

Nature park “Šargan – Mokra gora” as a major hot spot for promoting Serbian gastronomy

Goran Radivojević, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia, radivojevic.g@gmail.com

Dragan Tešanović, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

Maja Banjac, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

Nemanja Tomić, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

Nature Parks represent protected natural areas with preserved natural values. In addition to these natural values, Nature Parks also represent areas where people can satisfy other needs such as scientific, educational, cultural, health and recreational or tourism needs that are in harmony with the traditional way of life and sustainable development principles (“Official Gazette” RS 36/2009 and 88/2010). Thanks to tourism activities and promotion of several Nature Park values there has been an increase in popularity of these protected areas mainly because they can also offer other values and possibilities besides natural values.

One of these values are cultural values of which gastronomy plays an integral part. By consuming local food and drinks, visitors can familiarize themselves with the peculiarities of the area in which they are residing. This fact is confirmed in the research of Okumus et al. (2005) which shows that traditional gastronomy should represent a solid base of the tourism offer in each destination where visitors can feel the authentic cultural experience by consuming gastronomy products.

The goal of this paper is to determine the structure of the gastronomic offer in restaurants which are located in the area of “Šargan-Mokra Gora” Nature Park and to investigate which national dishes are included in the offer and promoted as representative dishes of Serbian gastronomy.

The Nature Park is located between the Tara and Zlatibor Mountains in Western Serbia. When it comes to gastronomy, what makes it unique and diverse is its favorable geographical location. This area is well known for livestock farming which is the dominant economic activity in the area. Therefore, meat and other products of animal origin, accompanied by mountain cereal and fruit represent basic ingredients used by local people for preparing meals.

The area of the Nature Park has a large number of restaurants. For the purposes of our research we focused on seven randomly selected restaurants of which “Drvengrad” at Mečavnik and “Šarganska osmica” offer food and lodging services and are categorized as tourist facilities. The other objects are several different types of restaurants: “Viskonti”, “Lotika”, “Jatare”, “Vitasi” and “Mladost”. We obtained our research results by interviewing the management of these facilities, the management of the Nature Park as well as by examining and analyzing the current menus.

In the offer of each restaurant national and local dishes are dominant: a bun with egg, serbian cream cheese and gravy, sour milk, "mokrogorska" local plate (smoked ham, local cheese "mokrogorski" and a special kind of pork cracklings), corn bread called proja, kačamak (white corn flour cooked with salty water and cream cheese), "šargan" cheese pie made with local kind of cheese, various types of homemade bread and cake, cooked cabbage in terracota pots, veal baked in terracota pots at high heat made from glow, lamb cooked in milk and roasted lamb. The dessert offer includes lazy pies with apples and sour cherries, pies with prunes and fresh cheese, fried dough with homemade jam from forest fruit and baklavas. All objects have an indication that they serve traditional dishes. What makes this part of Serbia recognizable are the cured meat products which are dried by using beech wood. The most famous of these products, "Užički pršut", which has protected geographical origin, is not properly highlighted and promoted even though it is one of the most prized and valued products of the area.

In order for the current offer to improve, it needs to be completed with products which have been in use for centuries by the local people: forest honey, sweet sirup made from wild strawberries, homemade juniper brandy.

Based on our research results we can conclude that the Nature Park "Šargan-Mokra Gora" is an important hot spot for the promotion of Serbian gastronomy. However, it is still not being used to its fullest potential. The Park itself could influence the formation of a unique gastronomy offer and the preserved natural environment and the implementation of current ecological trends in food production could contribute to achieving this. Considering that the diet in this areas is based on animal origin products, free range livestock farming as well as organically farmed products would complete the gastronomy offer of this area. Also, making organic spice gardens within the restaurant facilities would contribute to creating unforgettable tastes and aromas which every tourist would want to take along with him.



Hall, C.M., Mitchell, R. (2000), We are what we eat. Food, Tourism and Globalization. *Tourism, Culture and Communication*, 2(1), pp. 29-37.

Okumus, B., Okumus, F., Mc Kercher, B. (2005): Incorporating local and international cuisines in the marketing of tourism destinations: The cases of Hong Kong and Turkey. *Tourism Management* 28 (2007) 253-261.

TOS (2016): 52 ukusa Srbije – gastronomsko turistički putokazi. Turistička organizacija Srbije.

Zakon i zaštiti prirode, "Službeni glasnik" RS 36/2009 i 88/2010