

World Tourism Organization



# UNWTO

## Second Global Report on Gastronomy Tourism

Affiliate Members Report: Volume sixteen



# **Second Global Report on Gastronomy Tourism**

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### **Affiliate Members Report, Volume sixteen – Second Global Report on Gastronomy Tourism**

Published by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Madrid, Spain  
First printing: May 2017  
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Printed in Spain

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Citation:

*World Tourism Organization (2017), Affiliate Members Report, Volume sixteen – Second Global Report on Gastronomy Tourism, UNWTO, Madrid*

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ISBN printed version: 978-92-844-1869-5  
ISBN electronic version: 978-92-844-1870-1

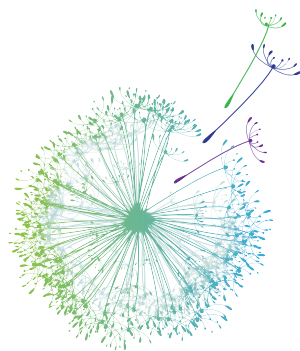
Design and printing: UNWTO

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2017  
INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
FOR DEVELOPMENT



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# Foreword



## **Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General**

Gastronomy is a fashionable trend, a hobby for thousands, and one of the main reasons for many to travel. People seek to experience food in the same way that they seek out other elements of different cultures like art, music and architecture.

Gastronomy tourism offers enormous potential in stimulating local, regional and national economies and enhancing sustainability and inclusion. It contributes positively to many levels of the tourism value chain, such as agriculture and local food manufacturing.

Linking gastronomy and tourism also provides a platform for the promotion of cultures through their cuisine. This not only assists in destination branding, but also helps to promote sustainable tourism through preserving valuable cultural heritage, empowering and nurturing pride amongst communities, and enhancing intercultural understanding. Through a visit to a food festival, cooking class or farm-to-table dining experience, tourists garner a better sense of local values and traditions.

2017 has been designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. It is now more important than ever for destinations to maximize the potential of gastronomy tourism to contribute to economic growth, social inclusion, cultural and environmental preservation, and mutual understanding.

Yet, to fulfil this potential, destinations must adapt by understanding and forecasting demand, creating networks with all local stakeholders and develop adequate products and marketing strategies. Support is also required to foster skilled human capital.

This report, developed by the UNWTO Affiliate Members Programme, aims at showcasing how gastronomy tourism can be a driver for the modern tourist hungry to create authentic yet memorable experiences and a pillar of sustainable tourism. We would like to thank each of the 60 contributors to the report, including UNWTO Member States, Affiliate Members and partner organizations, who provided the tried and tested case studies included in the report. I trust that the initiatives outlined will provide an excellent point of reference for stakeholders on the immense potential gastronomy tourism has to offer.

## 3.6

# Gastronomy Tourism: Challenges and Opportunities to Value Traditional Mexican Cuisine

*Humberto Thomé-Ortiz, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México*

Traditional Mexican cuisine is a living cultural expression with a long tradition, age-old skills, culinary techniques and ancestral ingredients. Mexican gastronomy is one of the fruits of the sea and the earth; from wild and field-grown origins, as well as Pre-Hispanic ingredients enriched by the mixing with European traditions. The five regions include the north, centre, high plateau, south and southeast in which every cuisine is unique, and is characterized and supported by the ecosystem and culture.

In 2010, Mexican Gastronomy was declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, and became one of the first cuisines around the world to achieve this distinction. The basis of the Mexican gastronomy is native corn; therefore, its increasing volume is a fundamental issue in the context of the globalization of food and the introduction of genetically modified maize.

The recognition of Traditional Mexican Cuisine as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity entails a major opportunity to view it as a strategic source to generate income, and gives it universal value as part of the culture of humanity; stimulating policy making directed towards its preservation and promotion.

In 2015, the Mexican government implemented the National Cuisine Promotion Policy, whose main objective is the preservation of gastronomy and the generation of new opportunities for the development of the sectors involved. Among the strategic areas, tourism is a key element, allowing gastronomy to be the basis for creating different touristic routes, with regional cuisines of Mexico<sup>5</sup> as the main attraction. The purpose of this case study is to analyse the challenges and opportunities facing gastronomy tourism as a tool to enhance the value of traditional Mexican cuisine.

### **Opportunities:**

Gastronomy tourism is one of the most promising tools for traditional cuisine, through the positioning of Mexico as a world-class gastronomy destination. The culinary richness of the country represents the perfect opportunity to add value to the emblematic meals via tourism. This has the potential to improve the living conditions across all sectors involved in the value chain of Mexican gastronomy, and a major integration and participation of different demographics. In this regard, perfectly planned gastronomy tourism strategies can contribute to the increased appreciation of farmers, traditional cooks and



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chefs, at the same time providing motivation to protect diversity and bicultural heritage of the regions. Thus, gastronomy tourism provides the ideal conditions for the enrichment of gastronomy, and thereby achieving preservation of the tangible and intangible components of the Mexican Cuisine.

#### **Challenges:**

In spite of the benefits associated with gastronomy tourism, it is necessary to think about the challenges that local governments, educational institutions and civil organizations have to face in order to reach their respective development goals. It is important to have an equitable distribution of the benefits provided by gastronomy tourism among the sectors involved. Not only is it crucial that farmers, cooks and chefs are seen as an integral part of the tourism value chain, but also that the proposals offer them a central role with the intention to preserve biodiversity and gastronomic culture. The real challenge is to overcome the stereotypes generated in culinary tourism centred on restaurants, and to take travellers to the real source where they can taste local dishes and interact with the cooks.

It is vital to think about tourism as a means to re-evaluate traditional Mexican Cuisine. It is therefore important to prevent any misunderstanding in the importance of this resource, for example by reducing it to solely an economic income. Furthermore, there is a risk of allowing excessive exposure of the traditional techniques and ingredients, which may lead to new dishes that do not have any ties to the values and traditions of the Mexican cuisine, in which case, the preservation of the gastronomic heritage could be compromised.

#### **Conclusions:**

The objective of enhancing traditional Mexican cuisine through tourism is to preserve biocultural heritage, encourage social integration and boost the economic growth of the country. To accomplish this, it is essential to target policies that take social, economic and environmental factors into consideration with actions directed towards educating, planning and managing the culinary heritage of the traditional Mexican towns.