currently known 'Hungarian cuisine' also bear memories of ages past. In the process of its formation and adaptation to environmental resources, it has been enriched by habits and ingredients borrowed from other ethnic groups. In some periods, however, the varieties, especially in terms of seasoning and food preparation methods were reduced.

Similar to Inner and Central Asian people, cooked, stewed and braised dishes were favourite dishes of ancient Hungarian people. Their cuisine was often characterized by the use of 'pentatonic' flavours, i.e. sweet, sour, salty and bitter flavour, accepting the fifth one as a spicy flavour in search of harmony (Kiszely, 2001). Before the Conquest (896 AD), when proto-Hungarians arrived in the Carpathian Basin, they acquired food mainly by fishing, hunting and gathering as an adaptation to a migratory way of life (Tusor, 2002). Later (in the 5th and 6th centuries), they tended herds and conducted primitive cultivation. In addition to cooking and roasting on spit, they also used parching, drying and smoking. Because of the constant migration, they made dried pasta, pulverized roasted salted meat, but also the predecessor of milk powder and dried sour milk. In the 8th and 9th centuries, living in the area of the Khazar Empire (from the Volga-Don steppes to the eastern Crimea, the northern Caucasus and the Caspian Sea), they mastered the knowledge of grape cultivation.

We have few historical sources concerning the eating habits of the Hungarians in the Car-

pathian Basin from the 9th century and the first centuries of settlement, but the language memories and habits of the related Caucasian people provide the basis for comparison (Tusor, 2002). Beef soup prepared without potatoes and peppers (which were unknown in Europe at that time), dried meat and farinaceous foodstuff, as well as different types of porridge can be found both in these nomadic people's and Hungarian pastoral diets.

After settling, not only agriculture and fruit-growing became regular, but viticulture and apiculture became widespread. Through King (Saint) Stephen I (970? -1038) and his first wife Giselle, the Hungarian cuisine was influenced by the German food preparation methods, while Byzantine methods were introduced through the contacts and trade with Balkan nations. For instance, meat, fish and fruit were the main staple diet for monks, and barley beer was served at meals along with water and wine.

Thanks to the household of King Mathias Hunyadi (1443-1490), the Italian influence also infiltrated the Hungarians cuisine. The variety of fish was consumed by the wealthier, and venison served in spicy sauce was also popular. The use of onion and garlic was widespread. A wide range of methods for preparing diverse ingredients significantly differed not only from the accustomed ways in the west but, according to a 16th century recipe book, they were more abundant than today. Cooking was done rather with oil and butter instead of pork lard prevailing today. Onion had a much smaller role, but the use of milk, cream and vinegar was as common as today. The benefits

¹ COMECON: Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, from 1949 to 1991 under the leadership of the Soviet Union.

of one-and-half-century Turkish Occupation (~ 1541-1699) include not only the construction of baths, but also the import of coffee, paprika and maize. Wine production was also transformed, the Tolna-Baranya region came to the fore, and new varieties of vine appeared, e.g. kadarka. The selection of dishes made with rice became widespread, partly replacing farinaceous foodstuff and vegetables served as the basis for garnish.

Potatoes, an important ingredient for one of the most famous Hungarian dish, i.e. goulash soup, may have been introduced to Hungary around 1650 with Bavarian-Austrian mediation, but it became widespread only in the 18th century. The Austrian influence appeared for the first time in the northern and western parts of the country, although the Viennese cuisine was very French in its nature. The effect has been preserved to this day in cooking methods and dish names. One of the best known dishes is meat fried in crumbs, served as a typical Sunday lunch in many Hungarian families. Finally, breaded chops are still shown as “Wiener Schnitzel” on menus of many domestic restaurants. Stew made with paprika has long been typical of the Great Plain. Having become a dish for soldiers in the second half of the 19th century, later became well-known throughout the Monarchy. Its popularity is reflected in the emergence of Austrian, Czech and South German versions, more or less different from the original. In the 1840s, its familiar denomination was no longer the former meat goulash in Budapest restaurants, but meat stew. Starting from the 1880s, the former “goulash” denomination survived as “goulash soup”. Nevertheless, meat stew was renamed to the original word “goulash” (gulasch) and became the most famous Hungarian food in the world, the Hungarian cuisine’s “coat of arms” (Csíki, 2008).

Apart from stereotypes, today’s culinary offers include paprika-spiced dishes (meat stew, goulash, stewed chicken with paprika), typical of the last century peasant cuisine, the frequent use of sour cream and onions, as well as dishes close to international tastes of French impact. The uniqueness and strength of Hungarian cuisine, however, consists in a wide variety of delicious ingredients due to excellent natural resources. In addition, the variety is enriched with a wide range of preparation

(roasting and cooking) techniques developed for centuries.

