PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences
ISSN 2454-5899

Csaba Kőmíves, 2017

Volume 3 Issue 2, pp. 234-245

Date of Publication: 05th September, 2017

DOI-https://dx.doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2017.32.234245

This paper can be cited as: Kőmíves, C. (2017). Culinary Heritage of Kisalföld in Hungary. PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences, 3(2), 234-245.

CULINARY HERITAGE OF KISALFÖLD IN HUNGARY

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Abstract

The study examines the landscape of one of the largest region in Western - Hungary, which has the most gastronomic roots. Based on the new trends of the traditional Hungarian cuisine, it is experiencing the creativity, the earlier consideration of flavours, following healthy diet and the appreciation of gastronomy. The empirical research (tasting dishes made by both the old and the new technologies) helps to highlight catering places special qualities and use of existence of the premium and quality products, such as eco-crafts or baby products, followed by the guests' need for new culinary experiences.

Keywords

Hungarian, Cuisine, Gastronomy, Sous-Vide Technology, Convergence

1. Introduction

The today's cuisines are about affection, variety and traditions. One food can be strange for ones but delicious to others in the same time. In my opinion all cuisine can lead back to ancient cuisine. Similar to humans, all today living cuisine carries their genetic code from East Africa to West and populated the Earth. This has been changed during the times according to all the people's own taste and usable ingredients. People would like vainly to make meals with olive oil in Lapland; they have their reindeer, their seal and their bear. This cuisine called Sumerian, from which Byzantium, and the ancient Roman, the French cuisine developed as well. The Russian cuisine also had a great influence on the French, whose roots date back to Byzantium.

There're some foods, we believe as the country's masterpiece. Italians thought pasta is an Italian food, but we know exactly, it had been brought by Marco Polo from China to Europe in the 14Th century. The famous French starter came from Russian "zakuszka", it was its basic. The Hungarian stuffed cabbage is not Hungarian, it was made first by Turkish. Typical Hungarian cuisine uses lard, onion, paprika, sour cream and flour; these are the core ingredients of Hungarian dishes. Stewing, roasting, and simmering are considered as the typical major cooking processes. There are a lot of vegetables and garnish with rich source of carbohydrate. Hungarian gastronomy has four mayor periods.

At first, the 6Th century. Here lived Avars and Slavs, so we have arrived not in an uninhabited area around 896 but people had already been living here.

Second step was renaissance in the 15Th century, when King Mathias had married an Italian princess, Beatrix, who had brought the Italian art of cooking in the Hungarian royal court. That included for example wine (vitis vinifera), together the wine culture, figs, cheese, garlic, onion, different spices, and saffron. Her most important act was the usage of porcelain plates instead of wooden plates by her servants from Italy.

Third step was in 1586 when we lost the fight against Ottoman Empire, so in the fall of Buda, Hungary had been torn into three parts. These three parts were the East Transylvania, the West-Hungary and the middle Ottoman Empire.

The fourth wave was in the 18Th century, when French cooks came in Hungary to serve the Hungarian ruling class. Thus the French culture had been adopted into Hungarian culture. French language was used in the Hungarian noble families and French become the official language of the gastronomy. The goal of the study was to present the gastronomic heritage of the region, and to examine how people use these old recipes at the beginning of the 21st century.

Special thanks to Mr. Róbert Alexovics – Executive Chef, head of the Regional Bureau of the Hungarian Gastronomic Association, and member of the WACS (World Association of Chefs Societies) – tasting and testing different dishes. According to his opinion, sous-vide technology is good in certain situations. By preparation it is advantageous that a large number of events in the catering stores are available. It is good if lower quality raw materials are processed because their quality can be improved. With this method, quality evenings can be organised, this is how the uniqueness disappears and the chef cannot express the momentary mood. After sous-vide, the meat has to be fried and another heat process is needed before serving. His judging is that sous-vide dishes will not be able to compete with fresh ingredients.

The picture below shows how Róbert Alexovics tastes different sous-vide-prepared dishes.

