

# **DISSERTATION**

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**2020**



**BUDAPEST BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**University of Applied Sciences**

**Faculty of Commerce, Catering and Tourism**

# **The evergrowing phenomenon of slow food in the Northern Hungarian region**

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Tourism and catering

Catering and Hotel Management

Full-time course

2020

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Dissertation data	
Dissertation title	The evergrowing phenomenon of slow food in the Northern Hungarian region..... ..... .....
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Deadline for submission	2 0 2 0 0 5 1 5 Total page number 79

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# Acknowledgement

The veritable support and vividness of this thesis is owed to all its collaborators. I would like to thank the selflessness contribution of Bodor Enikő, Bodor Gyula, Susán-Fekete Vanda, Pásztor Judit, Szalai Ferenc, Bokros Barnabás, Sziebig Tímea, Kovács László and Ladóczki Vilmos. Furthermore I am very much obliged to my friends, the participants of 'web-dinner' and my convenient kitchen assistants. Last but not least I sincerely appreciate the guidance of Dr. Gundel János.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Significance of slow food

A few years ago when I first learned from the term slow food, and told my friends and people around me about it, perhaps asked them if they knew what the phrase meant, the largest group of them surely answered something similar: - *Does it mean that we chew the food longer?*-. They also often referred to the healthy benefits of eating with a more moderate speed.

If they only knew that behind this simple expression there is a more than 30 years old movement. A movement dedicated to the new approach to food, the centre of our lives.

The meaning of slow food is coming from a play with words. It opposes a group of foods which people know as 'fast food' and which unfortunately rules our society in the recent decades.

In contrast with fast food, the good of mass production, which is the nest of pollution not only inside, in our bodies, but outside, in the form of economical and agricultural pollution as well, slow food was born, with its motto: 'Good, clean and fair' food is the right of every human.

Good, because the quality of food is significant. A certain food, whether it is an ingredient, or a complete dish can be determined through its pleasant aroma and flavour which is carried uniquely and entirely in its naturalness. Clean, as it has no harm to its environment including the flora, fauna, and feeders. The food is sustainably produced, marketed and consumed. It also is the part of its local biodiversity, this way protecting the ecosystem. Eventually, fair, since the conditions of labour to produce it are generated respectfully. This way the hard



work of producers is acknowledged, and economies, communities can practice sympathy and solidarity. Fair food also strengthens social and cultural diversity.

In my thesis I am celebrating on the idea and mentality of the slow food movement, firstly on the general level. I would like to get an acquaintance on the system the movement uses, to bring together and restore the agents of a consequential relationship: human with food and home.

Secondly, my intention is to incorporate the coefficient of Hungary, more precisely the Northern Hungarian region and the *Mátra-Cserhát* area, which has such a diversity of nature, culture, and gastronomy. These treasures must be recognized by people because they have the ability to teach us something unique. Something that the slow food movement successfully embraces all around the world. Something that the generations of the 21st century have somehow forgotten. This is humility. Being humble for the nature and their gifts, the animals, fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Our ancestors, their memories and their opportunity to spend their lives in an environment that was clean and in some sense blessed. Also, their methods for everyday life: medication, agriculture, kitchen activity. The people from this era were able to be humble for all these, this is why they lived their lives according to simple, peaceful wisdom.

As it is proven by the slow food movement, and throughout my research I saw myself, that imprints of these, sometimes ancient methodologies and knowledges still exist. Moreover there is a group of our society, who reach for these imprints and perhaps construct them in their work or lifestyle.

A substantive part of this group is a group of agriculturists, primary producers, food industry professionals (wine makers, cheese makers, butchers, confectioners, bakers), also gastronomy professionals (chefs and sommeliers) and food sellers (market vendors and owners of food shops, cafés, groceries), who play a major role in the initiation of popularizing the movement and arousing the interest of consumers.

Thankfully, when I was in search of possible interviewees in my home region, the *Mátra-Cserhát* area, I found plenty of persons who practice the mentality, in their own interpretation. I proposed to meet them, and talk about their realization of the concept of 'slow', their everyday life being a primary producer or an entrepreneur, who takes into consideration our folklore and produces their goods in a sustainable way.

In my opinion it is our responsibility as the inhabitants of this area to spread the word and learn about these producers. Supporting them, choosing them instead of chains, is the only way to stand up for the cause of slow movement which is about to pick up the gauntlet against today's food system.