In addition to clean water, our ancestors were happy to consume wine, produced according to the wine-making method brought from Central Asia (Kiszely, 2001), where they learnt grape cultivation while living in the Khazar Empire (8th and 9th centuries) (Tusor, 2002). According to I. Kiszely (2001), the origin of the word “wine” (ancient Hun word: Bor Tengri = greyish-white god) also reflects its important role in the beliefs of the ancient Hungarians. However, the Romans dwelling in the Carpathian Basin cultivated vines before the Hungarians. Grapevine seeds originating from earlier times were found there. Viticulture and vinification were also known to Avars arriving from 568 AD onwards. Among the small numbers of people settled in the first centuries of the Hungarian Conquest, there were also French and Italian vine-growers, who settled mainly in Transdanubian areas with volcanic soils. Monks arriving here after the conversion to Christianity also brought their familiar grape varieties and methods. As a consequence, the Hungarian viticulture (and probably the origin of grapes) has two different origins: the Roman tradition (the dominance of dry wines) that was preserved in the western areas, whereas wines (made from shrivelled sweet grapes) originating from East and Central Asia – in Gyöngyös and Tokaj hillfoot areas (Kiszely, 2001).

The knowledge of beer also has a long history. As reported by Rhetor Priscus (5th century AD), Huns prepared a fermented beverage from grain (millet, barley) called “kám”. Kuns (Turkish nation of Central Asian origin) who settled in the Carpathian Basin in the 8th century also brought their fermented millet “boza” beverage (Kiszely, 2001). However, the so-called “liquid bread”, i.e. the ancient fermented beverage, did not resemble today’s beer, the brewing technology of which was adopted from the Germans. Preparation of malt brewed beer flavoured with hops has long been included in the daily activities of housewives (Dreher Ltd., 2016). At the end of the 20th century, after the period of large-scale beer production, home-brewed, so-called craft beers also appeared in Hungary, in the production of which Church breweries play the primary role (e.g. Abbey

Beer of Zirc). Their variety (ingredients, flavouring) and popularity is still growing.

It is apparent that both wine and beer have a long tradition and are popular beverages among the Hungarians. At the same time, pálinka tasting is a definite experience for tourists coming to Hungary: “pálinka will find you and try to kill you”. This fruit brandy is ubiquitous throughout Hungary. Compared to the role of fermentation in wine production and brewing, distillation was a further step. Consequently, the alcohol content of pálinka is at

least 37.5% (maximum 86%, typically 40-50%) (Regulation EC 110/2008).

Its first written record dating back to the 16th century refers to the fact that the wife of Robert Charles, Queen Elizabeth, cured her gout with rosemary flavoured distillate wine (i.e. *Aqua Vitae Reginae Hungariae*). Although its consumption rate falls below that of wine, it continues to play an important role in our tradition (a typical greeting also refers to this: “Good morning with pálinka!”, i.e. “Pálinkás jó reggelt!”).

4. The position of culinary tourism in the official tourism strategy

Culinary tourism is part of cultural tourism (European Travel Commission and World Tourism Organization, ETC-WTO, 2005). This is an active and (Michalkó, 2012) man-made form of attraction. Food is the primary motivation for tourists participating in this type of activity, i.e. they travel to learn about food and beverages in a given area (39% of the European tourists) (Richards, 2014). However, there is a growing demand to get acquainted with traditions related to the cuisine of the tourist destinations, methods of preparing culinary specialties and even learning how to make them.

Gastronomy has evolved gradually from a background service of tourism into an important destination or incentive. The process can be traced by reviewing the formal elements of the tourism strategy. The tourism strategies of the national marketing organization, Hungarian Tourism Plc. (hereinafter referred to as MTZrt.) are available for public (MTZrt., 2016a). The Hungarian government launched a revamped tourism agency designated as the Hungarian Tourism Agency in April 2016. In addition to the strategies of 2004-2014, we also analysed the official brochures (MTZrt., 2011a; 2016b; 2016c) via content analysis.

In the 2004 marketing strategy, wine and cuisine issues were still classified as activities to be enhanced within the group of cultural products. They were seen as marketable supply elements, however, mainly related to other products (i.e. castles, historical cities, rural and agritourism). Since 2005, it has gradually become the main issue in domestic and foreign communication. The research (MTZrt, 2011a)

shows that the cuisine appears in the overall image of Hungary in most source markets, and in some cases it is a secondary motivation (e.g. the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain), but e.g. for Polish people it was among the primary motivations.

