



9th UN Tourism World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism

Gastronomy Tourism: A driver of economic
diversification and inclusion

18-19 NOVEMBER 2024, MANAMA (BAHRAIN)





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Introduction

In recent years, gastronomy has become one of the main tourist attractions, playing a crucial role in the perception of destinations. From exclusive dinners that inspire travellers to plan their itineraries around iconic restaurants, to rural tourism experiences that immerse them in the food production process, gastronomy tourism offers options for all tastes.

This sector has become a fundamental pillar of travel by providing immersive experiences that connect visitors with the essence of local cultures through food. Thus, it not only allows exploring destinations in a deeper and more authentic way but also responds to the growing global demand for unique culinary experiences.

The fusion between gastronomy and tourism not only satisfies those seeking genuine flavours, but also fosters meaningful connections with local communities, promoting cultural exchanges that strengthen the bond between visitors and inhabitants. This approach, which combines tradition, culture and flavour, elevates tourism to a more enriching and transformative experience.

The 9th UN Tourism World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism, held in Manama, Bahrain on 18-19 November 2024, focused on the transformative role of gastronomy tourism as a driver of economic diversification and social inclusion. Building on the themes explored in the previous edition, which highlighted its potential to foster rural development and strengthen resilience, this forum emphasized the importance of implementing inclusive strategies that involve all actors in the gastronomy tourism value chain.

The event also addressed the necessary policy frameworks to address challenges and seize opportunities, promoting sustainable growth and inclusivity as fundamental pillars of the sector. In addition, ways to integrate sustainable practices into the tourism sector's food chain were explored, such as waste reduction, local sourcing and effective governance, to strengthen responsible gastronomy tourism strategies.

The forum highlighted how gastronomy tourism can become a catalyst for change, promoting economic development, social cohesion and cultural valorisation in destinations, laying the foundations for a more sustainable and inclusive future.

1. Opening Ceremony

The 9th UN Tourism World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism was opened by Fatima Al-Sairafi, Minister of Tourism of Bahrain; Joxe Mari Aizega, Director General of the Basque Culinary Center; and Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General of UN Tourism. Minister Al-Sairafi highlighted the opportunity that the forum represents to position Bahrain as the epicentre of gastronomy tourism in the Middle East, and the possibility of interacting with international experts. Mr. Pololikashvili, meanwhile, stressed the role of gastronomy tourism as an engine of economic diversification and empowerment of communities. Finally, Aizega highlighted the power of gastronomy for social inclusion, building bridges between cultures and promoting sustainable development and economic diversification.



2. Ceremony for UN Tourism Ambassadors for Gastronomy Tourism

On the occasion of the 9th World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism, UN Tourism appointed three new ambassadors, internationally renowned chefs who have demonstrated their commitment to promoting gastronomy as a driver of sustainable tourism development:



Tala Bashmi (Bahrain)

Recognized for her innovative and sustainable approach to cooking.



Rudolf Stefan (Croatia)

Renowned for his dedication to preserving Croatian culinary traditions while driving their evolution through modern techniques and innovation.



Diego Guerrero (Spain)

Recognized for his creativity and avant-garde techniques.

The number of UN Tourism Ambassadors for Gastronomy Tourism continues to grow, reflecting the interest and importance of this sector globally. These chefs not only promote gastronomy as a tourist attraction but also projects that promote sustainability in the industry.

In addition, the creation of three scholarships for the Online Course in Gastronomy Tourism Experience Design was announced, an initiative that seeks to train the talent needed for the future of the sector through education and the development of key skills to boost gastronomy tourism worldwide.

3. High-Level Panel: Shaping Policies for Advancing Gastronomy Tourism

This panel brought together leading figures from the sector, including the Secretary of Tourism of the Philippines, Christina Garcia Frasco; the Minister of Tourism of Bahrain, Fatima Al Sairafi; and the Deputy Minister of Tourism for International Affairs of Saudi Arabia, Sultan AlMusallam. During the session, they discussed key policies and strategies to promote gastronomy tourism, focusing on designing a regulatory framework that fosters its development and maximizes benefits for destinations and local communities.

Bahrain

The Minister of Tourism of Bahrain emphasized the need for policies that unite efforts between the public and private sectors, with sustainability as a fundamental pillar. She highlighted the importance of involving local, regional, and international communities, as well as supporting local producers.



Philippines

The Secretary of Tourism of the Philippines presented her country's tourism development plan, which focuses on enhancing gastronomy through multi-dimensional, diversified, and sustainable tourism. She emphasized the key role of small and medium-sized enterprises, such as farmers, fishermen, and restaurants, and mentioned training programmes in food handling, sustainability, and gastronomy. She also pointed out investments in infrastructure to facilitate the arrival of tourists and the distribution of products, as well as the growth of gastronomy as the second reason why tourists visit the Philippines.



