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## **THE CONSUMPTION OF LOCAL FOOD IN RESTAURANTS: A STUDY IN KAŞ**

Serdar EREN\*

### **ABSTRACT**

Gastronomy is an element to promote sustainability of the destination. Some destinations in Turkey managed to reach the needed sustainability by promoting their cuisines with their local products. Alacati, Ayvalik are some destinations that are popular with their cuisines and local products, apart from classical tourism activities such as sea, sand and sun. Even though one of the other destinations that is Kaş, studied here, has almost the same artisanal products, its cuisine is definitely not popular. This research aims to find out the reasons behind the gastronomy tourism sustainability by searching the local food usage among chefs in Kaş-Antalya. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with 10 chefs to argue the barriers to the local food usage. The findings suggest that there is a lack of information on products and communication among chefs and the local suppliers, the supply side within the local producers are weak and the relationships among retail stakeholders are not very active.

**Keywords:** Gastronomy, Tourism, Local Food, Chefs.

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## INTRODUCTION

Local food products play an important role in the maintenance of food tourism by providing a connection between local culinary stakeholders such as chefs, local producers and tourists (Gale, 1997; Duram & Cawley, 2012). Local food has a potential to stimulate the needs within the sustainable tourism agenda, by encompassing the concerns about food safety (Reynolds-Alliea & Fields, 2012). It also improves the economic and environmental sustainability of both tourism and the rural host community through encouraging sustainable agricultural practices and the impacts of agriculture on the rural environment to visitor demands for more “authentic” tourist experiences (Sims, 2009).

Having seen as an alternative to the current globalized food system (Cawley, Gaffey, & Gillmor, 2012), local food enables the consumers to have a re-connection with nature, increases the amount of natural, healthy and authentic foods in diets (Duram & Cawley, 2012), mediates to support the local communities and sustainability of food resources (Gössling & Hall, 2013; Martinez, 2010). In addition, it may cater for new personal connection between the stakeholders on the basis of trust and cultural interaction (Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003; Kneafsey, Holloway, Venn, Cox, Dowler, & Tuomainen, 2004; Kirwan, 2006; Clark and Chabrel, 2007).

The reported research has two main objectives: (1) to investigate the locally grown agricultural products which are important to promote the restaurants and the food tourism activities at the destination (2) In order to find out the intentions of chefs on the usage the local food products and also the obstacles preventing them from using these products. Culinary stakeholders can utilize the findings by understanding the practical implications of local food to use in their business and to differentiate the products in their establishments.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### *Meaning and Scope of Local food*

One of the most significant discussions about the local food in gastronomy, tourism and agriculture literature is its definition (Wilkins, Bowdish, & Sobal, 2002). Sonnino & Marsden (2006) point out that “local” has a series of different meanings in the context of food that relate to the place and methods of production and exchange, the factors that drive consumer demand, and the influence of

producers in the food system. Morris & Buller (2003) also noted that local food is the food that is produced, processed, marketed and consumed within a geographically circumscribed area.

Many arguments have been specified to clarify the meaning of the local food. Among those distance between the production and consumption has dominated the literature. Some researchers think population of the city is important to determine the distance and the food can be accepted as “local” if the in-between distance is lower than 400 kilometres. Others support 100 miles in general considering shipping time and delivery conditions of the products (Sirieix, Kledal, & Sulitang, 2011; Smith & MacKinnon, 2007; Ricketts Hein & Watts, 2010). Similar debates are also taking place within the production methods such as aquaponics, hydroponic and permaculture, sustainable agricultural practices, factors affecting the consumers purchasing decision, labeling the food items such as “locally grown”, “organic” and “natural” (Goodman & DuPuis, 2002; Pollan, 2006; Inwood, Sharp, Moore, & Stinner, 2009; Duram & Cawley, 2012).

Even though the generalisability of much published research on the definition is problematic, a considerable amount of literature has been published on the scope of local food that it is associated with consumers seeking high quality which they may define in terms of nutritional value, freshness, carbon prints, clean production, animal welfare, environmental impacts of transporting food over long distances (Parrott, Wilson, & Murdoch, 2002; Born & Purcell, 2006; Pearson, Henryks, Trott, Jones, Parker, Dumaesq, & Dyball, 2011). The scope of local food can be examined in several different ways: Local food can be a single product (Peruvian potatoes, Almonds of Datça) or a combined product (Dijon Mustard, Turkish White cheese of Ezine, Oaxacan Mole etc.) which is unique to destination.