## **1.1 Purpose of the research**

### *1.1.1 Hypotheses*

The slow food movement is based on a system, which is a whole new idea differing from the structure of food system today. In today's reality the key figure is money, which dominates the industry, and around which all actions are operated. This leads to neverending competition between businesses and now, due to globalization, it takes place worldwide. The attributes characterizing this system are competitive, efficient, and leading. Competitiveness and efficiency are very important traits, although if we exclude loyalism, both carry the incident of treason. And leadership is just being in charge without sharing something with others. Being truly the part and head of a community is only the privilege of a charismatic leader. (MAD, 2017)

The lack of the above mentioned traits in the world of today's food industry call for different build-up of participants. The idea for solution is a fair alliance between producers and co-producers of food and gastronomy. Co-operation between farmers, primary producers, gastro-professionals and the everyday persons. The participants of slow food movement support each other, by the producer providing quality food to the table of a family, who learn about the producer, their altruistic, nature-centered work every day and spread the word for a good cause.

With the hypotheses of my research I examined the phenomenon of slow food along the guideline of these two participants. I compiled two hypotheses referring to the point of view of producers and occurrent customers, so called co-producers of goods prepared in the mentality of slow food. I also included a territorial perspective, where I chose to conduct my research.

H1: There is an evergrowing phenomenon of producers of gastronomy flourishing with the virtues of slow food mentality in the *Mátra-Cserhát* area.

H2: The everyday person of *Mátra-Cserhát* area is interested in virtues offered by the slow food mentality and local gastronomical cultural heritage (GCH).

The two hypotheses of mine are strongly interrelated and connected. Unlike in our food system in the 20th-21st century, in the model of slow food movement there are no closed sections of economy - *vide* the behaviour of demand and supply of customers and suppliers - not interfering on any level. Instead the producers and co-producers share some territories, mainly expertise. Every individual is a little bit of a chef, farmer, sommelier or fisherman and *vice versa*.

I chose my hypotheses in the hope of being able to get to know more about the culture, gastronomy and food system in my home region, and perhaps, popularize it amongst our society.

### 1.1.2 *Aims*

As I indulged in the topic of slow food, I soon reached the recognition, that although the movement is based on some strict and crucial points which make up the fierce roots, its body is built up from edifications of simple, native people. It is what, in my opinion makes the movement so original.

I wanted to take part in this initiation with my aspect. This is why I chose it as my object of research.

Northern Hungary, being nearly the last on the GDP performance list (KSH, 2020) of all Hungarian regions for a long time is often mentioned only on the score of this information. People, including the inhabitants of the region frequently negotiate on this fact, and bring it into focus in their everyday life as well. They

forget about all the cultural patterns and customs, all the colorfulness of biodiversity which the *Mátra-Cserhát* area carries. It - among other things - happens like this because the current generations are not acquainted properly.

My aim is to acquire more about the culture, and most likely, the gastronomy of this land, through the agriculturists, cheesemakers, butchers, and chefs who live in all corners of it. I hope, this way I can successfully draw attention and gain the appreciation to the heritage of Northern Hungary.

I would like to also interpret the mindset of slow food and lifestyle, which so many of these gastronomical professionals already understood and live by. The subjects of the interpretation would be locals.

### 1.1.3 *Objectives*

My first objective is to introduce the concept of slow food and the slow food movement.

My second objective is to map manufacturers adding up to the GCH of the Northern Hungarian region, more precisely, Cserhát-Mátra area.

My third objective is to meet the local manufacturers in person and exchange our views on the concept of slow food.

My fourth objective is to get to know more about the activity and methods of these local manufacturers.

My fifth objective is to connect these local manufactures to the local inhabitants.

My sixth objective is to raise the awareness of slow food and lifestyle to local inhabitants.

## 2 Basis and literature review – The slow food movement

### 2.1 History of slow food

Slow Food movement was founded by Carlo Petrini, an Italian politician and activist in the 1980's. The movement started with the *Arcigola* agricultural organization in 1986, to resist the opening of a *McDonalds* fast food restaurant in Rome, near the monumental Spanish steps. This inspired the name and the official symbol, a snail. Three years later in 1989, the declaration of establishment of Slow Food was signed by 15 delegate countries in Paris, France:

'Born and nurtured under the sign of industrialization, this century first invented the machine and then modelled its lifestyle after it. Speed became our shackles. We fell prey to the same virus: 'the fast life' that fractures our customs and assails us even in our own homes, forcing us to ingest "fast food" (slowfood.com, 2015).'

Slow Food is neither a classic association nor a non-governmental organization. It is a network-based movement which can be described most likely as an eco-gastronomic one, equally focusing on and deducting conclusion from economical and gastronomical issues.