Saudi Arabia

The Deputy Minister of Tourism of Saudi Arabia highlighted the connection between culture and gastronomy, considering it an essential component of the country's economy. His country offers a holistic experience to tourists, combining visits to museums and cities with tastings of traditional food. He also stressed the importance of education, mentioning the efforts made to professionalize the culinary sector and attract young Saudis to this industry.



All three participants agreed that gastronomy tourism is a constantly growing source of wealth, providing a livelihood and helping to preserve cultural heritage. Gastronomy acts as a bridge to transmit the culture, history, and heritage of a country, and contributes to the positioning of its brand. In this context, the public sector plays a key role in organizing gastronomic festivals that give visibility to businesses and restaurants.



4. Case Study

Get Inspired! High-end gastronomy pairs with sustainability, a game changer for destinations. Chef Sergio Torres, Hermanos Torres Kitchen (Barcelona, Spain)



* Sergio Torres

Chef Sergio Torres, recognized with three Michelin Stars and a Green Star, highlighted the role of identity and gastronomy as key tools to transform a tourist destination and face new challenges. In an emotional tribute to his grandmother Catalina, he recalled his beginnings with his brother Javier, stating that they both had “a very clear idea of becoming cooks from a very young age.”

After training in world-renowned restaurants and under the influence of Josep Lladonosa, an expert in Catalan cuisine, the twin brothers realized their dream: the ‘Hermanos Torres Kitchen’. This innovative proposal, which is defined as “a kitchen with tables and not in a restaurant with a kitchen,” transports diners back to their childhood through flavours.

For Torres, identity is the basis of any business: “to be international, you must first be local.” He himself uses onions grown on his father’s farm in Zaragoza, understanding gastronomy as “a window to culture, habits that connect with history, heritage, or legacy.”

With this approach, he highlights his roots while looking to the future, betting on sustainability. An example of this is the energy efficiency system he applies in his kitchens, where he uses ozone for cleaning and disinfection. His commitment to the environment has led him to support local producers, whom he considers “authentic stars of the gastronomy value chain,” with the aim of promoting regional development.

Torres recognizes the positive impact of tourism, which has positioned Barcelona and Catalonia as references on the international gastronomic map but warns that mass tourism “affects the authenticity of the city.” For this reason, he sees sustainable gastronomic tourism as an opportunity for the whole society. His proposal includes supporting restaurants, promoting sustainability, changing the perception of tourism, and educating about gastronomy and culture to preserve traditions. As the chef himself explains, “nature is in the DNA of the Hermanos Torres.”

5. Global Image, Local Cuisine and Ingredients: Branding Destinations through Gastronomy

The conversation, moderated by Célia Tunc, Secretary General of the Collège Culinaire de France, focused on the growing importance of cuisine to promote and preserve the cultural identity of countries. The guest chefs shared experiences, strategies, and challenges in their respective contexts, highlighting how cuisine can become a powerful vehicle to express cultural roots and project them to the world.



Chef Rudolf Štefan, Konoba Pelegrini Restaurant (Croatia)

He highlighted how Croatia, a young country with a still little-known gastronomy, needs to overcome the traditional approach of beach tourism. Inspired by his travels, he decided to promote Croatian gastronomy by organizing a festival to highlight the country’s cuisine and support young chefs. He also mentioned the creation of a foundation that allows these chefs to travel abroad for training, with the commitment to return and enrich the local culinary offer.



Chef Alejandra Espinoza, Somos Restaurant (Ecuador)

She acknowledged that it is a challenge to get tourists visiting places like Quito and the Galapagos to be interested in staying longer exploring other regions of the country. Her strategy consists of offering a culinary experience that represents diverse regions of Ecuador to awaken interest and appreciation for its gastronomic richness. However, she faces difficulties when trying to establish an Ecuadorian restaurant in Miami due to the lack of available local ingredients and the challenge of positioning a lesser-known cuisine in the international market.



Iñaki López de Viñaspre, Founder of the Sagardi Group (Spain)

He shared the success of his Basque cuisine both in Spain and internationally. He underlined the importance of maintaining a clear identity in restaurants, preserving traditional recipes without adapting them to the preferences of other cultures. He also emphasized the relevance of working with local producers to ensure the quality of ingredients, thus strengthening the link between gastronomy and the territory.



Chef Tala Bashmi, Fusions by Tala Restaurant (Bahrain)

She emphasized the need to respect the origins and local flavours in her kitchen, while educating diners about the authentic flavours of Bahrain. Her approach combines tradition and modernity, working closely with local producers to design a tasting menu that invites customers to explore new flavours, honouring the cultural roots of her country.

This debate highlighted the diversity of approaches and strategies that chefs employ to turn gastronomy into an engine of cultural identity, while seeking to adapt to the challenges of tourism and globalization.



