

CULINARY TOURISM AS A WAY TO USE THE POTENTIAL OF RURAL AREAS: THE CASE OF SWIETOKRZYSKIE PROVINCE

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to show culinary tourism as a way to use the potential of rural areas and agriculture. The study investigates the following research problems: What factors determine the choice of regional products by consumers? Why people decide to participate in culinary events? Which food products are identified by respondents as originating from the Swietokrzyskie Province? The study involved a desk research method and a method of a diagnostic survey conducted in the form of an online questionnaire. The empirical research was carried out in the first quarter of 2018 on a non-random sample of 322 persons. The research shows that food and traditional products of Swietokrzyskie Province are highly rated by the respondents. They are happy to participate in culinary events, which are not only a place to sell food, but also serve as a tool for cultural education and promotion of the entire region.

Key words: culinary tourism, food, rural areas, Swietokrzyskie Province.

JEL code: D1, D2, M2, Q1,

Introduction

Rural areas are a natural place for the production of food and raw materials for the food industry. Typical recipients of agricultural products are processing plants (mainly dairies, mills, butcheries, fruit and vegetable processing plants), chain and retail outlets as well as the consumers themselves (sales at marketplaces). Meanwhile, socio-economic changes taking place in rural areas and new consumer trends encourage rural residents to look for new forms of sale for on-farm produced food. An example is a food cooperative that has proved successful in large cities. It is a form of cooperation between family farms and consumers without the participation of intermediaries like wholesalers, shopping centres or supermarkets. Another form of entrepreneurship that facilitates the sale of on-farm produced and even processed food is culinary tourism. In this type of tourism food, its production, processing and consumption become the main tourist attraction. Culinary tradition is an inherent element of the regional cultural heritage, which is why culinary tourism can be treated as a form cultural exploration. Although culinary tourism can develop both in cities and in rural areas, the country - as a place of food production - is naturally predestined to host this form of tourism (Balinska A., 2017). It should also be emphasized that vacationers in rural areas increasingly often demonstrate interest in regional cuisines and the will to taste traditional dishes (Zawadka J. 2015a, 2015b). It is also important that the sale of culinary products takes place at the place where they have been produced or in its vicinity, which significantly reduces delivery costs and prevents possible quality loss in transport or during storage.

More precisely, the term „culinary tourism” covers trips aimed at exploring (Balinska A., 2016):

- traditional, regional and national dishes,
- culinary novelties,
- products of famous chefs and confectioners,
- methods of manufacturing food products protected by EU legislation (Protected Designation of Origin, Protected Geographical Indication and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed),
- vegetables and fruits typical of a given region, and animal husbandry,
- local, regional and national alcoholic beverages.

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Alcohol beverages, places and know-how of their production as the main attraction of a trip allow the identification of two more homogeneous forms of tourism, i.e. enotourism (wine tourism) and beer tourism (Sieczko A. 2017 pp 105-114; Montella M.M., 2017; Winfree J., McIntosh Ch., Nadreau T., 2018, Zawadka J. 2018).

Another important factor in culinary tourism is the diversity of culinary traditions and customs in various parts of the country. This increases the attractiveness of regions which have specific dishes and products typical of their geographical origin, but also the attractiveness of culinary tourism itself as a way of spending free time. The experiences of a tourist visiting different regions will vary. As A. Matusiak notes, „through the culinary art and through the world of smells and tastes, a tourist can fully and profoundly get to know the culture” (Matusiak A., 2009,). Food and everything that is associated with it, from agricultural production, through processing, to packaging and storage is an attraction in itself.

Culinary tourism in the countryside is a good combination of agricultural and tourist functions. Farmers (agricultural producers) can play various roles in culinary tourism, including:

- 1) producers of food delivered to restaurants, bars, hotels etc.,
- 2) producers and sellers of food in public space (market halls, marketplaces),
- 3) hosts providing food services on their own farm,
- 4) organising workshops and lessons about the production know-how and food processing (e.g. as owners of educational farms),
- 5) hosts providing comprehensive tourist services (accommodation, food and recreation) on their own farms as part of agritourism,
- 6) instructors at traditional cooking workshops.

The farmer, as a food producer or a manufacturer of on-farm processed food or even a housewife can sell what they produce regardless of the quantity. Retail chains are usually interested in large batches of goods but a single tourist (or a group of tourists) is focused on high quality and authenticity of food. Therefore, areas with low-commodity agriculture, dominated by small, family farms make a good destination for culinary tourism. An example of such an area is the Swietokrzyskie Province, selected for this study.