'Appropriately, we will start in the kitchen, with Slow Food. To escape the tediousness of "fast-food", let us rediscover the rich varieties and aromas of local cuisines. In the name of productivity, the 'fast life' has changed our lifestyle and now threatens our environment and our land (and city) scapes. Slow Food is the alternative, the avant-garde's riposte (Slow Food Manifesto, 1989).'

After the foundation of Slow Food *Editore* the official editorial and the first Slow Food International Congress in 1990, further organizations appeared, say Slow Food Germany and Slow Food Switzerland.

One of its most important projects, Ark of Taste was presented in 1996, formed to collect and preserve the unique species of plants and animal breeds all over the world. It is successfully functioning ever since. Slow Food Presidia, launched in 2000, offers a brand for these unique, biodiverse groups, which are in charge of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity from 2003.

Slow Cheese was the first campaign of the movement in 2001, which set up the enhancement of whole food groups according to the criteria of slow food. The campaign helps to propagate the numerous kinds of cheeses, their creators and original applications which can be easily adapted to our modern kitchen. Slow Fish campaign followed it in 2004, next to Slow Meat.

The live interaction between farmers and locals is helped by the Terra Madre project since 2004. For the first occasion, it attracted 130 countries. Later on Earth Markets, a global network of farmers' markets was created in 2008 which bring reputation to local products.

One of the main tools of the movement is education, which is believed to result in positive outcomes for all genders. Everybody, from the smallest children to elderly people can get interested in learning from their gastronomical heritages.

The Master of Food program, a new educational project based on adults, was launched by Slow Food Italy in 2001.

In 2004 the University of Gastronomic Sciences is inaugurated in *Pollenzo*, Italy, in association with Slow Food activities.

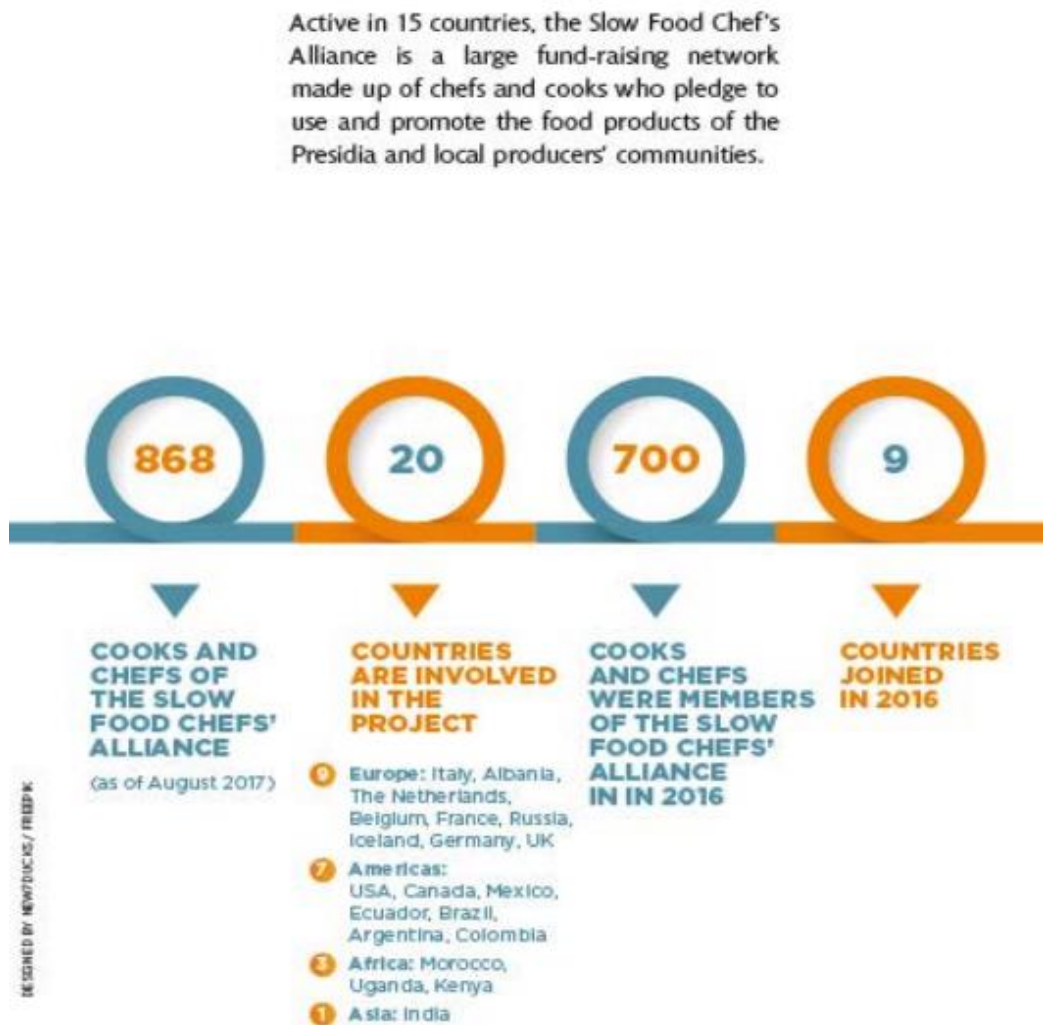
On Earth Markets and other events in many 'slow' communities, special food tastings are held for children where they can learn about their heritages and sustainability. 'Children should meet people who produce food. That's how you learn to be a co-producer. My own first food memories are the meals my mother