The year 2006 was “the year of wine and cuisine” in the domestic tourism strategy, and the related events also contributed to a better understanding of the culinary values for those coming from abroad. By then, independent English and German thematic culinary papers were published (MTZrt, 2016a). A “Great degustation trip” campaign took place in the same year, which aimed to draw attention domestically to Hungarian culinary values. “Fat Thursday” („Torkos Csütörtök”; the English translation is not the best for this celebration; the Hungarian word “torkos” means “gluttonous”! In few official publication: “Pigging-out Thursday”) (OECD, 2010) was organized then, which can be described as traditional (it was organized for the 11th time in 2016) since then. Hundreds of catering facilities joint the event, offering significant discounts (50%). To encourage the public to visit restaurants, the involvement of Christian pre-Easter Lent tradition in tourism aims to popularize new flavours.

Cuisine played an important role in the “Year of Cultural Tourism” events organized in 2009, as well as in the “Year of Festivals” event series in 2010, where special attention was paid to food and wine festivals. Although starting from 2011, MTZrt. emphasized product-based campaigns instead of thematic years (MTZrt.,

2011b), 10 years later, the year 2016 became the “Year of Culinary Experience” again. The highly successful hitherto thematic events (e.g. Open Cellar Days during Pentecost: www.nyitottpincek.hu, St. Martin Day’s Goose Tour and New Wine Festival during November: www.libatour.itthon.hu, Chimney Cake Festival during October in Budapest: www.kurtoskalacsfesztival.hu) are periodically organized (Chimney Cake Festival, 2016). Also Bocuse d’Or has to be mentioned. Its 2016 European finals was organized in Hungary. Thanks to the world’s most prestigious hot food competition, Europe’s gastro elite came to Hungary, and on the other hand, the attention was (still is in 2017?) focused on the cuisine of Hungary’s, at least for some time.

Other important culinary products without defined location (they are from all over the country): Hungarian specialties: Pálinka, Grape marc pálinka, Food product from fattened geese, Soda-water, Acacia-honey, Fröccs, Chimney cake.

Due to their diversity, only a few of the labels and titles that have become increasingly important from a strategic marketing perspective are to be briefly highlighted in this study. The initiatives emphasize the uniqueness of the country, strengthen the country image, and are widely supported, professionally controlled or even internationally declared rating indicators. Their objective is to increase the country’s attractiveness through strengthening the self-image and the sense of identity of the Hungarians. Derived from one of the frequently used sayings, the category of “Hungarian Specialty” is probably the best known by the Hungarians and became a statutory label in 2012 (2012/XXX Law of Hungarian national values and Hungarian specialties, 2012). Hungarian specialties are noteworthy value products of Hungary that should be preserved. They show the Hungarian speciality and uniqueness, and characterise them by their high quality. Hungarian specialties embody the top performance of the Hungarian people

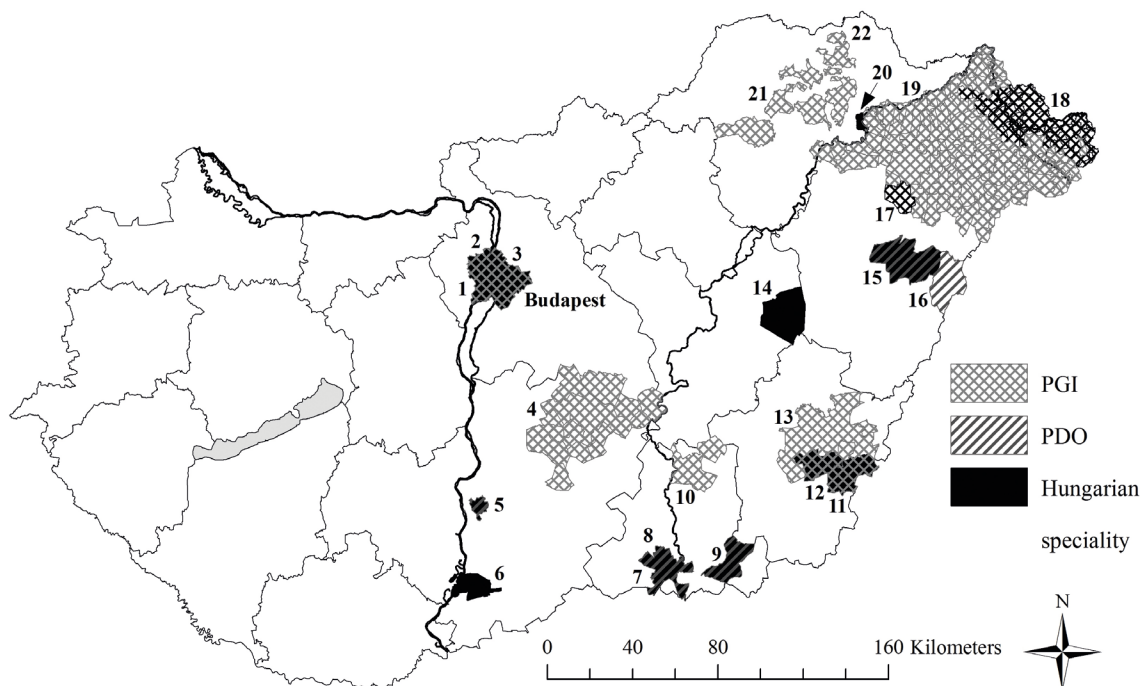


Figure 2. Defined location of the most important products from the Hungarian cuisine (Source: prepared by the Authors)