The support of institutions and organizations operating in the field of agriculture is also important for the development of rural culinary tourism. The key role of institutions has been discussed by Smalinskis J. and Auzina A. (2017). The preservation of traditional dishes and flavours is also part of the European Union policy, an example of which is the protection of traditional products' names in the form of the Protected Designation of Origin, Protected Geographical Indication and Guaranteed Traditional Specialty. An interesting initiative aimed at protection and promotion of traditional culinary art is the European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage, where entities from Poland successfully participate. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Poland holds the List of Traditional Products, which by 23rd November 2018 included 1864 products. Also public persons and various organizations, such as Slow Food, stimulate consumer needs to discover regional food and learn about the region's culture from the culinary perspective (Jeczmyk A., Sammel A., 2012).

Culinary tourism is a very friendly form of tourism as it can be practiced by people of all ages with different needs and constraints regarding physical activity, including seniors whose culinary experiences are usually very rich. K. Szpara and M. Gwozdz classify culinary tourism as educational tourism and even „special interest tourism” (Szpara K., Gwozdz M., 2011). The research of many authors shows that culinary experience is becoming a highly valued element of travel (Krupa J. 2010,

Borowska A., 2013) and the most appreciated aspect is that sales, consumption and tasting of food take place at or near the production site, which also has an educational dimension.

The aim of the article is to show culinary tourism as a way to use the potential of rural areas and agriculture. The study investigates the following research problems: What factors determine the choice of regional products by consumers? Why people decide to participate in culinary events? Which food products are identified as originating from the Swietokrzyskie Province? The study involved a desk research method and the method of a diagnostic survey which had the form of an online questionnaire posted on forums that focused on travelling, food, cooking etc. The empirical research was carried out in the first quarter of 2018. The selection of respondents was non-random, and the selection criterion was visiting Swietokrzyskie Province at least once in a lifetime¹.

Research results and discussion

1. Characteristics of the research area

Swietokrzyskie Province is one of the 16 administrative regions of Poland, located in the central part of the country. It covers an area of 11.7 thousand km² and is inhabited by 1.25 million people. The traditional cuisine of this area was not only influenced by natural and economic conditions. Swietokrzyskie Province is still one of the poorest regions in Poland (the level of GDP per capita in this region is about 47 % of the EU average). The province is characterised by considerable differences in the economic structure in relation to the national average for individual economic sectors. The structure of gross value added (GVA) shows a large share (over 5 %) compared to the national average (3.6 %) of the agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries sector concentrated in the southern part of the region, (Development Strategy ..., 2013). Almost half of the area (47 %) is arable land belonging to agricultural holdings. Soil quality is characterized by a considerable polarization caused by the presence of soils with bonitation class I - III in the south-eastern part of the province and poor soils in the north-western part. The average size of farms also varies, ranging from 6.47 ha in the Opatow Powiat to 1.82 ha in Skarzysko Powiat (www.wrota-swietokrzyskie.pl). It should be emphasized that these are small farms, compared to the average farm size in Poland, which is 10.81 ha. (www.arimr.gov.pl). Production is multidirectional, although there are areas dominated by horticulture or fruit-growing (near Sandomierz, Ostrowiec Swietokrzyski). Small farms and rather extensive agriculture translated into regional cuisine relying on products from farmers' own crops and simple ingredients (potatoes, groats, mushrooms, flour).

Swietokrzyskie Province is an interesting tourist area. It is home to many tourist attractions, such as the „Kryztopor” castle in Ujazd, the royal castle in Checiny, the town of Sandomierz rich in historic sites, the monastery complex „Swiety Krzyz”, the ethnographic park in Tokarnia, the fun and miniature park „Sabat Krajno”, the jurassic park in Baltow, Swietokrzyski National Park, landscape parks of the Swietokrzyskie Mountains and Ponidzie and many more. The supply of visitor accommodation is average for Poland. According to the data from Central Statistical Office, the number of accommodation facilities with minimum 10 beds was 248, which is 2.3 % of such facilities in the country (Tourism ..., 2018). There are also agritourism farms operating in the province, the number of which is estimated at around 320 (swietokrzyskie.ksow.pl/rolnictwo.html). They make a very good base for the development of culinary tourism.

¹ The survey was conducted by Zaneta Skalska

2. Results of empirical research and discussion

The survey study was conducted on a sample of 322 people, 175 women (54.3 %) and 147 men. The age of respondents was diverse, although young people - under 25 years of age - prevailed (49.4 % of the sample).