6. Case Study

Get Inspired! North-Atlantic gastrotourism on the move:
Constructing the Faroe Islands as a food destination



* Jóhan Pauli Helgason

Jóhan Pauli Helgason, Development Manager of Visit Faroe Islands, was in charge of presenting the region's development through tourism and its efforts to consolidate itself as a gastronomic destination.

The Faroe Islands, a small archipelago in the North Atlantic, are located between Norway, Iceland, and Scotland. The ocean is the central axis of its resources, covering 99% of its surface and providing an ideal environment for rich marine biodiversity. Among its most outstanding products are seafood and Atlantic salmon, recognized internationally. True to their name, which means "islands of the sheep," livestock farming also occupies a fundamental place in their economy and culture. Lamb, raised in freedom, is another of its most emblematic products.

Adverse weather conditions and difficulties in developing varied agriculture have led the Faroese to perfect traditional food preservation techniques, such as drying and fermentation. These practices, adapted to the natural conditions of the region, give their products a distinctive and authentic character. With a deep respect for their products and traditions, the Faroe Islands have embraced the new Nordic

cuisine, taking their traditional gastronomic culture to new levels of excellence. This has led to the emergence of innovative gastronomic proposals that, in addition to boosting the local culinary scene, educate new generations and serve as a driver of change and inspiration.

Tourism has been a key factor in counteracting the exodus of the young population, a common challenge in many remote regions of the Nordic countries. Through the development and promotion of their identity, the Faroe Islands have managed to revitalize the pride of being Faroese and strengthen regional cohesion.

Branding and marketing efforts have driven a deep self-awareness and rediscovery of what it means to be Faroese. This knowledge has allowed them to design campaigns and initiatives adapted to local capacities, but capable of fully meeting their needs. As a result, the tourism sector has experienced remarkable development in the last 15 years. "Tourism strengthens and develops what is unique about Faroe," an idea that perfectly reflects the essence of their strategy: sharing their culture and their home in an authentic way, promoting tourism that does not

seek uncontrolled growth, but the preservation and valorisation of their identity.

Geography imposes challenges, but it also offers opportunities, and the Faroe Islands have known how to take advantage of them. They have used tourism

as a catalyst for change, not only for its economic benefits, but also for its role in the recovery of identity pride, the construction of a solid and inclusive community, and the preservation of the environment.

7. High-Level Panel: Gastronomy Diplomacy – Positioning Arab gastronomy in the world

Speakers

- **H.E. Mr. Osama Al Mekhyal**, Undersecretary of Tourism Sector, Ministry of Information of Kuwait
- **Dr. Abed Al-Razzaq Arabiyat**, Managing Director of the Jordan Tourism Board
- **Mr. Omar Al-Jaber**, Chief of Tourism Development Sector of Qatar Tourism

The panel explored how Arab gastronomy can act as a strategic tool for cultural diplomacy, economic development, and global projection. Participants highlighted the importance of having a narrative that combines the authenticity, hospitality, and culinary richness of Arab countries to position themselves as unique gastronomic destinations.

Key Highlights

1. The richness of Arab Gastronomy

It represents a diverse mix of historical and cultural influences that span regions of the Maghreb, the Levant, and the Persian Gulf. Arab food is not only a reflection of ancient traditions but also a manifestation of hospitality, one of the central values of Arab culture.

2. Gastronomic Diplomacy

It was emphasized how cuisine can serve as a “cultural bridge” to promote mutual understanding between nations. Arab gastronomy can be used as a soft diplomacy tool, promoting peace and international cooperation.

3. Strategies for global promotion

- Chefs can be key figures to project the culinary richness of the region, participating in international events and collaborations.
- Local events and experiences: culinary festivals, gastronomic markets, and “farm-to-table” experiences in Arab countries can attract an audience interested in authentic experiences.
- Public-private collaboration: Create synergies between governments, businesses, and local producers to structure a solid international promotion strategy.

4. Success stories

Morocco, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates have integrated gastronomy into their tourism identity, achieving a significant impact on the global perception of their cultures.

5. Challenges

Although Arab gastronomy is rich and diverse, it does not always receive the attention or international recognition it deserves.





8. Case Study

Get Inspired! Going local Farm-to-Fork Revolution in Gastro-Diplomacy



* Nico Dingemans

Nico Dingemans is the founder of the “From Farm to Fork” initiative, which began in the Netherlands. In 2017, he published From Farm to Fork in the Netherlands, a culinary travelogue featuring healthy recipes from all 12 Dutch provinces, created in collaboration with over 24 chefs. After 2018, Dingemans expanded his work internationally, developing similar initiatives in Curaçao and other regions.

In 2019, he relocated to Jordan, where he launched From Farm to Fork in Jordan, a sustainable culinary tourism project. This initiative aims to promote Jordan’s rich culinary heritage by connecting local farmers, chefs, and hospitality providers, and by organizing events such as seasonal culinary campaigns and educational programs.