Figure 1: *Preparation and Finished Product*

2. Phrasing the Hypotheses

H1: The meals that were made with the new technology are more delicious than the meals with the old technology.

H2: Meals made with the new technology can be found in the offer of restaurants menus.

H3: The host restaurants offer organic meals to their guests.

H4: There is no significant relation between consuming healthy food, pressing down the danger of infection and the value of high quality food consumption.

3. Review of the Specialised Literature

Gastronomy origins from Greek "gaster" mean stomach, and "gnomos" means low, the composition of these is the gastronomy. The Hungarian Interpreter Concise Dictionary formulates like this: "*Expert knowledge of Food and Beverages, just as liberal ability of their enjoyment; art of tasting; gastronomy ….II. The culinary art, cookery "*(Juhász et al. 2006). In more narrow meaning it means culinary art and gastronomy. In extended meaning we understanding setting the table, serving, culture of meal, so everything, which related with meals. First book about gastronomy was written by Brillat-Bavarin (1755-1826), who in the book titled "Taste of Life" examined the relationship between tasting and meals and this is why it is different from traditional cookery books. The development of gastronomy is presented by figure 2, which reveals a similar pyramid construction to Maslow's 5 level hierarchies of needs. The bottom level comprises basic physiological needs like eating and drinking, and then we step up on the following level of skills: for example cleaning vegetables, using fire, agricultural procedures. The author puts heat treatment, the appearance of the science of cooking as a profession embodied in our culture on the third level. Whereas a level higher covers the

appearance of linguistic features related to gastronomy, etiquettes, and changed behaviours. Finally, on the top level we have gastronomy itself (Sándor 2012).

The development of sous-vide technology is related to the names of Miklós Kürti and Hervé This who have collaborated on molecular gastronomy. Conflicting and braising used from the beginnings of the twentieth century give the foundation to the sous-vide technique. Meal preparation processes with temperature control on low heat, drastically cut out bacteria due to the low level of oxygen resulting in low risk of infections. This is now advancing the innovation of the kitchen, which refers to experiments in laboratories (This 2002).

According to new tools, they can improve traditional culinary technologies. In Hungary, Tamás Csidei applied this technology to his restaurant first, and then founded a company for distribution of sous-vid machines, Gastronauta Ltd in 2010. Nowadays it sells not only catering, but also household machines.

Gastronomy is influenced by the geographical location, the raw materials of the given area, the lifestyle of people, the traditions of holidays and everyday life, the growth of commerce and economy, and religion.