Table 1

Respondents' age by gender

Gender	Age groups				
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56≤
Women (N=175)	31.4	24.6	18.3	16.6	9.1
Men (N=147)	21.8	19.7	24.5	17.0	17.0

Source: authors' research

Women predominated in the younger groups while men - in older groups (Table 1). Over half of the respondents had higher education (51 %). The remaining ones declared secondary education (39 %) and basic vocational education as well as primary education (10 %). The majority of respondents lived in rural areas (39.8 %) and large cities - over 500,000 residents (19.9 %). The vast majority (59.9 %) declared that they lived permanently in the Swietokrzyskie Province. Residents of the remaining provinces usually spent no longer than two days in the studied region. Research by other scientists confirms that culinary tourism usually takes the form of short-term trips (Orlowski D., Wozniczko M., 2016).

One of the aims of the study was to investigate the recognisability of food products and dishes typical of the Swietokrzyskie Province. Interestingly, almost half of the respondents (49.7 %) admitted that they did not know the traditional and regional dishes of the Swietokrzyskie cuisine. The others declared that they know: a soup called „zalewajka swietokrzyska”, a popular candy „krowka opatowska” (a fudge), luncheon meats and other meat products as well as dishes made of potatoes („prazoki” and „kugiel”). The authors also investigated the significance of specific criteria in the selection of regional products by the respondents, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Significance of factors determining the choice of regional products by respondents, on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the highest (%)

Factor/ Criterion	Rating the scale (in %)					Average rating
	1	2	3	4	5	
Quality certificate	0.9	4.0	4.0	19.9	71.1	4.6
Original ingredients	2.8	5.0	12.4	33.2	46.6	4.2
Taste attributes (appearance, smell, texture)	1.2	5.0	12.4	31.7	49.7	4.2
Uniqueness of the product / food (it cannot be bought elsewhere)	4.3	9.0	14.0	28.0	44.7	4.0
Recommendation / opinions of other consumers	9.0	10.6	23.3	37.6	19.7	3.5
Price	7.1	13.7	26.7	25.8	25.8	3.5
Speed of meal preparation	9.9	18.9	30.1	27.0	14.0	3.2

Source: authors' research

The most important factors, as declared by the respondents, included the quality certification of the chosen product, its originality and sensory values. High quality is an indispensable feature especially regarding traditional and regional products, which has also been pointed out by B. Gulbicka (2014). The originality of ingredients was also highly rated by the respondents. This conclusion seems

to be confirmed by the research of J. Szlachciuk and others (2017), which shows that when it comes to choosing traditional products the crucial factor is their connection with the region, which can be interpreted as the originality of ingredients. The least important was the speed of meal preparation, price and whisper marketing (Table 2).

An interesting and effective way to promote and sell food products are culinary events. Notably, this kind of events also promote natural and cultural assets of the region (historical sites, museums, festivals) and tourist infrastructure (visitor accommodation, food service facilities, agritourism farms, horse farms and tourist trails). People arriving at culinary events usually visit the region or receive information about tourist attractions and pastime activities available in the region. Świętokrzyskie Province also hosts numerous culinary events. The respondents recognized the following events: Dymarki Świętokrzyskie (archaeological festival), Świętokrzyskie Święto Zalewajki (local soup festival), Święto Chleba (bread festival), Świętokrzyski Jarmark Agroturystyczny (agritourism festival), Święto Kielc (Kielce town festival) and Festiwal Smakow (food festival). These events are usually held in places that are interesting in terms of regional culture, such as the open-air ethnographic museum in Tokarnia, which is an additional tourist attraction. This was one of the factors that the respondents found important in encouraging participation in culinary events. Details on this topic are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Significance of factors determining the participation of respondents in culinary events in the Świętokrzyskie Province

Factors	Assessment					Average assessment
	1	2	3	4	5	
Opportunity to taste local dishes and regional products	2.5	5.0	9.6	23.0	60.0	4.3
Opportunity to buy products unavailable in other regions of the country	3.4	7.8	15.0	35.4	38.5	4.0
Combination of the region's cultural offer with the culinary offer (attractiveness of the offer)	2.1	7.5	16.1	33.2	41.0	4.0
Wish to get to know the Świętokrzyskie region (curiosity)	2.8	10.2	17.0	26.4	43.5	4.0
Wish to gain new experiences and skills in the preparation of meals	4.7	15.0	20.5	21.4	38.5	3.7