In Jordan, stakeholders across the food value chain are currently working together to develop gastronomic routes that encourage the consumption of local products. The country, located in the Arabian Peninsula, has a strong agricultural and culinary tradition, with key products including dates, olive oil, lavender, seafood, dairy, and locally produced meats.

The strategy to position Jordan as a sustainable destination is based on four fundamental pillars:

1. Promotion of healthy cuisine
2. Preservation and respect for the environment
3. Responsible innovation
4. Positive socio-economic impact

Dingemans highlighted that the Farm to Fork vision aims not only to bring fresh, local products to restaurants and hotels, but also to be complemented by a Fork to Farm approach. This perspective encourages immersive gastronomic experiences, inviting tourists to engage directly with food origins through farm visits, harvest participation, and learning about the connections across the entire value chain—from primary producers to final consumers.

Drawing on his international experience, Dingemans encouraged chefs and industry professionals to support and invest in Jordan’s gastronomic tourism initiatives. His objective is to preserve the country’s culinary heritage, promote the use of local ingredients, and strengthen rural communities whose livelihoods depend on the sale of these products.

9. Sharing is Caring

The session served as an interactive space for industry leaders and participants to exchange ideas and perspectives on the evolving landscape of gastronomy tourism. Through live polls and open dialogue, the discussion emphasized the value of collaboration in addressing key challenges and capitalizing on new opportunities.

Central themes included sustainability, authenticity, and innovation, with a focus on how gastronomy can enhance cultural experiences and contribute to sustainable development. The session reinforced the potential of gastronomy tourism to connect people, preserve traditions, and support economic growth, while tackling global issues such as climate change and food waste.

Participants explored current trends, sector challenges, and opportunities for transformation, laying the foundation for future action. Among the key concerns raised were rising costs, food waste, seasonality, and



David Mora, Director of the Master’s and Online Course in Gastronomy Tourism Experience Design, Basque Culinary Center (Spain)

overcrowding in urban destinations. In response, UN Tourism presented initiatives aimed at reducing food waste and promoting more sustainable practices within the sector.

Key themes addressed

Destination Branding:

The session explored strategies to strengthen destination identity through storytelling, social media engagement, influencer partnerships, and community involvement. Notable case studies such as Inspired by Iceland and Amazing Thailand were shared as successful examples of branding initiatives.

Current and Future Trends:

- Experiences beyond restaurants, such as visits to producers and stays in themed accommodations.
- Tourism beyond traditional routes, promoting lesser-known and secondary destinations.
- Regenerative gastronomy, where tourists actively contribute to improving the destinations they visit.
- Slow and sustainable tourism, emphasizing authentic, locally rooted experiences and stronger connections with producers.

Artificial Intelligence in Gastronomy:

The potential of AI to enhance tourism experiences was discussed, particularly its ability to personalize recommendations, predict trends, and inspire travelers. While AI cannot replicate the sensory nature of gastronomy, it was recognized as a valuable tool—provided content is carefully curated to maintain authenticity and accuracy.

10. Identifying and Leveraging Intangible Cultural Heritage in Gastronomy Tourism

Enhancing Destinations with Intellectual Property and Branding



Mary Hayrapetyan,
Associate Program Officer,
Regional and National
Development Sector, World
Intellectual Property
Organization (WIPO).

Mary Hayrapetyan's presentation focused on the role of intellectual property (IP) in enhancing the value of destinations and supporting the development of gastronomy tourism. Key points included:

- IP can contribute to gastronomy tourism by preserving local traditions, protecting heritage and innovation, and stimulating economic growth.
- WIPO leads targeted projects that position IP as a strategic tool for sustainable development.
- Several of these initiatives directly support gastronomy tourism by documenting and promoting traditional products and recipes, boosting local economies, and increasing the added value of destinations.
- The implementation strategy follows four key phases: identifying local partners and associations; conducting an IP diagnosis; delivering training and mentoring; and developing tailored communication materials.
- The presentation featured success stories, including a geographical indication project in Georgia and the revitalization of Bali's tourism sector through IP-driven strategies.



11. Panel Debate: Gastronomy – Building the Image of a Tourist Destination

This debate, moderated by David Mora, Director of the Master's in Gastronomy Tourism Experience Design at the Basque Culinary Center, featured the participation of leading experts in tourism and economic development:

- **Sara Ahmed Buheji**, CEO of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA).
- **Majeed Al Majeed**, Director of Business Development and Licensing at the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA).
- **José Luis Martínez**, Director of Economic Development and Tourism of Mérida (Mexico).
- **Elif Balci Fisunoğlu**, Deputy General Manager of the Turkish Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA).
- **Ahmad Shehada**, Head of Government and Social Impact for the Middle East and North Africa at Meta.