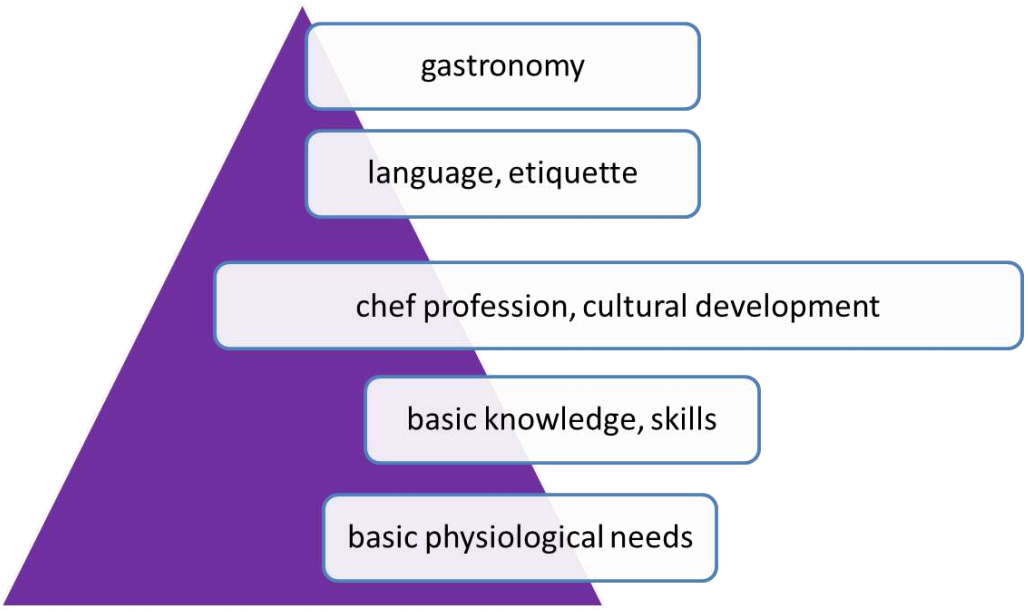

Figure 2: *The Development of Gastronomy*

Gastronomy is closely related to a number of disciplines and activities, such as nature, ethnography, physics, chemistry, biochemistry, space exploration, and commerce and hospitality industry.

Happ believes that the sustainability of tourism requires a change in the mind-set of all actors in tourism and responsible tourism complies with this new approach. Responsible tourism

covers a travel perspective that, while respecting our travels, causes positive changes in the target area. These can be economic, social and natural (Happ 2014).

In another publication by Happ, she points out that her research results clearly demonstrate the detectability of generation differences, the appearance of environmentally conscious thinking, and the susceptibility to environmental protection (Happ 2013).

Juhász et al. (1970) collected Hungarian traditional dishes. This book is very important for us, it helps to share the old recipes to expand the supply of the restaurants, brasseries and coffee houses.

Magyar's (2007) work presented the masterpieces of Hungarian cuisine.

At the beginning of the XXI. century sous vide cooking is a huge tool in the modern kitchen: constantly temperature control gives superior reproducibility, reduction of pathogens to a safe level at lower temperatures, and more choice of texture than traditional cooking methods. Vacuumized packaging improves heat flow, extends the shelf-life of the food by eliminating the risk of recontamination, reduces off-flavors from oxidation, and reduces the loss of nutrients to the cooking medium (Baldwin 2011).

The sous-vide technology has a small number of experimental results, thus only a few Ph.D study is available in Hungary. Vajda investigated the heat resistance of bacteria which has the biggest impact on microbiological quality of sous-vide products in 2015. Szücs (2015) defined in her dissertation the minimum heat temperatures parameters in accordance with the sous-vide principles. With the help of that, the numbers of Staphylococcus aureus and Listeria monocytogenes could be reduced to safety level.

4. The Methodology of the Research

Following the secondary research primary research methods was applied in order to collect the missing pieces of information and data. The primary research consisted of two parts, on the one hand, that involved quantitative methods (questionnaires) asked for cooks about their opinion sous-vide - if the most important factor is the healthy eating for the cooks and do they use the sous-vide technology, on the other hand meals (prepared by old and new technology) were tasted. It can be announced that the meals prepared by the sous-vide technology are more delicious. The sample size of 220 people came from, not representative of the respondents in the region of West Hungary chefs, 81 women 36,8% and 139 men 63,2% (see Table 1.). In the tasting 25 people were involved arbitrarily. 15 scales, three nominal questions and two open questions appear in the questionnaire. It was checked whether the meals made with the new technology could be found in the offer of restaurants menus, and the host restaurants offer organic meals to their guests. 56 places and their menus were selected from the restaurants in the

region. The most important questions were that the meat made by the new technology juicer is the colour of the sous-vide meat more intense than the colour of the conventional one.

Table 1: *Breakdown by Gender*

What is your gender?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	woman	81	36,8	36,8	36,8
	man	139	63,2	63,2	100,0
	Total	220	100,0	100,0	

5. The Results of the Research

After inputting the data, they were processed with the help of the program SPSS 20, and applied descriptive statistical, frequency and cross-chart analysis, as well as correlational research. As for the proportion of the gender, the hospitality industry is still masculine; however, during the first decades of the 21st century, women will have the advantage. As far as age is concerned, 1,8% of the men age are between 18 and 21 years (Z), 21,8% age are between 22 and 37 (Y), 31,8% age are between 38 and 52 (X) and 7,7% age are between 53 and 61 (Baby-boom). In case of women, the age groups is following, 0,5% of them are between 18 and 21 (Z), 16,4% are between 22 and 37 (Y), 12,7% are between 38, and 52 (X), and least 7,3% (Baby-boom) (see Table 2). As far as positions are concerned, from 220 people there are 19 chefs, 38 chef's deputy, and 163 cooks.