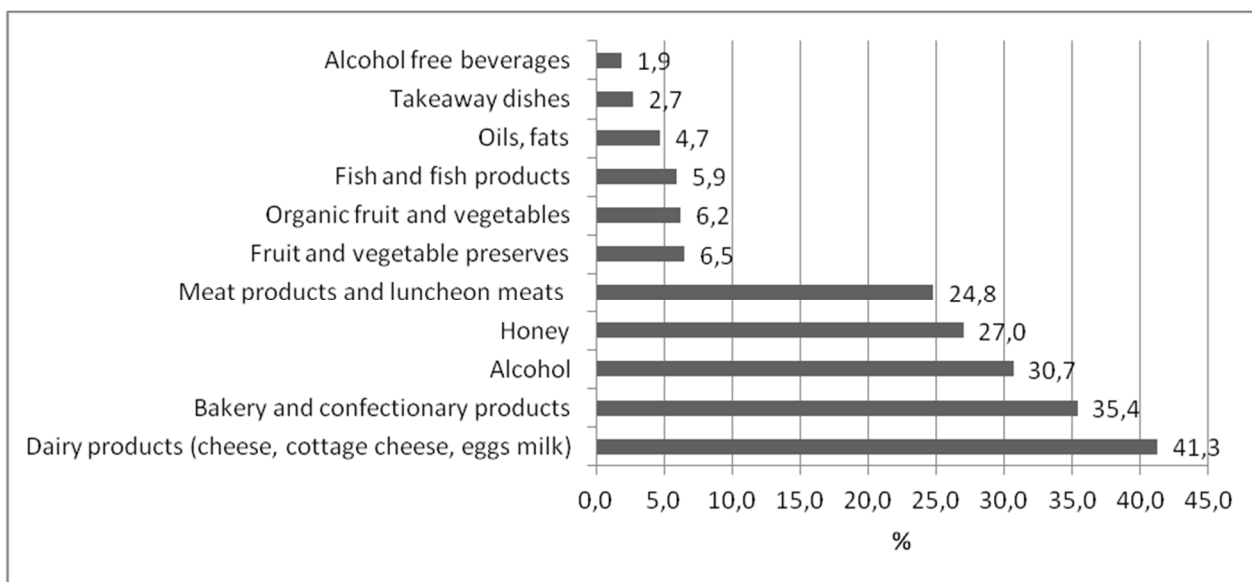
Source: authors' research

The main reason for participating in culinary events was the opportunity to taste local dishes typical of the area. The least encouraging factor indicated by respondents was the wish to participate in culinary workshops. These conclusions are confirmed by the research of A. Smalec (2014), which showed that participants of culinary events most often search for and taste traditional products, manufactured locally and unavailable in retail chains.

The vast majority, almost 70 % of respondents admitted that they always bring souvenirs in the form of food from tourist trips and culinary events. This was characteristic of people of all ages, with respondents aged 36-45 dominating in this respect (75 % of people in this age group). Products brought from culinary events were very diverse (Figure 1).

Interestingly, the most popular souvenirs were fresh and processed products with relatively short shelf life like dairy products and eggs, bakery and confectionery products as well as alcohol. These

product groups were more often purchased by women than men. Men in turn more often chose meat products, fruit and vegetable preserves and honey. This popularity of food products brought as souvenirs results primarily from the fact that the tourists seek authenticity. This fact has already been observed by M. Banaszewicz (2011), as well as J. Geresz, D. Fiszer (2015). It should also be noted that honeys are quite popular with respondents. According to A. Borowska's research, honey producers are more and more willing to present and sell their products at cultural and culinary events (Borowska 2018). The popularity of this product may also be boosted by the beneficial healing properties commonly attributed to it, which are now highly appreciated.



Source: authors' research

Fig. 1. **Food products brought from tourist trips as souvenirs and gifts**
(Respondents could indicate more than one answer)

Conclusions

- 1) Culinary tourism may constitute an interesting combination of agricultural and tourism functions of rural areas. What's more, it fits in with contemporary consumer trends involving the search for traditional authentic flavours. It is also an interesting and promising perspective for rural residents. The benefits of its development are multidirectional, and the most important include:
 - expanding the market for food products through shops, fairs, culinary events, food service facilities and agritourism farms
 - maintaining traditional rural settlement with its characteristic function, which is agriculture,
 - maintaining traditional crops and breeding, and thus maintaining biodiversity,
 - preservation and cultivation of traditional recipes,
 - prevention of rural depopulation and changes in the agrarian structure,
 - promotion of the region.
- 2) The presented research results demonstrate a favourable perception of regional products, high popularity of culinary events and food products as souvenirs brought from tourist trips. This is one of the effects of the development of culinary tourism and effective promotion of the region.
- 3) The main factor determining the choice of regional products by consumers was the guaranteed level of quality.
- 4) The prerequisite for participation in the culinary event was the opportunity to try local dishes and regional products.
- 5) The respondents associate the Swietokrzyskie Province with dishes (mainly soups) and sweets.

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