and grandmother would prepare just after the war. This was a generation that saved and saved and wouldn't throw away a thing (Petrini, 2009).'

According to Petrini, education is alike in the hands of local cooks and chefs than in farmers and primary producers. 'These chefs should get out of their golden cages, let loose their media chains. They have to become more a part of society. They should cook for a village, teach children, feed old people in [care] homes, prepare food in hospitals (Petrini, 2006).'

This is why The Alliance between Chefs and Slow Food *Presidia* was launched in 2009. It aims restaurants to commit to use of local *Presidia* products.

Figure 1: Slow Food Chef's Alliance



Source: Slow Food Financial Statements, 2016 (own editing)



All projects, events and exhibitions were firstly introduced in Italy, the home country of slow food. As these turned out successfully, and popularity was gained amongst the Italians, they were immediately negotiating to expand abroad too.

More and more countries of several continents became connected to the movement yearly. After Slow Food Switzerland, came the inauguration of Slow Food Japan, the interference of Brazil, the United Kingdom, the USA, here Slow Food USA created the Terra Madre Relief Fund to help Louisiana food communities whose homes, properties and lives were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2006. The Terra Madre network organized national meetings in countries like Ethiopia, the Netherlands, Tanzania, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Norway and Austria at the end of 2010's.

Slow food had the unique privilege of interconnecting all of these countries and more, through the customs and traditions of food. Today the Slow Food movement has 160 countries as members of the network in every continent of the world.

*Image 2: Countries of Slow Food Movement (marked with dark colour)*



*Source: slowfood.com, 2015 (own editing)*

Carlo Petrini, who is the mind behind the idea, is now 70 years old. He started with a thought and dream that good, clean, and fair food is deserved by all humans of the Earth, just as by the Earth. Petrini was named one of the '50 people who could save the planet' by the The Guardian newspaper in 2008. In 2012 he received the highest UN Environmental Award. This award is offered by a flagship programme of the organization, the United Nations of Environment Programme, and is also known as the Champions of Earth Award.

## 2.2 Phraseology of slow food

The following section is dedicated to the expressions, which is important to learn about, this way bringing closer a deeper understanding of the movement's mindset to the reader.

With the birth of slow food movement, a whole dictionary was born. This dictionary is the collection of terms and projects epitomizing the initiative as a whole. Over the now more than 30 years, the dictionary has continually broadened. It adapted to all the anthropological and economical changes of the years, and is always keeping up with technological opportunities as well.

When examining the cohesive definitions of the slow food dictionary, it can be observed, that these definitions are well-structured and intelligible. This can approve of the fact that the whole phenomenon is created to real people by real people. It can effectively encourage the ordinary man to take action.

First of all the base expression of slow food must be defined. According to Cambridge Dictionary, slow food is 'good food that is prepared and cooked carefully (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, n.d., *slow food* entry).'

Slow food is basically a concept of food that is defined by three interconnected principles: good, clean and fair.

- 'GOOD: quality, flavorsome and healthy
- CLEAN: production that does not harm the environment
- FAIR: accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for producers (slowfood.com, 2015)'

These three parameters are the matters of that quality of food which was crucial to come by 30 years ago, and is even more crucial today.

Producer: The provider side of the slow food cycle. It is represented by the farmers, primary producers, artisans, winemakers, chefs and cooks, food sellers and other gastronomical professionals who prefer and support the principles of slow food instead of the norms of the modern food system. This support requires patience and reverence towards the rhythm of nature. It can be challenging, because of standing in a sort of antithesis with how our modern food system works. Slow producers respect nature, biodiversity and promulgate the local heritage.