The session explored key strategies for positioning gastronomy as an expression of a destination's cultural heritage, history, and traditions. Panellists emphasized the importance of safeguarding local culinary practices and integrating them into innovative tourism experiences that resonate with younger generations. Illustrative examples, such as cochinita pibil in Mérida and traditional Turkish dishes, underscored how deep-rooted culinary traditions can enhance the tourism value proposition of each region.

Community participation was identified as a cornerstone of sustainable gastronomy tourism development. The integration of local farmers and producers into the gastronomic value chain was recognized as essential for ensuring authenticity while fostering inclusive and resilient local economies. Panellists further underscored the importance of empowering youth and entrepreneurs by equipping them with the skills and tools needed to innovate and thrive within the tourism and gastronomy sectors.

The session also addressed strategic and digital marketing approaches, noting the growing influence of platforms such as Instagram and YouTube in engaging food-motivated travellers—an increasingly relevant segment within tourism. While not all users of these platforms travel physically, many actively seek culinary experiences virtually. Gastronomy-focused influencers were highlighted as effective agents for raising global awareness. The most impactful campaigns, it was noted, are those grounded in authentic experiences and developed in collaboration with local content creators, thereby fostering trust and emotional resonance with potential visitors.

The development of distinctive and immersive gastronomic experiences was highlighted as a key driver for enhancing the tourism offering. In Mérida, for example, the traditional Day of the Dead celebration has evolved into a week-long cultural and culinary event, drawing visitors who extend their stay for up to ten days. Similarly, Türkiye’s Turkish Cuisine Week integrates gastronomy with music, art, and culture to create a holistic visitor experience. In Bahrain, the Forum on Gastronomy Tourism provided attendees with hands-on opportunities to engage with the local culinary heritage through cooking workshops, market visits, and interactions with traditional chefs. The integration of advanced technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, was also noted as a means to broaden access and allow potential travellers to discover a destination’s gastronomy remotely.

The discussion concluded by emphasizing the importance of international recognition in strengthening the positioning of gastronomic destinations. Affiliation with global networks such as UNESCO and the Creative Cities of Gastronomy, along with the attainment of international awards, was acknowledged as a key factor in enhancing visibility and credibility in the global tourism market. Additionally, the combination of authentic local cuisine with a diverse international gastronomic offer was identified as a strategy to attract a broader audience and reinforce the destination’s overall appeal.



12. Case Study

Get Inspired! Going local – Local Culinary Exploration



* Yigal Schleifer

Yigal Schleifer focused his intervention on the added value of the gastronomic experiences developed by his company, which are rooted in authenticity and cultural exploration. His approach prioritizes guiding visitors to lesser-known neighbourhoods with rich culinary traditions that are often overlooked by mainstream tourism. He underscored his mission to “introduce intellectually curious diners and travellers to the world’s most intriguing culinary destinations and to celebrate their traditions and those who preserve them.”

Schleifer underscored the role of gastronomy as a reflection of cultural identity and a means to deepen visitors’ understanding of a destination. He emphasized the need for gastronomic tourism to generate mutual benefits—enhancing the visitor experience while supporting local food systems—to ensure long-term sustainability and meaningful impact.

He further stressed that the development of gastronomy tourism must ensure mutual benefit—supporting both travellers and local food systems. Without equitable impact, he noted, the sustainability of such initiatives is compromised. For a culinary tourism experience to be truly meaningful, it must be memorable, engaging, participatory, educational, and

capable of fostering genuine connections between visitors and host communities.

Regarding community benefits, Mr. Schleifer underscored the potential of gastronomy to drive local development by creating quality employment, stimulating economic activity, and promoting civic pride and participation. He cited the example of a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Istanbul with high tourism potential, which until recently remained under the radar. By including it in his company’s itineraries, he achieved notable success—driven by the area’s authentic cuisine, welcoming residents, and cultural richness. He encouraged tourism professionals and travellers alike to explore and elevate such lesser-known destinations.

Finally, Mr. Schleifer referred to the “Bourdain effect,” highlighting how Anthony Bourdain—renowned chef, author, and television host—used his culinary journeys and storytelling to bring global attention to street food and local food cultures, positively impacting local economies. He presented Bourdain’s approach as a valuable model for promoting gastronomic tourism, emphasizing the importance of celebrating authentic, local culinary traditions.

13. Learning from the Best.

In Conversation With...

This roundtable discussion, moderated by Joxe Mari Aizega, General Director of the Basque Culinary Center, featured the participation of:

- **Deepanker Khosla**, chef and owner of the Haoma restaurant in Bangkok, recognized for his sustainable approach to gastronomy. Haoma has been awarded as the most sustainable restaurant by Asia’s 50 Best Restaurants 2024 and is the only Indian restaurant to have been awarded a green star by the Michelin Guide, in addition to being the first to receive this recognition in the city of Bangkok.
- **Tim Brooke-Webb**, Managing Director of The World’s 50 Best in the United Kingdom.

