Chapter 3

Entertainment and Food Tourism in the Backdrop of Late Modernity and a Reflection on Turkey

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ABSTRACT

It is widely accepted today that food is symbolically and culturally bounded, which make it also emblematic for cultural and creative industries, as well as entertainment and leisure. This is observed in the increasing use of food in media entertainment such as cooking shows and competitions but also in other variant forms such as culinary schools, specialist food boutiques, gastronomic festivals, and the expansion of traditional media into digital platforms (i.e. with food blogging). This chapter is interested in one particular form of food entertainment. This is food tourism, which is deemed to incorporate different aspects of food entertainment forms within. The chapter initiates on a brief assessment of changing conceptualizations of food in the backdrop of late modernity with the conviction that food's changing conceptualizations are driving food's popularity as an entertainment scheme. Consequently, food tourism is discussed with an evaluation of its development and current positioning in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

Given their vitality for sustenance, food and drink are often seen as "the stuff of life" (Boniface, 2003, p. 27). However, they are also essential for most human activities such as banquets, celebrations, holidays, reunions and meetings (Antonioli Corigliano & Baggio, 2002). In this respect, food related activities are increasingly popular – i.e. eating out, cooking and tasting events – rendering restaurants as trendy and fashionable places for socializing and entertainment, as well as for business and dating purposes. In the same context, culinary institutions, cooking schools, food related media content, familiarity with different cuisines and having been on food related travel (i.e. wine tasting, truffle hunting etc.) are also gaining recognition as forms of entertainment, leisure and culture.

These developments highlight the changing role of food from an item of sustenance towards various novel conceptualizations. In fact, one of Fernández-Armesto's (2002) eight revolutions, regarding the transformation of food in history, emphasizes the realization that "food is more than sustenance" (Boniface, 2003, p. 3); and, that "eating can acquire associations with other forms of sensuality" and "social effect" (Fernández-Armesto, 2002, pp. 52-54). Similarly, Toussaint-Samat (2009) delineates the development of the intellectual capacity of man and his sensations for food and taste since about 60 million years ago. In doing so, Toussaint-Samat (2009) illustrates how the meanings of eating and diet have paradoxically changed from one of sustenance towards a global standardization and to an abundance for some societies in modern age. Fernández-Armesto (2002) further contests that this notion of abundance can be liberating for people from "dependence on food for nourishment" (p. 52).

This brief historical recollection of food aims to show how food has developed meanings beyond sustenance, as well as pointing towards a trajectory that emphasizes the notion of *excess (abundant) food* or that of being *in excess of food* (for a more cultural explanation into this, see also Parasecoli (2008, pp. 1-4) on 'Excessive Food'). Scholars indicate that individuals' independence from the circumstances regarding the production of their food may be caused by such excessiveness (Boniface, 2003; Luard, 2001). Another indication is that, this excessiveness maneuvers members of modern society to cultivate a complex relationship with food (Fernández-Armesto, 2002; Parasecoli, 2008). In fact, this is most evident in the way in which food has come to be related to power, cultural capital, class, gender, ethnicity and identity (Parasecoli, 2008); as well as aesthetic beauty and the body (Richards, 2002).

The excessiveness of food is also manifest in its increasing depictions in media (Parasecoli, 2008). The variety of culinary programmes including cooking shows and competitions, together with the idea of celebrity chefs are an attestation of that. Similarly, new culinary magazines, recipe books, podcasts and various other publications are incessantly appearing on the shelves of bookstores and kiosks; while the Internet is taking off with new age food critics called the *bloggers*. Therefore, being in excess of food is not only with respect to food production and consumption. The excessiveness of food in modern age is also related to exposure to food and its resultant popularity; and, these are few of the factors that also make food emblematic for entertainment and leisure.

This chapter is interested in one particular form of food and entertainment. This is food tourism. Despite the range of different forms of food related entertainment, the emphasis is placed on food tourism, as it is deemed to encompass different aspects of all other forms within. For example, food tourism in Alba, in Italy, which is at the same time the birthplace of the famous food movement Slow Food, focuses on regional food products such as wine and truffles. Truffle season (months of October and November) is thus highlighted as the season to visit the region in particular to taste the region's famous white truffles and to visit its fair market. In the right season hence, the region boasts with crowds of food and wine tourists, who visit vineyards and attend markets, buying and tasting food and wine in specialist boutiques called *enoteca*s. As is now often the case, visitors also share their experiences on social media, tweeting savory comments and posting photos of food and wine. Ultimately, as this example attempts to show, food tourism is about different forms of food related entertainment, whether it is using food on digital media, visiting food markets or attending tastings; and, it is hence that this chapter will focus on this particular form.

Eventually, this mostly exploratory analysis starts with an overview of the background studies on the changing roles of food (the object of any food related entertainment and food tourism); and, presents the different categories, which

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