Co-producer: The costumer side of the slow food cycle. In today's food system context, they are called consumers. However, the word consumer can recall the negative phenomenon of consumerism - 'the theory that an increasing consumption of goods is economically desirable (*Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary* n.d., consumerism entry)' -, so the term co-producer is used instead. 'I don't want to call them consumers, I want to call them co-producers, because consumerism is the problem we face. The word consumer is only three centuries old. It was born with the industrial revolution. You worth more the more you consume, this is why it never stops (MAD, 2017).' The co-producer is a responsible customer, who knows about the local producers around, supports them and would like to know even more about their heritage - prepares their own food, and grows their own ingredients as far as possible. Co-producers ask for help from the family members and together, they sit around the table, eating, drinking, talking with their loved ones and friends. They teach their children about this lifestyle, which

is then hopefully carried on by them. It is not as later-day of a lifestyle-model, since two or three generations before, it was naturally followed by our ancestors.

*Convivium*: A local Slow Food-scope. The name is coming from the word *convivere* which means living together in an Italian-Hungarian translation. It is interesting that there is also an English word, *convive*, meaning 'someone to drink together with'. It is the task of *convivia* to foreshow the message of slow food. Its members hold events and activities at the local level, such as simple dinners and tastings, where people, friends and strangers come together to share the everyday joy of food. They organize visits to local producers and farms, conferences, discussions and taste education courses for both children and adults. 'Convivia are the backbone of Slow Food, made possible through the members, who volunteer their time and energy. (slowfood.com, 2015)'

Community: This group organization model was introduced recently during a Conference in Chengdu, China, in 2017. The build-up of the community is similarly operating according to the slow mentality, although it is based around one common objective of protection and for a specific purpose, etc. the promotion a local product, or building a school garden. It is based on individuals who can become a part of the mission without owning a membership card (for which an annual fee must be paid). Whereas *convivia* has several obligations going beyond one specific purpose, with communities more doors are opened for average inhabitants – no legal entities, representatives of an association, organization, cooperative, or educational institution can take part - who sympathize with slow food (Anon., 2017).

GCH-Gastronomical Cultural Heritage: Slow Food Central Europe had drawn up the abbreviation GCH which is an overall review of a locality's folklore and culinary customs. These customs are entitled to be called hereditary and are often, being spread with word-of-mouth, become forgotten without the lack of technological preservation. Cultural heritage, with an example are the traditional *palóc* motives of my grandmother from my father's side, who spent her entire life

painting mesmerizingly beautiful plates and objects with these motives. Each motive and flower has a meaning in Hungarian ethnology, whether it is a girl and a boy, or a wife and husband, love, friendship and family. These motives, a heritage of my homeland, *Palócföld* must be heard about by the newest generations because they provide worth, and the identity of a unique region in the swarm of the world. Culinary variedness also exists and amounts to a vast part of cultural heritage. Discovering and distinguishing GCH-s are the first but the most purposeful step in the process.

Ethnodiversity: It is the cultural diversity of all humans on Earth. All of us differ from the others. The ideal way of living together is not to oppose but to get to know each other and learn, to broaden our intelligence. It is one of the ancient, deepest interest of human nature, curiosity. The main elements that combine to define the concept of ethnobiodiversity are:

- languages and dialects
- kinship systems
- organization of family life
- religions, myths, rites
- food practices

Diversity is the greatest wealth we possess as human beings and as a community. (Anon., 2017)

Biodiversity: The word biodiversity is quite recently born, first used in 1986 by biologist E. O. Wilson. It is a kind of augmentation of ethnodiversity and *vice versa*. Biodiversity is all the living that surrounds us humans on Mother Earth. It is the foundation of life. The constant evolution and adaptation, the vital life force of our planet. And it is strongly effected by mankind. Next to today's crucial problems of desertification, destroying of rainforests and overbuilding, food industry is indeed very much faultful. According to a research of Slow Food Foundation, 27,000 species are lost every year, because of the one-sidedness

and limitation of food industry. 90 % of the seeds in modern crop production are so called 'patented hybrids' produced and sold by a handful of multinationals. These are very fragile, man-made species and their uniformity is not able to cope with diseases and extreme environmental situations. To the 10 % left on hand, there belong the actual naturally occurring species for example around 1,000 kinds of potatoes and apples (fondazioneSlowFood.com, 2019). We should take care of pandas and the polar bear, it is essential. But the evanishment of species and breeds occur closer than we think, mentioning for instance the old Hungarian donkey, which most of us are not even acquainted with.