Meaning of the numbers (*in the brackets “H” means Hungarian speciality*): 1. Herz-classic winter salami (H), Budapest winter salami (PGI), 2. Gundel heritage (H), 3. Unicum (H), 4. Apricot pálinka from Kecskemét (PGI), 5. Kalocsa ground paprika (H + PDO), 6. Fish soup of Baja (H), 7. Pick wintersalami (H), Szeged wintersalami (PDO), 8. Szeged ground paprika (H + PDO), 9. Red onions from Makó (H + PDO), 10. Szenteg ground paprika (PGI), 11. Gyulai sausage (H), 12. Csabai sausage (H + PGI), 13. Plum pálinka from Békés (PGI), 14. Lamb stew of Karcag (H), 15. Debreceni double sausage (H), 16. Hajdú horseradish (PDO), 17. Sour cherry pálinka from Újfehértó (PGI), 18. Plum pálinka from Szatmár (PGI), 19. Apple pálinka from Szabolcs (PGI), 20. Tokajiaszú (H), 21. Apricot and apricot pálinka from Gönc (PGI)

(MTZrt, 2016b). Most Hungarian Specialties (Fig. 2) are mobile, the products are exportable, and souvenirs can be taken home (e.g. Tokaji Aszú). However, some of them are difficult to reproduce abroad, owing to their ingredients or preparation (e.g. sausages, salami). In addition, the essence of some of them requires authentic setting (e.g. Lamb Stew of Karcag or cafés – where the 1848 Hungarian Revolution burst out). Thus, these Hungarian culinary specialties serve as boosters for tourism.

It is strange that the principally well-known goulash is not a “Hungarian specialty”. Therefore, we have a unique culinary speciality that can contribute to the tourism image of Hungary. *The Collection of Hungarian specialties* preserves the 20 finest culinary values in 2 categories. In the section of *Agrarian and food industry products* you can find pálinka, grape marc pálinka, Tokajiaszú, Unicum, fröccs (spitzer), soda-water, debreceni, csabai and gyulai sausages, two types of paprika, Pick and Herz-classic winter salami, acacia-honey, red onions from Makó, pastry horn and food products from fattened geese. Another category called *Tourism and catering* consists of lamb stew of Karcag, the fish soup of Baja and the Gundel heritage (culinary and catering trade heritage of Károly Gundel and the Gundel Restaurant) including Gundel pancakes.

Hungary is the major source of high-quality paprika, including the sweet one, the deep red and brownish-orange ones (bright red is the most common one) (MTZrt, 2016c). We can

say without exaggeration that Hungarians put paprika in every dish, from soups to stews, making paprika the most widely used ingredient of the Hungarian cuisine. Paprika from Szeged and Kalocsa is on the list of *Hungarian specialties*.

One of the most delicious Hungarian foods is sausage. Sausages are made of pork meat spiced with paprika, and the production procedure is governed by strict rules (MTZrt, 2016c). This food can be very different depending on which part of the country it comes from. Sausages from Gyula, Békéscsaba and Debrecen are *Hungarian specialties*.

In 2013, lamb stew of Karcag was the first food recipe to get into the collection. Karcag is a small town on the Great Hungarian Plain, and has an old tradition of shepherd life. Lamb stew is famous for its traditional cooking method, because the locals put the lamb's head and all chitterlings into the pot on open fire (Cs. Kovács and Oláh, 2000) (Fig. 3). Fish soup of Baja is also a Hungarian specialty. The main ingredients of this thick dish are river or lake common carp, paprika, spices and onion (Miklósi, 1991).

Tokaji Aszú is a world-famous dessert wine, also called the “king of wines, wine of kings” by Louis XIV of France (MTZrt, 2016c). It is from Tokaj-Hegyalja located in the north-eastern part of Hungary, which is a historical wine region. Moreover, this region is a World Heritage site due to the long tradition of wine production.

