

TRADITIONS, FLAVOURS AND REGIONS

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The collection of traditional meals and foods was first compiled in France. The aim was to keep the national character in gastronomy with the conditions of the globalization of eating culture. The idea was rapidly proliferating in Europe and several countries were following the example of France. Today a broad list of more than 4000 traditional food items is available in Brussels which doesn't include wines, but has a rich collection of regional meals. Only in France 22 regions were introducing themselves by describing their traditional .

In Hungary collecting has started in the 90's with the guidance of French experts. Essential condition was availability of the food today in shops and markets, but it was also required to have at least 3 generations in manufacturing in the past. The product must be well known and preserved in the region concerned. Strong tradition in fabrication and popularity in consumption were fundamental requirements for a food to be registered.

A National Council for Acceptance was formed by inviting scientific experts, business people and high ranked government officers to take part in the evaluation. In the first round 301 food items were included in the list, among them local plants and animals for traditional food production, product descriptions of a typical meal for a Hungarian region and food item sold on a market. Well known local fish specialities like carp on the Tisza River or pike-perch of the Lake Balaton were among the essential raw materials in a traditional meal preparation (e.g. fisherman's soup).

The responsible governmental organisation, the Agromarketing Centrum has printed a book with the title H.I.R (News) as an abbreviation of Hagyományok (Traditions), Ízek (Flavours) and Régiók (Regions) in Hungary. It was a great success and excellent tool for introducing traditional products from the country. The collection and description of typical local food and meal has got a new driving force with the distribution of the book. Experts estimate at least three times more valuable articles for the treasure-house of Hungarian food.

From the point of view of marketing and sale most of the traditional products are from local bakeries. Very few of traditional articles are keeping their quality and safety for long time, like pepper and paprika preserved, air-dried sausages. Traditional Hungarian meals are far from well transportable and safely pre-packed articles. A lot of experiments and designs are needed to develop production series and lines for manufacturing of selected food items in a large scale.

From the first selected 301 products 89 are of sweet character and produced on the whole country. Several regions of Hungary are using sucrose from sugarbeet or honey to fulfill the sweet taste requirement, especially in the Middle-Hungary region with the centre the capital Budapest. However, in the South region (in the Low Land) people give priority to adding spices to food like red pepper (paprika) and other hot (chilli) ingredients. In contrast of it the North-Hungarian region including the border to Slovakia is giving preference to fermented products like cabbage (saurkraut), clotted milk and other dairy products. The contrary of it is the Eastern region which preserves meat products with salt in the process of pickling and curing. A very unique exception you can find in South-Western Hungary at the Mountain Mecsek with mild climate which is suitable for preserving herbal flora. Inhabitants of this region are giving preference to use medical plants in alcoholic beverages (liquors) and they are producing fantastic red wines. Their taste is slightly bitter and they represent a special characteristic taste region in Hungary.

The „taste map” of Hungary is one of the approaches to identify traditions and tastes in a fruitful combination. All geographical descriptions are challenges for tourists and represent invitations to visit places, discover the rich character of the region and taste the local food.

Hungary has a lot of traditions in breeding plants and animals for human consumption and our gastronomy has been developed over many centuries. Embedded in the middle of the Carpathian basin the Hungarian cuisine has melted all findings and innovations of the local gastronomy, therefore its effect has spread over the border. Neighbouring countries, like Austria, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia are sharing this richness and taking advantage from the treasure-chest of the regions. Welcome to the Carpathian basin and have a taste of the local food and meal for your pleasure !