Ethnobiodiversity: Slow food movement prefers to use a metaphor which helps to explain ethnobiodiversity. Let us look at the world as a tree. This tree has firm roots, which elongate in all directions. A stiff trunk ensuring support to the entire tree. It also has arborescent branches, bigger and smaller, and leaves, flowers, later fruits on them. The roots are anchored to a territory, a specific climate, defining water content, the sun and soil. The soil that welcomes the seeds and allows them to grow. Whereas a territory is not only soil climate and physical coefficients. It is culture, artisanal knowledge, language, art and the customs of a community. The roots of the tree are interconnected with diversified territories, cultures and their history. The trunk of the tree represents the hold up necessary for true production. These are the economic, social and environmental sustainability. The fruits growing on the vigorous branches of the tree appear for taste, smell, sight, texture and finally cooking methods of the food. These methods are similar and different at the same time in the diversity of cultural customs, but one aspect meets in all: the enjoyable food experience. Ethnodiversity and biodiversity locks into each other through food (fondazioneSlowFood.com, 2019).

Ark of Taste: Ark of Taste was established in 1996. Named after Noah's Ark, the goal of this project is to rediscover and map rare and unique varieties of plants, breeds of domesticated animals, and artisanal food products. There is higher risk day by day that these species and gastro-cultural worths fade out and later on vanish with time. This is a system registering mainly small-scale, family based food production frames this way encouraging their workmanship and protecting

ethnobiobiodiversity. Currently there are more than 5100 products registered worldwide (Fossa, 2006).

Granaries of Memory: Not so long ago, word of mouth was the primary form of information distribution and knowledge between ordinary folks. This was the way of how a father passed over his heritage to his son, just like people said: from mother to daughter. Word of mouth and the power of memory through generations was alternated with written knowledge. In the last century, technology generated a new era, where word of mouth has no chance to survive against the velocity of information flow. It became downwarding just like the endangered species and plants, and the victim of technological revolution.

Granaries of memory is a project with the mission to connect technology and intangible heritages of common people. Since 2004 there are more than 1000 recorded interviews with the most varying interviewees, from food industry specialists through primary producers to chefs and housewives. The idea is to establish a library, a so-called 'granary' to word of mouth, this way conservating the key attainments of our predecessors to our descendants. The project received the Europa Nostra Awards of 2016 in 'Research' category since 'it has the potential to be considered on a larger scale and it can be held as a model in Europe for good practices in preserving intangible heritage. This project is a chance to offer an Award to the memory of ordinary people. Even if the interviews are led by professional researchers, the number of participants is high and favours the interests of younger generations (granaidellamemoria.it, 2016).'

Slow food movement is on the way to bring featured definitions and denominations into our society's general knowledge. It is an initiation which proves its mentality without fail for more than 30 years now, withstanding the test of time. In our current era, infamous of hurry and phrenetic technological development, to stay alive as such an initiation like slow food is undeniably a mightful accomplishment.

The potentials of slow food inspired me to investigate in the topic. With its clear, comprehensible structure, slow food lends a robust base for further research. Over and above I would describe it as a living, vital science, which continuously broadens, experiencing research gaps by nature.