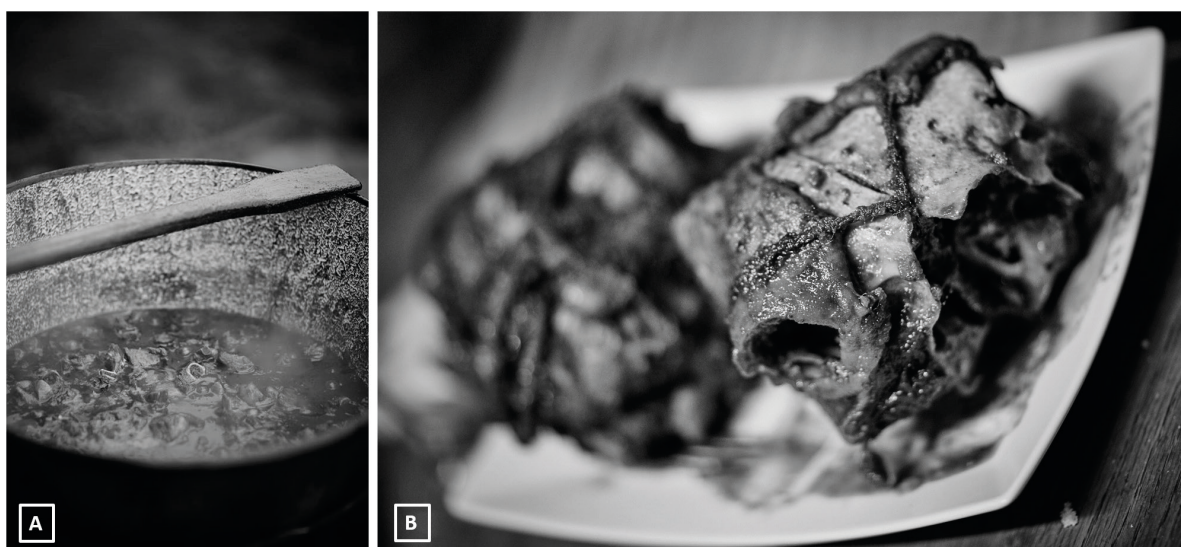


Figure 3. Traditional lamb stew of Karcag, as a Hungarian specialty (Source: L. Kupi). A: Lamb stew in the pot on open fire; B: Lamb's head on the plate

Another world-famous Hungarian alcoholic speciality is Unicum produced by the Zwack Company. According to the legend, Unicum was originally presented to Kaiser Joseph II of Austria, who proclaimed “Das ist ein Unikum!”, means „This is a specialty!” (Zwack Unicum Plc., 2016). This drink is a bitter liqueur made with spices and herbs, considered by the Hungarians as e.g. a medication that helps digestion.

Last but not least, fröccs (spritzer) is one of the most popular alcoholic drinks. It is a white wine mixed with another Hungarian speciality, i.e. the sparkling water from a tank. A spritzer on a hot summer day is really invigorating. Inferring the popularity of the drink, you can choose from at least 11 types of Spitzer, like the Big Spritzer (in Hungarian: Nagyfröccs), the Long Stride (Hosszúlépés) or the Tenant (Sportfröccs or Kisházmeester) (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Different types of fröccs (Source: We Love Budapest, 2016)

Among the registered culinary values, there are also many Hungarian specialties (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016), which are products with geographical indications in accordance with the European Union’s agricultural and food production quality policy (DOOR, 2016). The overlap and place of origin of Hungarian specialties and products with protected geographical indication (PGI), as well as protected designation of origin (PDO) is shown in Fig. 2. In the case of pálinka with geographical indication (e.g. plum from Szatmár, apple from Szabolcs,

apricot from Gönc, apricot from Kecskemét), the strict limitation applies both to the area and species (Török, 2013).



Figure 5. Logo of Hungarian specialties (Source: Ministry of Agriculture, 2016)

Without a specific geographic definition, the following products can be classified as Hungarian culinary specialties (Fig. 5): pálinka in general (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016), grape marc pálinka, products from fattened goose, carbonated water from tank, acacia honey and chimney cake. The “pálinka” denomination under Regulation 110/2008/EC refers to an alcoholic beverage prepared from fruit grown exclusively in Hungary, and produced, distilled and bottled also in Hungary. In addition to the flavours provided by fruit grown in larger amounts (e.g. apples, pears, plums, cherries, apricots, sour cherries), a smaller proportion of special flavours also appear (quince, or wild fruit, e.g. cornel-berry).

The Traditions–Tastes–Regions program started more than 10 years ago in Hungary as a national adaptation of the French initiative Euroterroirs program running in Western Europe for several years. The use of the so-called *HÍR trademark* (Hagyományok–Ízek–Régiók–means Traditions–Tastes–Regions), symbolizing the promotional program helps to promote the traditional and regional food as part of the Hungarian culinary culture.