The debate revolved around three key themes: the concept of brand destination, the impact of The World’s 50 Best list on the careers of chefs and the industry, and the importance of creativity, innovation, and sustainability in gastronomy.

Brand Destination: The Impact of Gastronomy on the Promotion of Destinations

Tim Brooke-Webb shared insights on how The World’s 50 Best Restaurants has contributed to shaping the global image of destinations through gastronomy. Originally held in London, the awards have expanded to various cities around the world—including New York, Sydney, Melbourne, and Bilbao—allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of their local impact. A particularly notable example is Valencia, which hosted the event in 2022 and subsequently generated over 70,000 media articles on gastronomy, with an estimated media value of USD 52 million. Similarly, in Los Angeles, the event produced 9,000 articles with a value of USD 71 million.

Tim explained that The World’s 50 Best is based on three fundamental pillars:

- **Legitimacy:** As an independent and widely respected platform, The World’s 50 Best lends credibility to emerging gastronomic destinations, generating international recognition.
- **Media Reach:** The platform’s strong presence across social media significantly amplifies the visibility and global impact of the event.
- **Curiosity:** Media exposure and digital engagement inspire culinary travellers to discover and experience the local food scene firsthand.

Deepanker Khosla noted that while Thailand has long been known for its temples and cultural heritage, its emergence as a recognized gastronomic destination is a more recent development. In this evolving context, Generation Z is increasingly seeking sustainable culinary experiences that integrate history, tradition, and artisanal quality. Through a holistic approach to gastronomy, his restaurant Haoma has successfully connected with this audience—demonstrating that gastronomy must be understood not only within the confines of the restaurant but across the entire value chain, from production to consumption.

The Value of The World’s 50 Best Restaurant List

For chefs, being on the list represents a radical change in their career. Tim Brooke-Webb explained how the visibility granted by the awards can transform the trajectory of a restaurant:

- When NOMA reached number 1, reservations were sold out for the next 15 years in a single night.
- In the case of Celler de Can Roca, its website crashed after the announcement of its inclusion in the list, due to the volume of reservations.

Deepanker highlighted that the presence in such a prestigious list not only amplifies the recognition of chefs but also allows them to return to their roots and expand their influence. Many choose to open restaurants in small cities, generating employment and contributing to the local economy.

Creativity, Innovation, and Sustainability in Gastronomy

Deepanker stressed that gastronomy is not just about feeding the masses but about creating innovative experiences without losing sight of the essence of traditions. The challenge is to make it relevant to new generations, allowing them to reinterpret them and adapt them to the present.

Tim highlighted that chefs are storytellers, capable of transmitting the identity and history of a destination through food. Telling these stories on global platforms helps to arouse public curiosity and attract new tourists.

Finally, Deepanker addressed the issue of sustainability through the “4 Ps” of sustainability:

- **People** – Empowering individuals who are committed to sustainable values and practices.
- **Processes** – Implementing responsible methods in sourcing, preparation, and operations.
- **Products** – Creating food offerings that reflect these sustainable principles.
- **Profit (or Prosperity)** – Generating lasting benefits for communities, businesses, and the wider tourism sector.

This integrated approach not only supports the long-term viability of sustainable gastronomy but also strengthens its positive social, environmental, and economic impact—both locally and globally.



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14. Future Trends in Gastronomy Tourism

The panel addressed key issues about the future of gastronomy tourism, moderated by Nicolas Kenedi, president of l'Agence Française, author, and member of the International Academy of Gastronomy, who highlighted the power of gastronomy in diplomacy, stating that, “gastronomy is the main weapon of diplomacy,” in reference to his books. The panellists provided diverse visions on the evolution of the sector:



Sheikh
Rashid
Al Khalifa

General Manager of **Peninsula Farms** (Bahrain), shared a personal story rooted in his grandfather’s agricultural legacy, underscoring the vital role of fruits and vegetables in gastronomy. He emphasized the importance of seasonality and quality, advocating for the consumption of ingredients at their peak. Mr. Al Khalifa noted that many fruits today are consumed after extended periods of storage and refrigeration, which compromises both flavor and nutritional value.

At Peninsula Farms, he explained, products are distributed with traceability labels and a three-day delivery system, ensuring maximum freshness and transparency. Their mission is to promote product origin on menus and contribute to positioning Bahrain on the global gastronomic map.



Alex
Resnik

Managing Partner and Co-founder of The Hierophant Group (United States of America), emphasized the importance of establishing meaningful connections with customers. His approach is rooted in storytelling, aiming to create memorable gastronomic experiences that extend beyond the plate. By offering guests curated recommendations on where to go and what to explore after dining, he positions gastronomy as a gateway to discovering the destination’s broader culture. His ultimate goal is to blur the lines between the dining room and the kitchen, fostering experiences that encourage guests to return.