## 3 Slow mentality and Hungary

### 3.1 Introduction

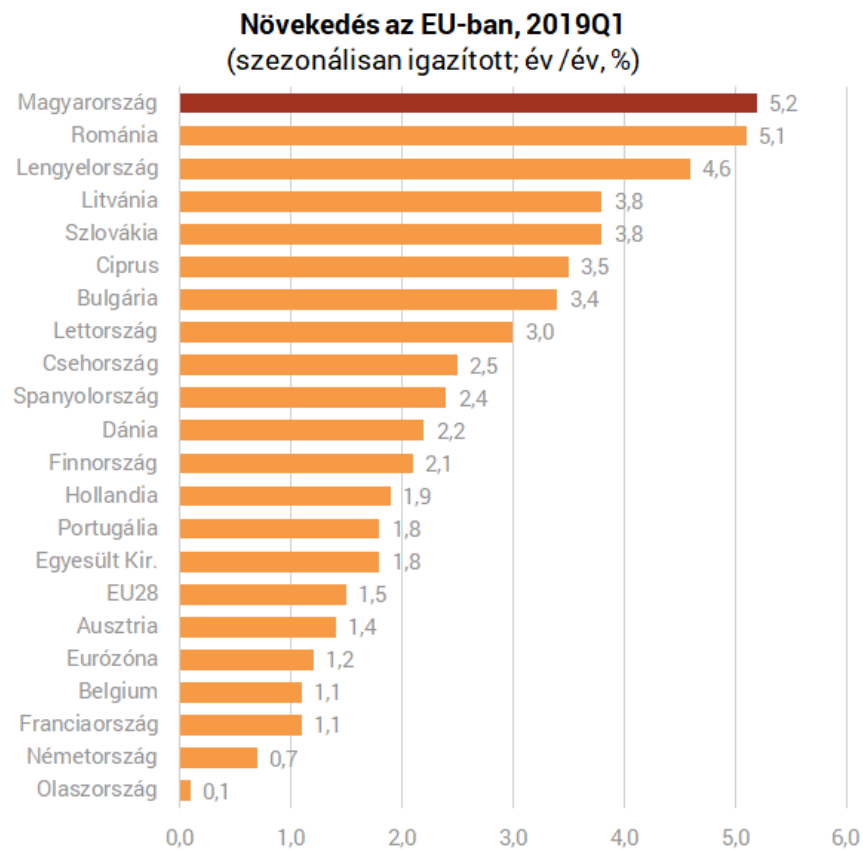
If peculiarity is pertinent to one nation, it is ours, Hungarians. Throughout the history, so many impacts attained the country. In the Middle Ages Hungary was the flourishing centre of Renaissance culture and arts during the reign of King Matthias. For more than 170 years the country played a role of palladium against the Turkish invasion in the 16th-17th century. As becoming the part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy Hungary subsisted the economical success story and its largest territory in the beginning of 20th century with 325,411 km<sup>2</sup> and 20,8 million inhabitants (Gerő, 1996). Then within 20 years and the Treaty of Trianon, the fate of our nation was contaminated. Historical Hungary was taken away its two-third territory, riving thousands of families from each other along and beyond the new borders.

Inasmuch as a nation and its culture is strongly connected, Hungarian ethnographic traditions had fluctuant history since the establishment of the country. In our cultural heritage several vestiges can be uncovered, from the ancient Hunnic customs, through the marks of Turkish invasion and Cuman migration, when numerous habits were implemented from their lifestyle, to the historical eras of art. Hungarian folk music for example, still carries the marks of the Renaissance and Baroque, especially in Transylvania.

After Trianon bequeathing through word of mouth begun aggravated for our country. All of a sudden Hungarian traditions got into an imperiled situation as lacerated families and generations were undermined in terms of passing father-to-son observancies. This gap widened throughout time, and when Socialism planted its feet in Hungary, the governance discouraged all efforts of researching national cultural identity since these acts were against the ideology of standardization. Technological development did not announce relief either, although Hungary counted as rather backwarded in this case.

30 years elapsed since the Change of the Regime in 1989. Our country is closing up in economical development, with the inhabitants becoming real members of the consumer society. In 2019 Hungary could assuredly step on the podium of EU countries' growing GDP rates with 5,2 %. (infostart.hu, 2019)

Diagram 1: Yearly GDP growth of European countries, 2019



Forrás: Eurostat, Portfolio

Source: infostart.hu

Only this membership has a price. This price is the coherent evanescence of ancient Hungarian customs, folkways which have incomparable variagation for such a small territory, not to mention many Hungarian species of house animals and vegetals which upbuild our personalized biodiversity.

## 3.2 Slow food in Hungary

Slow living Hungary is the country-wide community functioning in three spheres: food and wine, art and culture and travel. Currently four communities, so called *convivias* operate in our country: the *convivia* of *Central Budapest*, *Kiskunság*, *Tokaj*, and *Heves-Mátra*. Their mission is to strengthen quality-based thinking instead of consumerist attitude of mind. As for slow food, the members, be they primary producers, farmers, or catering units, combine gastronomical pleasure with responsibility, sustainability and the natural rhythm of Earth. The community of Slow living Hungary is broadening year by year, such as the partners, who make a significant contribution in events, etc.: tastings and farmers markets. Partners include *Graeffl Castle Barton* in *Kétútköz*, *Gál Tibor Vinelands* in *Eger* and *Bori Mami Bistro* in *Gyöngyös* (slowliving.hu, 2020).

Slow living Hungary auspiciously provides space for Hungarian heritage in the world of technology, with up-to-date attendance on the internet and on social media, the new tech-achievement of the 2010's.