Table 2: *Investigating of the Generations*

Generations	**Woman**		**Man**		**All**	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Z	1	0,50%	4	1,80%	**5**	2,30%
Y	36	16,40%	48	21,80%	**84**	38,20%
X	28	12,70%	70	31,80%	**98**	44,50%
Baby-boom	16	7,30%	17	7,70%	**33**	15%
All	**81**	36,90%	**139**	63,10%		100%

The First hypothesis is related to the degree of contentment in connection. The result of the research is shown in Figure 3.

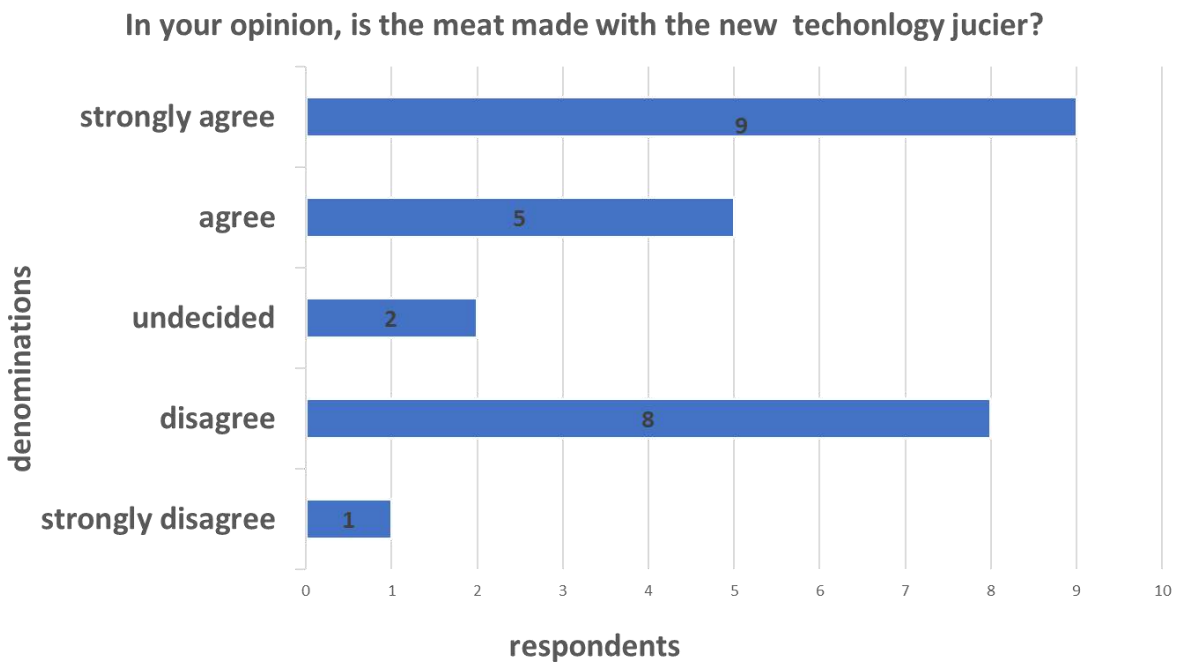

Figure 3: *Examination of Meat from the Point of Suckling*

4% of the respondents strongly disagree, 32% disagree, 8% undecided. 20% agree, 36% are strongly agree with the juicer of the meat made with the new technology. All together 14 people mean (more than 50%), that these meat are juicer. The other question was about the texture of the meat, which is illustrated in Figure 3. Of the 25 respondents, only 2 people did not answer, 3 agreed, and 20 people fully agreed with my statement. So the first hypothesis has been confirmed. The next question referred to the texture of the meat, this is illustrated by figure 4. Out of the 25 respondents only two avoided giving an answer, 3 agreed, and 20 completely disagreed with the statement. Some opinions were divisive; there were some testers who claimed that the meat was soft and tasty but overcooked.