Chef Diego
Guerrero

Owner of **DSTAgE** and **DSPEAKEASY** (Spain), and holder of two Michelin stars, reflected on the evolutionary role of gastronomy in human development. He observed that dietary habits have long been shaped by cultural, social, and economic influences. Today, he argued, society faces a pivotal moment: while we now have the ability to choose how we want to eat in the future, financial considerations remain the dominant force behind decision-making. For Chef Guerrero, gastronomy represents both identity and communication. In an increasingly homogenized world, he believes chefs bear significant responsibility as agents of change. His culinary philosophy promotes the use of overlooked or unconventional ingredients, as demonstrated by a dish on his menu made from tuna eye consommé—an example of holistic and sustainable cooking.



Miguel
Flecha

CEO of **Delaight** and creator of @dondisfruton (Spain), spoke about the growing role of technology and personalization in gastronomy. He highlighted how tools such as Big Data, artificial intelligence, social media, and influencers can provide valuable insights into consumer preferences and enable more tailored culinary experiences. He stressed the importance of adapting offerings to accommodate dietary restrictions, preferences, and individual needs. Mr. Flecha also referenced an innovative collaboration between the Roca Brothers and chocolatier Damián Allsop, in which participants created their own aromatic maps at a sensory station to select chocolates aligned with their personal taste profiles.

The session concluded with an optimistic vision: the future of gastronomic tourism is bright and should be a priority in travel.

15. Circular Solutions for Reducing Food Waste

This session, moderated by Svitlana Mikhalyeva, Coordinator of the “One Planet” Sustainable Tourism Program of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), brought together three experts in circular economy, who shared their experiences and innovative solutions to reduce food waste in the tourism sector.



- **Leyla Fathallah**, advocate for the **United Nations Environment Program on Food Waste in the ‘Recipe of Change’** campaign, in addition to being a chef and consultant, presented her project focused on raising citizen awareness about food waste and optimizing management in hotel and restaurant kitchens. Through her specialized consultancies, she has managed to improve efficiency in reducing food waste. A prominent case was the implementation of her resource efficiency system during Ramadan, managing to reduce food waste by 65%, a result that exceeded expectations and demonstrated the positive impact of education and strategic food management.



- **Muhammad Danbappa**, co-founder of **Ehfaazz**, explained how his company transforms food waste into reusable products. Organic waste is converted into compost, beverage waste and its derivatives are transformed into ethanol, while remnants of shampoos and other personal care products are reused for the manufacture of car cleaning products. His model demonstrates that food waste can not only be reduced but also become a valuable resource for other sectors.



- **Benjamin Lephilbert**, founder of **LightBlue Environmental Consulting** (Thailand), presented a technological solution designed to reduce waste in the hospitality sector. His company has developed an application that allows quantifying and analyzing waste in restaurants and hotels, identifying critical points where greater waste is generated. This analysis not only has a positive impact on sustainability but also represents a high economic benefit for businesses that implement these practices.

Hospitality businesses—particularly those offering buffet services—are among the largest generators of food waste. However, innovative solutions developed by organizations such as Lightblue Consulting and professionals like Chef Leyla Fathallah demonstrate that it is possible to identify key sources of waste, train staff effectively, and optimize resource management. By combining technology, capacity-building, and circular economy strategies, the sector can significantly reduce its environmental footprint while enhancing operational efficiency and profitability.

16. Final Pitch Challenge of the 4th UN Tourism Global Gastronomy Tourism Startup Competition

The Forum in Bahrain hosted the Final Pitch of the Start-up Competition Challenge, in which six startups presented their innovative ideas to transform gastronomic tourism through proposals that combine technology, social impact, tourism, and gastronomy.

The winning startup was **Agrojusto** (Argentina), standing out with a pitch that balanced clear data and a human approach. Its digital platform connects small producers with restaurants and markets, allowing direct and transparent commercialization thanks to blockchain technology. Beyond technology, Agrojusto emphasized the social impact of its work: creating economic opportunities for thousands of producers, thus revitalizing the rural environment.

- **Garista** (Morocco) proposed a technological tool for restaurants that allows customizing menus, integrating digital payments, and using artificial intelligence for tourist recommendations.
- **JOOD** (Saudi Arabia) opted for a more social approach, supporting home kitchens so that they can become small restaurants, offering employment to women and local chefs.
- **The F*** Waste** (United Kingdom) presented a technology that helps reduce food waste, highlighting its environmental and economic impact.
- **Kitchen OS** (United Kingdom) proposed an operating system for professional kitchens, optimizing their operations and efficiency.
- **Jiranileo** (Zambia) presented a platform that allows tourists to live authentic gastronomic experiences in African homes and markets, promoting more cultural and immersive tourism.

