

The Food Tourist

As the demand for food tourism experiences grows, so does the need for new understandings of the phenomenon. *The Food Tourist* adds to this growing body of knowledge by adding depth to traditional areas of interest while also exploring new and emerging topics in food tourism. It is a welcome addition to the bookshelf and will be of interest to academics, students and practitioners.

—*Tracy Berno*,
Professor, Auckland University of Technology

The global authorities on cultural food tourism have spoken, masterfully dissected the profiles of travellers seeking meaningful experiences through rooted flavours. This publication paves the way for immersive discussions and a profound understanding of market segments into the dynamic landscape of food and travel. Industry professionals across the globe looking to grow the gastronomy tourism sector must grab a copy of this book!

—*Clang Garcia*,
Publisher, Philippine Food Holidays

At last! An authoritative book by excellent researchers utilising a food tourism lens to examine existing and emerging forms of tourism and add perspective. This approach addresses a significant lacuna in the existing literature by facilitating business and academic readers to conclude that food tourists don't just eat – these tourists use food to express specific priorities. A huge opportunity for tourism researchers and operators.

—*John D. Mulcahy*,
Gastronomy Tourism Activist, Advisor and Researcher

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The Food Tourist

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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We all eat when we travel. We eat to discover, to enjoy, and to share. We eat because we want to fuel our body and also our souls. We would like to thank all the food-loving travellers because you explore the world looking for the stories behind each food experience, not just through the aromas and flavours but also through the cultural and environmental aspects of cuisine. Your journeys are guided not only by maps and reviews but also by the connections between yourself and others, the dialogue between tradition and innovation, and both that which is near and far. You celebrate heritage through food. Your food journeys are diverse and remind us all that there are different ways to get to know places, people, and practices.

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Introduction

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If food tourism is defined as the discovery of destinations through foods and beverages (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Hjalager & Richards, 2002), then the food and beverage tourist (hereafter, ‘food tourist’) is the person who travels to discover places through foods and beverages, the person who searches for a sense of place through taste of place (WFTA, 2024). This means to discover the food culture of a region through the relation between people, places, and practices (Ellis et al., 2018; Fusté-Forné, 2021). This book understands food as heritage (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2016) and heritage as a source of food tourism (Timothy & Ron, 2013).

Previous research shows that food tourists ‘are not only interested in food but also want to learn about the history of foods, their production, and the process leading to the final dish’ (Coppola, 2016, p. 20). Food tourists encounter a variety of culinary experiences during their trips, such as restaurants, markets, or food festivals, and also cooking classes (Bardolet-Puigdollers & Fusté-Forné, 2023), among others. They gather the sense of place through food in rural or urban environments. They do it alone, with their family or friends. They have different backgrounds and belong to different economic and social contexts. However, each of these interactions showcases the rich diversity of food and the cultural significance it holds in different communities. In relation to the motivation of cultural tourists, McKercher (2020) states that purposeful and sightseeing cultural tourists put cultural tourism as a main reason for travelling. In particular, Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016) analyse the food motivation and identify a profile of food tourists who see food as an essential part of travel (the experiencers) and a profile of food tourists who view food as an important aspect of their trip (the enjoyers).

To this end, the World Food Travel Association (WFTA) pioneered in 2010 a methodology called PsychoCulinary profiling. Simply put, the implication behind the methodology is that food-loving travellers are not all the same and do

not all have the same likes and dislikes (Robinson et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2019). The WFTA notes that this is one of the biggest mistakes made by destination marketers. Some seek gourmet experiences, certainly, yet others are entirely novice to the phenomenon of travelling merely to eat and drink. Still others may seek authentic or localist experiences, yet how do we define ‘authentic’ since all cuisines evolve? Every traveller embarks upon his or her own ‘customer journey’. By this, we do not mean the actual trip they take. Instead, we mean the pre-trip, on trip, and post-trip experiences that every food-loving traveller has (see, e.g. Fusté-Forné, 2023). During these stages, food-loving travellers show their own PsychoCulinary behaviour. Savvy destination markers need to match their marketing messages to the consumer types they seek to attract. Destinations, too, have their own PsychoCulinary profiles, which can be used as an overall kind of ‘summary’ of the destination’s own food ‘personality’. Some destinations are perfectly suited to gourmet travellers, while others would suit perhaps localist-oriented or even vegetarian travellers.