### *Chefs and Local Food*

Although the idea to use local products in restaurants became popular in the last decade, less is known about the role of chefs as purchasers and users of local food in their restaurants and also their relationships with the producers (Strobehn & Gregorie, 2003; Duram & Cawley, 2012). Most of the research taken into study by attracting tourists attention and motivation to particular food items (Telfer &

Wall, 2000; Kozak, 2002; Torres, 2002; Ryu & Yang, 2006; Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009; Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012; Ohe & Kurihara, 2013), integrating food items and cuisines as an attraction of holiday through the instrumentality of promoting and marketing destinations (Okumus, Okumus & McKercher, 2007; Hall & Sharples, 2008).

Few researchers have been able to draw on any systematic research into the connections between chefs, restaurants and their intentions to use local food. A number of studies have examined the positive motivations of chefs who would like to buy local products, These drives are: Freshness, safe food, city farms, certified organic, supporting local economy, less chemicals in food products, health and diet issues (Barham, Lind, & Jett, 2005; Giovannucci, Barham, & Pirog, 2010; Sharma, Moon, & Strohbehn, 2014). Among the results of the studies some important conclusions

have been determined as barriers which are costs, year-round availability, lack of quality and quantity, on-time delivery, safety, package size, inconvenience of dealing with multiple suppliers, reliability of sources (Inwood, et al., 2009; Schmit, Lucke, & Hadcock, 2010; Reynolds-Alliea & Fields, 2012; Nilsson, 2016).

### Local Food in Kaş

Kaş is located in Antalya city region, southwest of Turkey. With the mountains covering the area, it has many small villages and many small producers. Apart from the Antalya city, famous with agriculture and major source of most vegetables and fruits in the country, there are several artisanal producers located around the Kaş. Table 1 shows the major products which can be identified as “Local” to the area. It should be noted that the table 1 only shows the local artisanal products that have a higher gastronomical value.

**Table 1: Local Artisanal Food in Kaş Area**

Group	Types	Source
Seafood	Grouper, leer, dentex or swordfish, red mullet, Red Gurnard, Sea Bream, Dover Sole, Conger Eel, Octopus, several types of Crabs, Sea Urchins, Mussels	WWF-Turkiye (2015) Antalya Department of Agriculture and Livestock (2017)
Dairy	Butter, Artisanal Cheese, Goat milk.	Tangala (2017)
Meat	Goat, Veal, Beef	Antalya Department of Agriculture and Livestock (2017)
Game	Quail, Partridge, Duck, Goose	(Antalya Department of Agriculture and Livestock) (2017)
Grains	Almonds, Several types of artisanal beans, peas and lentils, Chia and Quinoa.	Elbademcifligi (2017)
Vegetables	All types of Tomatoes, and many other vegetables. Mushrooms including Shi-take, Saffron Milk, Chanterelle, Morel, Oyster, Boletus, and Yellowleg.	WWF-Turkiye (2015) Flora Mediterranean Garden (2017)
Herbs	Aromatic Herbs such as; Chervil, 4 types of Thyme, Sage, Rosemary, Dill, Tarragon, Chives, Corriander. Pot Herbs Such as; Leaf Mustard, Mallow, Fennel, Wild Raddish, Wild Spinach and Watercress	WWF-Turkiye (2015) Başak (2012)
Spices	Black Pepper, Green peppercorns, Cumin, Sumach, Chillies, Nigella, Nettle and Flax seeds.	WWF-Turkiye (2015)
Sauces and Syrups	Pomegranate Syrup, Carob bean Syrup, Grape Molasses, Several types of Jams and Glaze. Olive oil, Almond Oil, several types of Honey including Thyme, Pine, orange blossom, Heather, Clover, and Alfalfa	Elbademcifligi (2017) Antalya Department of Agriculture and Livestock (2017)

*Note. Table 1 has been adapted from the several national and international project reports, websites of organic farms and seafood producers through the 100 miles radius of Kaş area.*