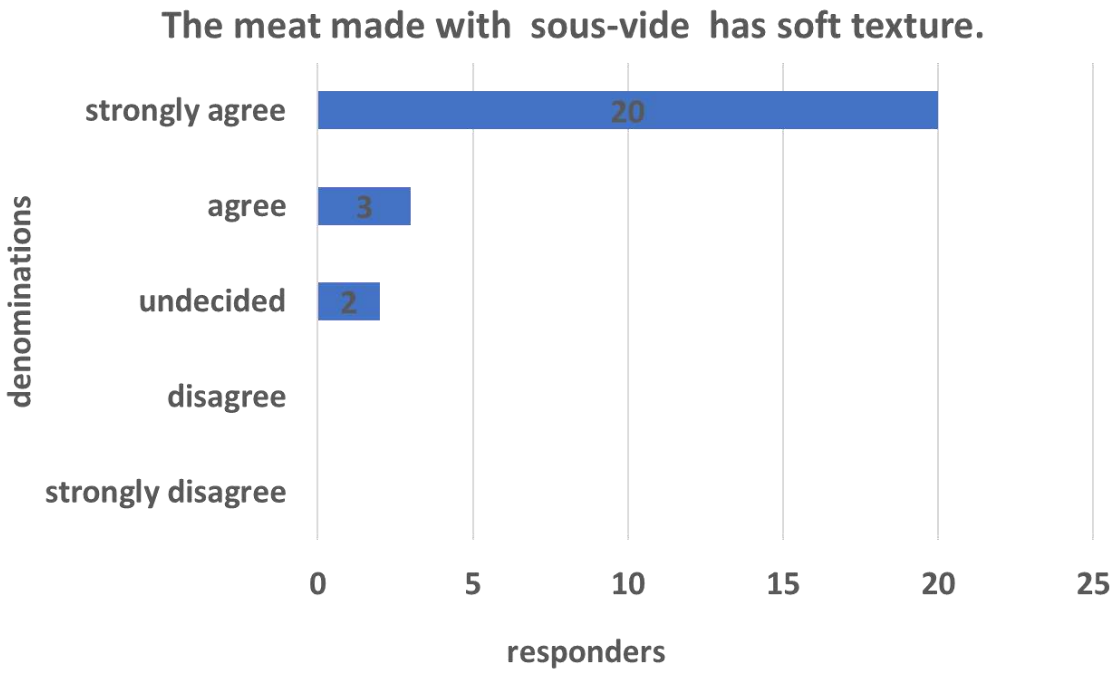

Figure 4: *Examination of the Structure of the Meat*

According to the second hypothesis that meals made with the new technology can be found in the offer of restaurants menus. Out of 56 restaurants only 3 prepare meat with sous-vide technology. Roasting on slow heat 13, roasting on tuff 1, oven 4. Unfortunately any soup had not been made by new technologies (for example porcini cappuccino). Therefore this hypothesis can be rejected.

The third hypothesis have been neither confirmed, because only 1 restaurant offered organic food.

The fourth theory said that healthy eating is the most important factor for cooks in the use of sous-vide technology. Table 3 clearly shows that the level of significance of healthy eating is 0.421, the risk of infection is 0.244, and the enjoyment of food is increased by 0.000, which is the only one that is significant. Accordingly, the fourth hypothesis is also rejected.