While the body of research around the food tourist experience is wide (see, e.g. Kim et al., 2010; Quan & Wang, 2004; Roustai & Jamshidi, 2020), this book contributes to fill a research gap in previous literature, which is to provide in a single publication a robust understanding of the profiles of food-loving travellers based on the understanding of the diversity of destination attraction factors and visitor motivations and experiences. Within the understanding of food tourism as the act of discovering a place through its culinary culture, this book delves into the food tourist from a cutting-edge and multidisciplinary approach and analyses the relationships between ‘food’ and the ‘tourist’ from supply and demand perspectives, from slow to fast, and from urban to rural, among others in order to bring together the relevant issues that inform the profiling of the food tourist in research and practice. This book *‘The Food Tourist’* is divided into three sections which discuss ‘The Classics’, ‘In Vogue’, and ‘The Future’. The book is divided into 12 chapters that discuss the typologies of food tourists based on the understanding of tourists’ motivations and experiences.

After this Introduction, in the first section, Chapter 1 analyses ‘The Niche Food Tourist’. Roberta Garibaldi and Andrea Pozzi explore the emergence of niche food tourists, who prioritise ‘passion products’ when they choose destinations and experiences. In Chapter 2, Giovanna Bertella, Cristina Santini, and Alessio Cavicchi approach ‘The Ethical Food Tourist’. The chapter discusses the complexity of food tourism and ethics and focuses on the concepts of sustainability and slowness. Chapter 3, ‘The Food Market Lover’, elaborated by Montserrat Crespi-Vallbona and Darko Dimitrovski, focuses on the urban food market tourist to analyse urban food market tourist drivers and effects of the (gastro)gentrification process. Finally, in Chapter 4, Francesc Fusté-Forné analyses ‘The Rural Food Tourist’. The chapter explores the rural food tourist as a type of tourist who appreciates and values the authenticity and identity of food and beverage products based on the relations between the online marketing and the cheese tourist.

In the second section, Chapter 5, elaborated by Chantal Cooke, ‘Specific Dietary Considerations for the Food Tourist’, focuses on food tourists with

specific dietary requirements. When businesses understand and cater to such traveller needs, they can set themselves apart from the competition and enhance their own, and their destination's reputation. In Chapter 6, 'Special Disability Considerations for the Food Tourist' by Eric Lipp explores the challenges and opportunities of food tourism for travellers with disabilities. The chapter underscores the importance of empathy and understanding in overcoming barriers to accessibility to contribute to a more inclusive experience. Chapter 7, elaborated by Patita Paban Mohanty and Hiran Roy, focuses on the 'Faith-inspired Food Tourist'. The chapter analyses the nexus of food and faith, and the understanding of faith-driven tourists' food consumption in religious destinations. To end this section, Chapter 8 explores 'The Gourmet Tourist'. Francesc Fusté-Forné and Jonatan Leer analyse the gourmet tourist as a food tourist profile that seeks a fine dining experience in the context of 'experiential luxury'.

In the third section, Chapter 9, elaborated by Alicia Orea-Giner, 'The Post-pandemic Food Tourist', focuses on the evolving characteristics of the post-COVID-19 food tourist to understand the pandemic's impact on travellers' preferences and the role of food tourism in promoting social sustainability and justice in destination communities. In Chapter 10, 'The Adventurous Food Tourist', Szilvia Gyimóthy explores the intersections between culinary tourism and adventure tourism and, based on sociocultural and sensory psychological theoretical perspectives, discusses the drivers of food adventure trends. The Chapter 11, elaborated by Helena A. Williams and Robert L. Williams, Jr, 'The Hands-on Food Tourist', analyses how and why tourists are involved in local food- and beverage-related activities when they travel. Lastly, 'The Future Food Tourist', Chapter 12, elaborated by Faruk Seyitoğlu, approaches food tourists in the future based on technology and digitalisation, and considering two different future food tourist scenarios, realistic and utopian. After, the editors present the book's Conclusion.