In addition to traditionalism and quality assurance, some culinary products meet sustainability criteria as well. The so-called Products from National Parks are produced in accordance with the Nature Conservation

values (Nemzeti Parki Termék, 2016). Not only organic products have been awarded the title (Fig. 6) in 2012, but also accommodation services, craft products and programs. Visitors purchasing culinary products at 10 Hungarian national park demonstration sites (ranging from rose hip jam made around Aggtelek, to mountain cheese, different kinds of herbal tea and Hungarian pálinka, forest honeydew of Őrség, or cold-pressed pumpkin seed oil) not only support the protected area farming, but also indirectly contribute to the conservation of natural values.



Figure 6. Logo of Products from National Parks from the Duna-Ipoly National Park
(Source: Duna-Ipoly National Park, 2016)

Sustainability is also one of the fundamental principles of the European Commission's

EDEN programme. In 2014 and 2015, projects related to tourism or local cuisine could be submitted, as a result of which the Mecsek Greenway won the title of "Hungary's tastiest hospitality destination" (European Commission, 2015). Members of the Mecsek Greenway have meticulously identified local values, products, services, events, traditions and cuisines of individual villages. Biobia, an operator of Eco Buffet, gives a good example of this by preparing "weed dinners" from sprawling greens growing in the wild or our gardens, considered by many as weeds. An example can be the November green salad of Biobia, composed of the following ingredients: young borage leaves and flowers, chickweed, spinach, *Malvasylvestris*, sweet chervils, *Tropaeolummajus* leaves, marigold petals, pansies and freshly picked field tomatoes (Biobia, 2016).

Apart from the fact that labels and trademarks guarantee the quality, their role in tourism is much more important. They help tourists to make a choice and decision in a fast-growing consumer society. Like tourists travelling on the basis of the World Heritage Sites check the list to make sure that they saw what they planned to, thus tourists travelling in Hungary after having tasted the labelled products, such as Hungarian culinary specialties, would have the impression that they tasted Hungary.

5. Thematic culinary routes in Hungary

5.1. Locality as a magnet for culinary tourists

The main characteristics of the world's culinary trends (Csíki, 2016) have not changed for years, and they meet with a favourable response also in Hungary:

1. The use of locally sourced meat (and seafood ingredients);
2. Locally grown and produced goods;
3. Environmental sustainability.

These trends and other trends on the top 10 list in 2015 (hyper-local sources of supply, such as from a garden of a restaurant, place 7; Farm products, place 10) further strengthen the culinary tourism.

Agricultural marketing also seeks to establish supply elements (events, themed itineraries) that direct consumers to food production regions.

One of the best examples for the pursuit among Hungarian restaurants (e.g. IKON in Debrecen: www.ikonrestaurant.com) of being local is the so-called 30 km menu comprising ingredients obtained from their own 30-kilometer radius. Although the importance of using seasonal products is not literally included on the list above, it is closely related to sustainable environment. Its importance for Hungary lies in the fact that due to the climatic conditions, stock-farming can be seen as traditional, including the diversity of preservation methods.

There is a wide range of culinary tourism offers, from festivals and competitions attracting crowds (e.g. Buda Castle Wine Festival, Fish Soup Cookery Competition in

Baja) through legendary, even internationally known restaurants and confectioneries (e.g. the Gerbeaud confectionary in Budapest), market halls (e.g. the Great Market Hall in Budapest) to cookery courses, or pig-slaughter festivals in the countryside, thus tourists can easily find something interesting for themselves (MTZrt., 2011a). Their success is based on the uniqueness, which is authentic and characteristic of a given destination. This is based on the raw material used, methods of preparation, and serving or traditions related to the consumption.

Meanwhile, getting to know local cuisine in a complex manner is touring along thematic

itineraries. This complexity is due to the diversity of elements that can be involved (arable land, processing facilities, craftsmen, and exhibits of traditional technology, reconstructed or still living traditions, catering facilities, accommodation facilities, etc.). They are also complex in terms of their impact, as they play a key role in strengthening the region's social identity and economic development. Bringing together regional values and resources (which while scattered are of lesser impact) creates a new product that provides an opportunity to acquire new markets as well.