## METHODOLOGY

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, individual semi-structured interviews were

undertaken to obtain more information from restaurants and chefs. This type of interview allows researchers the flexibility to systematically ask respondents a series of

predetermined questions related to the inquiry, but also the opportunity to probe beyond answers provided (Berg & Lune, 2012). Another advantage of using this approach is that, due to face-to-face interviews, it helps to gain more detailed information about underpinning motivations, knowledge, and belief and this results in a higher percentage of completed answers (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Qualitative methods are particularly useful for revealing the rich symbolic world that underlies needs, desires, meanings, and choice, currently, the most popular qualitative research methods are focus groups interviews and market-oriented ethnography (Kozinets, 2002). The interviews lasted approximately 40-60 minutes in length. Interviewees participated on their own terms so as not to cause any disruptions to interviewees or their businesses, particularly prior to or during busy times of operation. Casual dining restaurants with formal table service were chosen as survey participants, particularly because, previous studies showed that these are the restaurants that typically have interest in purchasing local food (Kirby, 2006; Curtis, Cowee, Haverkamp, & Gatzke, 2008; Curtis & Cowee, 2009). To identify the sample size, various web sites of the restaurants are reviewed and all casual dining restaurants are visited in Kaş city center.

Descriptive coding is applied in the study. The subjective nature of coding process enables the researchers to interpret the data with their own background, experience and beliefs related with research. Audio files have been transcribed into Ms word text format. The ideas and the issues of the respondents were chosen by reading the text continuously. Statements were grouped into categories by considering relationships, frequencies and meaning across codes. The Synthesizing process was applied to data to obtain the themes which creates the theory of the research (Saldaña, 2009).

To understand the usage of local food, five questions were asked to the chefs;

- 1.How do the restaurants and chefs define local food?
- 2.What motivations and challenges do restaurants and chefs have for accessing local foods from the farmers and/or farmers' market vendors, or wholesale distributors?

3.What types of relationships do restaurants and chefs have with farmers and/or farmers' market vendors or wholesale distributors?

4.How do restaurants and chefs conduct messages about local foods to their consumers?

5. What are the future prospects of purchasing local foods from local sources?

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Chefs Knowledge of Local Products*

The aim of first question is to understand how chefs define the local food in Kaş area. The answers indicate that chefs usually look for authenticity and the variety of the products that are unique to the kaş area. Chef 3 narrated the products he uses in his seafood restaurant.

*Chef 3: I think it is related with the territory and the uniqueness of the products. For example; we have leer, dentex or swordfish, and octopus from our territory which we use in our menus. I can say that we have not much other products that are unique to our territory.*

Chef 6 states that it's all products that produced in Antalya region which is the major source of vegetable and fruit production in Turkey: *As you know all around Antalya is the major source of various common vegetable and fruit products for Turkey. Around kaş, there are many vegetable products which is known as local food. It's any type of product produced locally around the area.*

Chefs knowledge about the local food is supported by previous studies (De Puis & Goodman, 2005; Ilbery & Maye, 2006). Duram & Crawley (2012) states that most of the chefs are aware of the products on their area, however, to define these products accurately is a different manner. The definition of local food and beverages is not only about locally grown produce, but should also include food that requires raw material from outside the area, but that is processed locally and thereby given a local or regional identity (Nummedal & Hall, 2006; Kim et al., 2009).

### *Logistics and Operational Barriers*

Restaurants need a stable supplier to maintain their business. They have delivery days which pre-ordered products are provided by the supplier accurate and on time through the business needs. This creates complications for chefs to reach the local products as the wholesalers or middleman

usually sells the products of different region which is also illustrated with the narration of Chef 5 as; *We have a farmers market once a week here in Kaş. As our purchasing days are Mondays and Thursdays, we barely shop from the farmers market, only when we need specific products such as herbs and greens that we can use as dehydrated. On the other hand, we are mostly using the wholesalers and local middleman to supply our products.* Most of the local food suppliers do not have a delivery service. This is an important barrier, also identified similarly in previous studies (Strohbehn & Gregoire, 2003; Inwood et al., 2009; Dougherty, Brown, & Green, 2013).