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Part 1

The Classics

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Chapter 1

The Niche Food Tourist

Roberta Garibaldi and Andrea Pozzi

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Abstract

This chapter explores the emergence of niche food tourists, who prioritise ‘passion products’ like, for example wine, beer, olive oil, and cheese, and choose destinations and experiences accordingly. Academic and market studies reveal that niche food tourists constitute a growing segment, embracing an ‘omnivore’ approach to food and beverage products and experiences. Destinations and stakeholders must prioritise tourism strategies focused on ‘passionate products’, innovate and diversify offerings, and foster public–private collaborations to attract these discerning travellers. Addressing digitalisation gaps and increasing the visibility of related tourism experiences can enhance accessibility. By effectively managing these strategies, destinations can benefit economically and culturally, stimulating food heritage preservation and increasing overall income.

Keywords: Passion products; food tourism segmentation; tourism niches; travel motivations; consumer behaviours; omnivore pattern

Introduction

Food tourism has flourished in recent years. Tasting local specialities and cuisine has shifted from a supporting/secondary activity to a driver of experience-seeking. Its consumption on holiday has raised individuals’ passion towards diverse food and beverage products and participation in a wide range of experiences, from the most consumptive (e.g. dining at restaurants serving local, gourmet, or ethnic

dishes) to engaging and learning activities (e.g. participation in festivals, events, visits, workshops) (Richards, 2021). Academic and market studies investigated travellers' participation in these activities and their characteristics, preferences, and food consumption habits (e.g. Garibaldi, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023; Getz et al., 2014; Robinson et al., 2018; Stone et al., 2016, 2020), showing changing and evolving patterns through years.

Niche food tourists have emerged among the most appealing market segments. This distinct group is highly enthusiastic about 'passion products', which translates into a primary motivator for travelling and driving their holiday decisions. They prioritise, for example, wine, beer, cheese, and olive oil exploration and seek out new cultures, unique flavours, and experiences that involve all senses. This chapter focuses on this segment and aims to provide an exhaustive picture of their behaviours. After defining the niche food tourists, we examine the numbers and the current pattern by reviewing academic and market studies. Finally, we elaborate on the benefits and challenges of attracting this market segment.

Who Is the Niche Food Tourist?

Niche food tourists are enthusiastic about 'passion products' (e.g. wine, beer, olive oil, cheese), culinary exploration, and gastronomic experiences at home and during their travels. They are not merely interested in using their vacation time to seek activities that continue their daily food habits but look for something beyond the 'normal' daily experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). The gastronomic experience constitutes the peak of their holiday, represents something extraordinary that motivates these tourists, and contributes to a memorable experience.

One aspect that distinguishes niche food tourists is their reason for travelling. They prioritise their 'passion products' and choose destinations and experiences accordingly (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004; Mak et al., 2012; Therkelsen, 2015). For instance, those mainly driven by their enthusiasm for wine seek to immerse themselves in new wine cultures and winescapes, taste unique vintages, learn about wine traditions, and engage in diverse wine-related activities that involve all senses (look, smell, drink, and think) (Hall, 1996; Hall & Mitchell, 2001). The same happens with other products – for example, beer (Plummer et al., 2006; Stone et al., 2020), olive oil (Parrilla-González et al., 2020; Pulido-Fernández et al., 2019), cheese (Fusté-Forné, 2020), coffee and tea (Chen et al., 2020) – often in pairs. This motivation aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where niche food tourists seek self-actualisation through culinary experiences.

Academics and marketers often use different terms when referring to individuals who travel with the primary idea of pursuing their interest in 'passion products'. Reviewing definitions is not just a complementary exercise. Stakeholders approaching the topic may need clarification about the meaning of the words to understand the unique characteristics of this group of tourists whose passion is a primary holiday driver – despite the diverse labels that academics and marketers use to refer to them.

'Foodie' is among the most popular (Ellis et al., 2018; Getz et al., 2014; Robinson et al., 2018; Robinson & Getz, 2014). This term emphasises the idea of food as a vehicle by which people can engage in adventure with other cultures.