Table 3: *Variance Analysis*

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
How important is healthier eating for you?	between Groups	,994	1	,994	,649	,**421**
	within Groups	334,002	218	1,532		
	Total	334,995	219			
Does it increase enjoyment of food?	between Groups	24,380	1	24,380	17,787	,**000**
	within Groups	298,797	218	1,371		
	Total	323,177	219			
How important is to reduce the infections for you?	between Groups	1,262	1	1,262	1,364	,**244**
	within Groups	201,720	218	,925		
	Total	202,982	219			

Table 4: *Cross Tabulation*

			It increases the enjoyment of the food.					
			strongly disagree	**disagree**	**undecided**	**agree**	**strongly agree**	**Total**
Healthy food is important for me.	**strongly disagree**	Frequency	**3**	**4**	**1**	**0**	**9**	**17**
		Percent	23,10%	15,40%	4,50%	0,00%	10,70%	7,70%
	disagree	Frequency	**4**	**4**	**3**	**13**	**13**	**37**
		Percent	30,80%	15,40%	13,60%	17,30%	15,50%	16,80%
	undecided	Frequency	**2**	**3**	**2**	**7**	**24**	**38**
		Percent	15,40%	11,50%	9,10%	9,30%	28,60%	17,30%
	agree	Frequency	**2**	**5**	**8**	**23**	**38**	**76**
		Percent	15,40%	19,20%	36,40%	30,70%	45,20%	34,50%
	strongly disagree	Frequency	**2**	**10**	**8**	**32**	**0**	**52**
		Percent	15,40%	38,50%	36,40%	42,70%	0,00%	23,60%
Total		Frequency	**13**	**26**	**22**	**75**	**84**	**220**
		Percent	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

The table 4 illustrates well that 17 of the respondents are strongly disagree (7,7%), 37 people disagree (16,8%), and 38 people have withdrawn themselves from being beaten. 76 people agree and 52 people were strongly agree, so it can be concluded that 58.1% of

respondents (128 people) think that it is very important to increase healthy eating and food enjoyment.

6. Scope of Future Research

The questions raised during the research clearly demonstrated which factor is the most significant one in usage of sous-vide technology. The main objective is to reduce risk of infection, although futher aspects should be investigated in connection with the possibilities; how rich flavoured dishes could be made economically. On top of that prepared foods should remain fresh and tasty even for weeks. Those open points are answered by sous-vide, one of the technology in molecular gastronomy. This new technology compared to the currently used methodes separates food preparation and consumption both in time and at place. In the second wave of the investigation the questionnaire research should be extended to the most famous destinations of Hungarian tourism, such as Budapest (Capital town), Lake Balaton, Hortobágy and Western regions (Pécs, Szeged). In the third wave the tasting should be done through higher number of volunteers. The result in that case could analyse the connection of dependent and independent variables.

7. Summary

By writing the study, the set up goals has been achieved, although only the first hypothesis of the research was supported, the other three were rejected. The investigation should be extended to other regions of Hungary; interesting results could be probably get in the capital and the Balaton area. First, the catering technicians should familiarize themselves with the new kitchen technology procedures and then apply it to the restaurants. The opinion of kitchen profession is different about sous-vid but the technology is not called into question. The process itself needs to be complemented by traditional baking. This was confirmed by the tasting, according to the testers, it is indeed soft, beautiful and juicy, but has a boiled taste. Hungarian cuisine has been renowned and famous in the past centuries, and we have passed this tradition and passed on to the next generations. We may be proud of our chefs, such as József Marchal, who was the chef of the German Emperor, Russian Tsar and Archduke. Lukács Túrós, who perfected his skills in Paris or Eigen Egon's Oscar-winning master chef, he represented our country at several cookies at the Olympics and at the World Expo in Brussels (1958), or Tamás Széll, who got the 4th place with his team at the 30th Bocuse d'Or competition in Lyon this year. Sustainability of the environment, purchasing from local sources and ethnic kitchens (whether gluten-free) determine the priority of the next decade. I think that the regions in Kisalföld live in symbiosis, they are not inseparable each other, Kisalföld and Csallóköz are one territory, only the

Danube separate them. Real cookbooks are not decorations on bookshelves in the living room, they are often read, and they are kept on the bedside cabinet to be read before sleeping. Real cookbooks reflect life in the kitchen.

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