The event showed how innovation and tradition can coexist to drive the development of gastronomy tourism, promoting a more inclusive, sustainable model with a positive impact on both the industry and local communities.



17. Education for the future of Gastronomy Tourism

Mr. Joxe Mari Aizega, General Manager of the Basque Culinary Center, presented the past, present, and future of this pioneering institution and its innovative approach to gastronomy education. Founded 15 years ago in San Sebastián (Spain), the Basque Culinary Center was established with the vision of transforming the rich culinary heritage of the Basque Country into a hub of academic excellence. Its mission is to safeguard the future of the hospitality industry, preserve culinary traditions, and uphold the global reputation of Basque cuisine through education, research, and innovation.



The Basque Culinary Center is recognized as a driver of social development, built upon two main pillars:

A comprehensive 360º perspective on gastronomy that embraces a holistic approach, encompassing food production and processing, culinary arts, restaurant management, chefs, hospitality, retail, and related sectors.

A multidisciplinary educational model that integrates diverse professional fields and activities within the gastronomic ecosystem.

The Basque Culinary Center currently offers a diverse portfolio of educational programs, including a Bachelor’s degree in Culinary Sciences and specialized courses covering various facets of gastronomy, such as culinary arts, food innovation, gastronomy tourism, hospitality management, and food entrepreneurship.

The cornerstone of their educational approach is a multidisciplinary framework, combined with experiential learning (“learning by doing”), fostering personal growth grounded in core values and a strong spirit of teamwork.

Mr. Aizega introduced their ambitious new project: GOe (Gastronomy Open Ecosystem). This innovative facility reflects the Basque Culinary Center’s vision for a more open and dynamic approach to gastronomy, aiming toward a “delicious future.”

Located in the center of San Sebastián, GOe will offer expanded postgraduate programmes, foster food-related entrepreneurship, and serve as a hub for research and innovation. The building will include a Living Lab, event spaces, eight kitchens, ten laboratories and workshops, an auditorium, and other state-of-the-art facilities. GOe is designed to provide enhanced opportunities for students, innovators, researchers, and the local community.

18. Conclusions

1. Gastronomic Tourism as an economic driver

This booming sector represents a great opportunity to diversify economies. Gastronomy is seen as a strategic ally, and gastronomic tourism plays a key role in generating new experiences and sustainable economic activities.

2. The value of awards and recognitions

Distinctions such as Michelin, The 50 Best, and other awards not only highlight chefs, restaurants, and sustainable initiatives but also create value for destinations and the gastronomic sector, boosting their recognition at a global level.

3. Public-private collaboration

Many destinations have already implemented joint strategies between the public and private sectors to strengthen gastronomy and gastronomic tourism, promoting their sustainable development.

4. Recovery of authenticity and preservation of culinary legacy

Many destinations have already implemented joint strategies between the public and private sectors to strengthen gastronomy and gastronomic tourism, promoting their sustainable development.

5. Events

The importance of organizing events around gastronomy tourism, but it must be done with sustainability criteria and strategic planning to maximize its positive impact.

6. The power of social networks and the role of content creators

Social networks play a key role in the promotion of gastronomy tourism. Beyond large budgets, creativity and a well-defined strategy, supported by specialized content creators, can generate a great impact.

7. Chefs as gastronomic ambassadors

Beyond guides and awards, chefs with media visibility can be key pieces in the promotion of regional dishes and cuisines, bringing their cultural richness to a wider audience.

8. Education of visitors for responsible tourism

It is key to raise awareness among tourists about the importance of local gastronomy and encourage more conscious and respectful consumption of the destination’s culture and resources.

9. Reduction of food waste

The fight against food waste is gaining strength in both the hospitality and gastronomic industries, promoting more sustainable and efficient practices.

10. Regulation of agritourism

Policies need to be reviewed and adapted to enable producers to actively participate in gastronomic tourism by developing more comprehensive and enriching agritourism experiences.

Building on the success of its global editions, the UN Tourism World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism—organized by UN Tourism and the Basque Culinary Center—has expanded its reach with regional editions. In 2024, the forum was held for the first time in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa, with upcoming editions soon to take place in the Americas, further strengthening its role as a global platform for advancing gastronomy tourism.

The forum has become a key platform for shaping the future of gastronomy tourism—fostering dialogue, sharing experiences, and promoting more sustainable, inclusive, and impactful tourism, and will continue to evolve with the sector, offering a space for exchange and innovation.

11. Strategy and narrative in brand building

Behind every gastronomic experience, there is a story. The way it is told and communicated on social networks is key to connecting with the public and strengthening the identity of a destination or product.

12. Gastronomy as a link in times of uncertainty and confusion

Food unites us and acts as a bridge in times of change, reinforcing its role as a central element of identity and cultural connection.





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