Farmers usually travel to the city once a week and the fluctuations of the price and quality changes every week. Stability of quality and prices, in another words standardization of the products, is another barrier that affect the restaurants purchasing decisions. Chef 5 and chef 3 narrated the problem as;

*Chef 5: I rarely use the local products. Prices of the local food are usually are not stable during the season. There are many problems related with the taste, texture, size, and appearance. So I have three different companies providing me the products in a same stable price and standard quality all season long.*

*Chef 3: Fluctuations during the season affect a lot on my costs and budget. That's because I use wholesalers. Going to farmers market is nice, I do it when I am not busy but I want all my products to be shipped at my door which saves time and money.*

Chefs need their products at the appropriate quality and quantity. A supplier needs to satisfy the chefs needs in the restaurant business during the high season, it becomes a challenge to find a good supplier, Chef 10 described this situation as follows; *I worked as a chef and restaurant owner in Kaş for many years. I always try to follow the media and newspapers to get inspiration from other chefs and cuisines. I always try to contact and negotiate with local farmers and wholesalers about the specs of the product, it was really easy to get the appropriate quality and quantity of local food 20 years ago but as the giant markets rise, it's hard to find real local farmers or producers in the area.*

These similar barriers are consistent with the previous studies (Casselmann 2010; Reynolds-

Alliea & Fields 2012; Nelson, 2014). Curtis & Cowee (2009) conducted a research in Nevada. Among the results of the study; incomplete information, lack of awareness, inadequate availability, and product variety were found as barriers to restaurants purchasing decisions. Alonso & O'Neill (2010) found that price was a modest factor in restaurants purchasing decisions.

### ***Chefs' relationship with Local Producers***

Small restaurants use the local markets and retailers as their volume is low and inventory turnover is not very huge. They do their orders or shopping every two or three days to maintain the freshness and quality. Chef 2 explained that; *We mostly use the local product suppliers, a big grocery store and a butcher at the center of the city, because it's in a convenient location. If we are out of any product we basically go and shop from those places. This also reduces my leftovers and costs.*

Communication and supporting each other is one of the main problems among the culinary stakeholders. Chef need to have a dialogue with local producers about which products they need, when they need and how much they need. Typically either farmers or the local fishermen don't know the exact amount or specs of the products they supply. Chef 4 and Chef 7 narrated the situation as follows;

*Chef 4: I have been working in Kaş for 5 years. In the first year, I wanted to contact with the local people to reach interesting local products and learn different preparation and cooking styles, I drove all around the mountains and villages. I found lots of different ingredients. However, I found no one producing or selling the ingredients that cater the restaurants' needs.*

*Chef 7: There are two local women selling herbs around the streets but its mostly small quantities. They usually cannot provide a service needed in restaurants business. I have a wholesale supplier when I order the products, I need to get it on the delivery day to keep my business work.*

Communication issues related with buying and selling of local food, improving local economies and interaction among the culinary stakeholders are supported by the previous studies (Renting et al., 2003; Kneafsey et al., 2004; Kirwan, 2006; Clark & Chabrel, 2007). In this research the communication and interaction is weak but it can be improved with the construction of networks through the stakeholders.

### ***Chefs' relationship with customers related to Local Food***

One of the important issues related with chefs is that the way they promote the local food. Because they are a member of the stakeholders community, chef and restaurants shall have a marketing duty of the local products to raise the sustainability of tourism destinations. This situation is narrated by Chef 9 and Chef 2 below.

*Chef 9: I am very interested about the customers thoughts. The knowledge of customers and their feedback brought us here. When the customers ask for a dish or an ingredient related with the local products, we try to provide from local farmers market and prepare it for them but because of seasonality and also fishing ban during the high season, we cannot add these dishes to our menu.*

*Chef 2: I am buying yogurt, eggs, butter, and olives from a local producer. During the breakfast when customers are at the restaurant the producers makes the shipment. In that way, I give the message to my customers that everything they eat are local. I also inform my waiters and add the fresh produce local items to my menu.*

Chef 9 narrates as they have stronger relationships with the local providers during the peak seasons to satisfy the extra needs of their customers and Chef 2 likes to buy products from local people and let them deliver during the operation hours to show their customers that they support the local producers and always this action creates a value of authenticity in the eyes of the customer. These results are consistent with the previous studies. Inwood et al. (2009) states that using unique and new local items can be a great strategy to boost up the appeal of regular customers which is good for business. Another benefit of highlighting local food as special in different flexible communication tools is that particular menu items are in season and potentially attracting, even more, customers into the restaurants (Roy, 2016).

