

Cesarine: An Authentic Way to Experience Italian Gastronomy

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ABSTRACT

Cesarine.com is a community of Italian home cooks. Having originated in Bologna, the network has expanded far beyond its place of origin and nowadays exists in more than 120 Italian cities. The purpose of this case study is to explore why Cesarine.com is a successful example of regenerative and community-based tourism that helps enliven and preserve the local heritage. An interview with a Cesarino was held in order to analyze their experience of being a host in the community. This interview highlights the significant role of the community in the existence of the network, the long-lasting positive impact that experiences with Cesarine have on tourists, as well as the crucial part that the network plays in fostering and preserving the local traditions and values. Furthermore, an analysis of online secondary data (Cesarine.com website, online reviews, etc.) was conducted. The analysis demonstrates that the majority of visitors are satisfied with their Cesarine experience.

INTRODUCTION

Lately, culinary tourism has become increasingly popular across the world. It exists in different forms, such as eating at local restaurants, visiting farms and food production centers, taking part in cooking classes, eating at local households, and so on (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2021). Participating in gastronomic experiences during their travel provides visitors with an opportunity to taste the food that conveys the cultural meaning of the place they are visiting (Lallani, 2024). Furthermore, engaging in gastronomic activities abroad allows tourists to have a memorable, authentic, and unique experience. Finally, culinary tourism helps regenerate and promote the local culture and heritage.

Cooking classes, one of the forms of culinary tourism, provide visitors with a chance to actively engage in the production and consumption of food and also creates a link between visitors and local people, place, its identity, and culture (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2021). This type of activity is specifically beneficial for tourists since it combines an educational aspect, personal enrichment, and self-gratification. From the hosts' perspective, cooking classes allow them to promote and preserve the important elements of their culture through educating the visitors about the culinary heritage of their country or region.

This case study concentrates on the successful innovative example of Cesarine.com: an online platform for Italian home cooks who offer various gastronomic experiences and culinary classes to tourists. The paper emphasizes the role of this platform in regenerating the cultural heritage of the country and bringing together the local community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Regenerative Tourism

According to Pearson, Bardsley, and Pütz (2024), regenerative tourism is a type of tourism that purposefully and actively creates the conditions for the growth and well-being of local communities and destinations. Therefore, this type of tourism is more than just minimizing negative consequences. As proposed by Pearson et al. (2024), this tourism actively seeks to improve the social, cultural, and ecological well-being of destinations. This emphasis on the positive change that differentiates it from conventional sustainable tourism, which is being criticized for putting economic growth over environmental or social benefits (Bellato et al., 2022; Hall, 2019).

One of the main principles of regenerative tourism is the importance of cultural knowledge. Pung et al. (2024) focus on knowing how to promote a strong connection with the place and an admiration for the environment, which are essential for long-term sustainability. "(...) regenerative tourism in terms of improving, not simply maintaining, places and communities." (Pung et al., 2024, p. 4). According to this author, this involves creating relationships between the locals and the visitors, supporting responsible tourism practices, and making sure that the advantages remain for future generations.

Regenerative tourism also places a strong emphasis on encouraging cooperation and trusting relationships, because both the people and the places benefit from this cooperative approach. It is imperative for this tourism that stakeholders from different sectors, including local communities, tourism businesses, and government agencies, cooperate on establishing a common vision and implement responsible practices. (Pung et al., 2024). Additionally, regenerative tourism marks an essential change in the travel

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