5.2. Wine routes

Wine routes are the best-known themed routes, and many of them can be found in 7 wine regions of 22 wine-producing areas in Hungary (Fig. 7). Wine-producing areas differ in terms of their location, size, age, landscape and settlement geography. Consequently, not all wine routes can be considered typical on the basis of CERV (European Wine Regions Conference) definitions (Máté and Szabó, 2011). The majority of them are in the northern Hungarian

wine regions (including the best-known Tokaj-Hegyalja and Eger), as well as the Tolna wine routes situated in south-west Hungary. They can be classified as open wine routes, which offer the opportunity for wine tasting and dining, thematic wine routes, such as the South-Balaton wine route created in the Balatonboglár wine region, which, in addition to wine tourism services, also offers major tourist attractions to visitors. The really famous, but small-scale wine routes in

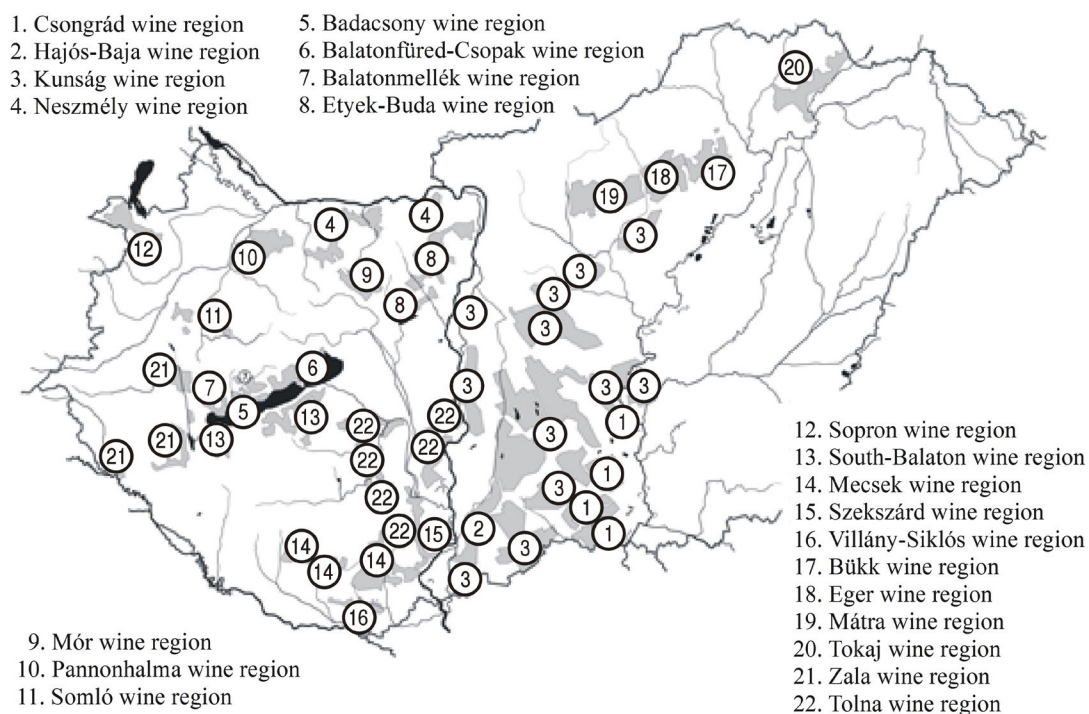


Figure 7. Wine regions in Hungary (Source: based on Bényei et al., 2016, modified)



Figure 8. Vineyards: A) Disznókő, Tokaj (Photo by P. Charzyński); B) Sarospatak vineyards (Photo by P. Charzyński) C) Landscape near Badacsony (Photo by D. Puyau)

wine-producing areas recognized in hospitality, such as Villány-Siklós, Badacsony (Fig. 8C) or Somló mountain wine routes belong to classical wine routes. Becoming acquainted with extensive knowledge of high-quality viticulture and quality wine can be linked to cultural or active tourism products. A network of trademark services (ranging from family accommodation

to bike rentals and historic cellars) along the Villány-Siklós wine route, as well as a unified image information system help to know the viticulture area, the scenery and the farmers living there. Wine regions (routes) in northern Hungary – Eger and Tokaj (Fig. 8A and B) are well known in Poland (Mazurkiewicz-Pieźło, 2010; Orłowski, Woźniczko, 2011).

5.3. Pálinka routes

Fruit registered under geographical indications (apples of Szabolcs, plums of Szatmár, cherries of Újfehértó; see Chapter 4) provide a good basis for the development of thematic routes, which become truly attractive due to a selection of pálinka. The Plum Route running along Bereg County, or the Pálinka Route in Békés County (Fig. 9), the Southern Plain, near three villages, are all linked to plum pálinka. During the journey along these routes, you can learn about plum crops and the distillation of pálinka and, of course, taste and buy the products. The

preserve made of “Dunno” plums using the traditional method, i.e. cooked without sugar on open fire in a copper cauldron for hours, as well as dried fruit are also popular among the region’s products. You can enjoy traditional preserves in many countries, e.g. Poland (Charzyński et al., 2015), but the preserve made with pálinka is unique to Hungary. For the time being, other services related to pálinka with protected origin are distinct services targeted at culinary tourists (e.g. the Zwack Fruit Brandy Distillery and Exhibition Hall).