### ***Future Prospects of Purchasing Local Food***

Future motivations about using local products and future plans of purchasing local food products from farmers and farmers market vendors, and/or wholesale distributors were asked to respondents to understand the future of supply and demand situations at the area. Chefs are narrated with different views as follows:

*Chef 8: 20 years ago there we not a lot of markets or giant retail stores. We used to prepare all the products from winter to be ready for the season. We were preparing brined seafood and vegetables, salt-curing the seafood and meat and drying the herbs and greens but nowadays because of the convenient products and the lack of products during the season, all these habits seem to be forgotten.*

Chef 8 thinks that the traditional methods and techniques they used to do 20 years ago was lost because of the wholesale and giant supermarket convenience products. This result is supported by the literature (Venn, Kneafsey, Holloway, Cox, Dowler, & Tuomainen, 2006). Ver Ploeg, Breneman, Farrigan, Hamrick, Hopkins, Kaufman, & Tuckermanty (2009) imply that the market choices, price, availability, and transaction costs associated with obtaining local foods can be a barrier to consumers, especially in low populated areas. To regain the traditional culinary practices and increase the usage of the local food, there must be more establishments such as bakeries, coffee shops and ethnic restaurants in the area too (Green & Dougherty, 2008).

*Chef 10: The products in our landscape supports and shapes the cuisine which is famous with seafood and edible green plants. Whenever we want something from our local producers, they always do their best to provide it all seasons. The thrust and support each ways make our business to grow bigger and our cuisine become more famous.*

*Chef 9: We are usually aware of the products and their seasonality of freshness. To improve the food retail system and to support the local farmers, local economy and sustainability there must be a communication between the stakeholders. We cannot do it only by chatting five minutes in the farmers market once every week.*

Chefs implied that there is a connection between the restaurants and the producers however the level of this type of communication must be increased. These results are consistent with previous research, According to Hinrichs (2000), relations between producers and consumers is often presented as immediate, personal and enacted in shared space and also Roy (2016) draws an attention to stakeholders relationships which should be practised in terms of responsibility, and care for each other.

## CONCLUSION

The current study was attempted to understand the barriers and problems of local food consumption by the restaurants and chefs in Kaş area. Results from personal interviews throughout the chefs provided a comprehensive view of the barriers between the producers and restaurants. These barriers can be grouped in three different sections such as; operational barriers (costs, year-round availability, lack of quality and quantity, delivery and reliability of sources) which forces the restaurants to buy from the middlemen (Duram & Cawley, 2012). This barrier seems to be eliminated by using the farm unions and fair trade associations in Iowa (Strohbehn & Gregoire, 2003), relationship barriers (interpersonal connections, trust, and cultural interaction) which are also found significant barrier in a research conducted in Colorado-USA (Starr, Card, Benepe, Auld, Lamm, Smith, & Wilken, 2003), and future prospects (lack of availability of local traditions, shortage of the markets which supports the interaction and communication of the local culinary stakeholders, Lack of marina fauna and species and illegal poaching of fish products) which is also supported with the literature (Schmit, & Hadcock, 2010).

To overcome the problems related with the situation, some recommendations are also suggested. There is strong presence of local food mostly produced by local ecological farms and seafood companies. In order for restaurants and chefs to reach these products, an active retail marketing tools shall be conducted in the area. Gössling & Hall (2013) proposed a solution to solve the situation by re-organizing the culinary sustainability by focusing on the social, environmental and economic dimensions of food systems including restaurants, catering services, and all food service establishments. To achieve that type of a system all the stakeholders related with tourism such as academics, tourism planners, chefs, restaurants, farmers, and producers need to unify with the local authorities and implement mixed projects to the area.

Despite the reported barriers in this study, it seems that chefs are willing to use the local products. However they probably don't know the way to obtain the ingredients. On the contrary, local producers want to sell their products but they also are not aware of the ingredients that chefs' need. According to Inwood et. al (2002),

its expected that restaurants and chefs would demonstrate active engagement in existing network structures (e.g., such as membership in farm or culinary organizations promoting local foods) in order to effectively access information or a supply of local food. To increase the awareness of local product usage, chefs and local producers, both sides of production and consumption need to be made familiar each other. To accomplish this familiarization, further research and prospective projects shall build on practical cross training of chefs and local producers within the related fields.

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