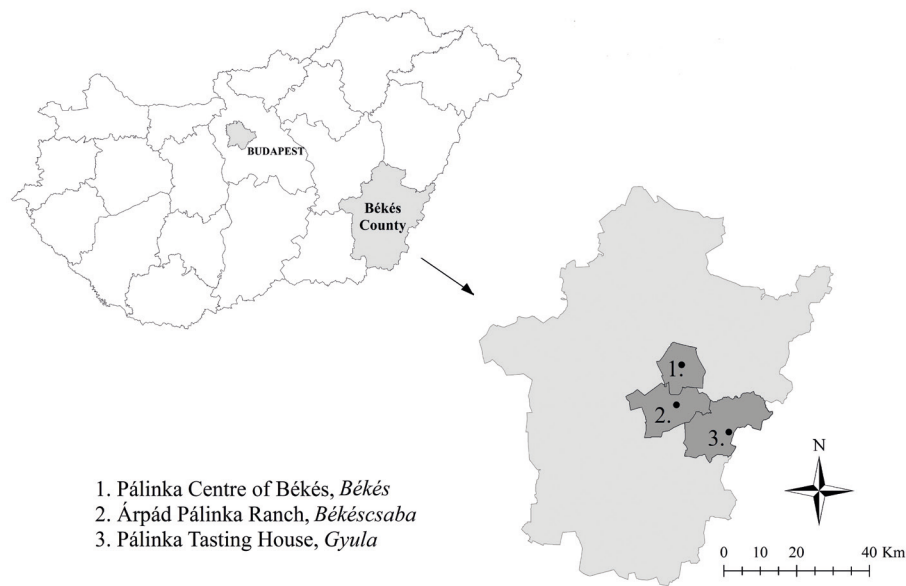


Figure 9. Pálinka Route in Békés County (Source: prepared by the authors)

5.4. Gastronomy as a tradition in a cultural thematic route

From the gastronomic point of view, the Palóc Route is also worth mentioning among the cultural routes as it combines the unique values of “Palóc Country”. Hollókő was designated as a World Heritage site due to the rich folklore and tradition of the Palóc people – the largest Hungarian Catholic ethnic group, which has

long lived in an ethnic array in basin-like territories north of Mátra and Bükk. The objective of the established thematic route is to preserve the culinary traditions through events, cooking shows and catering offering Palóc dishes (e.g. Gánica made with potatoes, Haluska, or potato pancakes).

6. Summary

The specific climate, topography and bedrocks of the Carpathian Basin result in the presence of different vegetation and soil zones as well as transition zones, with varying effects in different territories. Encounters with other nations during migrations and the following settlement (sometimes as conquerors and sometimes as hosts) contributed to diverse and rich cuisine of the Hungarians. It is reflected in the variety of ingredients used, seasoning, and cooking methods. The nomadic lifestyle and the related spit roasting and cooking in cauldron over open fire have survived as frequent and pleasant summer evening events. At the same time, plastered clay furnaces were considered to be necessary household appliances after the settlement of the Hungarians, and many kinds of

delicacies are still roasted, fried or baked in the thus reconstructed furnaces.

Tourists arriving with stereotypes about Hungary also have expectations. Although they still find dishes made with pork lard, stewed and roasted dishes and goulash soup, they can get acquainted with a cuisine having a more colourful tradition. Apart from paprika-seasoned dishes, there are much older types of dishes, for example with dill (pumpkin vegetables with dill, cottage cheese pie with dill, pickled cucumber flavoured with dill), which were already known in the 15th century. In addition to the greasy pork dishes, vegetable stews are also common. Emerging fine wineries or local farmers organizing buffet receptions using home-grown and wild plants picked on the slopes of Mecsek have

no trouble in following the world's gastronomic trends.

Apart from the world-famous and iconic wines (e.g. Tokajiaszú), tourists can get acquainted with a growing number of products of wine-producing regions and wineries as part of complex services. Small villages hidden along the eastern border of the country also have many things to explore, i.e. different kinds of pálinka distilled from local fruit that belong to Hungarian specialities, and those who have not seen these values for themselves have not tasted real Hungary yet.

The unique Hungarian cuisine is based on spicy, high quality Hungarian food. Gastronomy, as part of the promotion of cultural

heritage, is therefore beneficial to agriculture. A number of gastronomic tourist attractions have been established in Hungary. There are more and more local events and initiatives focused on the popularization of the regional heritage, which help to preserve the identity and the local values. Traditional products or festivals (and competitions), thematic routes (e.g. specialised wine tours) contribute to the recognition of these cultural values. These routes cover a lot of must-see and must-taste areas, but leave treasures to be discovered by tourists. Although famous dishes can be tasted in most Hungarian restaurants in the world's great cities, it is better to join the culinary tourism. Think global, eat local!

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