## 3.3 Establishment of Slow Food CE

As I started to engage in the search for my thesis topic, the origination I picked up on first was Slow Food Central Europe. This project also rests on the conceit of slow food, with good, clean and fair being in the focus and connects it with cities of Central Europe. A common incident of these notable cities is utilising gastronomy to promote tourism but hardly ever as a resource that can leverage environmental sustainability and social integration (interreg-central.eu, 2020).

Valorisation of intangible gastronomical heritage is the key apropos according to which Slow Food CE chose five central European cities: Krakow in Poland, Brno in the Czech Republic, Dubrovnik of Croatia, the centre and authority of Venezia in Italy, and *Kecskemét* of Hungary. The plan is rather trustworthy since central European nations have corresponding history and attach to each other in

a way. Hence the historical similarity, ethnographic, cultural and agricultural resemblance can be detectable as well. National dishes include alike ingredients, dependently from weather conditions, such as beef, pork, chicken and freshwater fish, potato, cabbage, onion and herbs like dill, garlic and marjoram. True enough that in most cases, every country has its own species of these ingredients, reflecting to the beauty of biodiversity.

Kecskemét, dealing with cultivation and rigid animal husbandry from the early ages is one of Hungary's leading agricultural cities. Peach pálinka, the Hungaricum is the honour of the country town next produces like tomato or plum. As the economy is based on food industry, Kecskemét has impact on gastronomy both on local and national level, this is why in collaboration with Slow Food CE, regular events and programmes are organized, taking in the famous *Nagybani Piac*. The monthly Slow Market is not only a popular attraction for tourists, but an essential purchasing source for townspeople, who can chose local, GMO-free food from small-scale producers instead of exported options.

The project of Slow Food CE also disposes of the tool of education and learning through the Interreg Central Europe Programme. Courses dedicated to broadening the cognition of slow food and lifestyle are available for not only members but the public eye as well. Throughout the Food Paths Network, local governments and any committed person can learn about the methodology behind mapping the regional gastronomical heritages. It is an online course easily downloadable thus reachable for everyone, enabling a wholesome call to action.

## 4 Theoretical mapping of the Northern Hungarian region

### 4.1 Introduction and geographical aspects

Before conducting the active part of the research, I reckon the importance of examining the thesis location being a fundamental element both in the actual research question and among the aims of mine.

The research takes place in the Northern Hungarian region, narrowed down to the *Mátra-Cserhát* area. Unequivocally, this area is enclosed by two mountains. *Cserhát* from the northwest, is an elongated mountain-range with the highest point *Naszály* (652 m), prolonging until the Danube Bend. And *Mátra*, our highest mountain (*Kékes* of 1014 m) from the south. The area abounds in hills and valleys which consequently ensue such as tablelands which are most likely lie under the mountains. Geologically, most lands are limestone and volcanic layered, facilitating a rich, fertile soil (Karátson, 2005). The hydrography is formed by no lakes, but tributary streams like *Zagyva* which is fed by uncountable creeks coming from the mountains.

On the score of animality of the area, deers, fawns and boars live on the mountain level and deep in the forests, but oftentimes cautiously seek after aliment in the nearby meadows. Numerous pheasants also plod along these meadows. Moufflons are not indigenous although the strongest individuals live in the *Mátra* and *Cserhát* mountains (Schmidt, 2005).

Mushrooms and herbs are prevalent in the whole territory for instance chanterelle and precious porcini mushroom types, which prefer light woodlands and forest fringe (mek.oszk.hu, n.d.).

## 4.2 Folks of Northern Hungary – *Palócföld*

In an ethnical interrelation, *palóc* people inhabit the province, tracing back to the foundation of Hungarian State. The inhabitants of *Palócföld* are Catholic, presumably from Hunnic origin, upstanding, cobby persons, with a prideful, clever and at the same time arch nature. Their garments and houses are clean, ordered.

*Palóc* folks were always conversant with animal husbandry and agriculture. Juveniles got used to livestock animals at a very young age, especially horses. Once a *palóc* child could walk, they were put on the horse, hereby grew up horseback. They were notoriously the best horse-soldiers in the country (Czárán, 2005).

The foundation of livelihood was animal husbandry and agriculture from here derives the skillfulness of *palóc* people. Forests appeared in the picture too especially in case of villages at the edge of the woods. Typical pursuits were logging in the mountains and crop production on land, fruit cultivation together with viticulture and beekeeping (palocut.hu, n.d.). Sylvan hog farming, a primaeval form of livestock was alternated by sheep, later by neat. Ordinarily horses went to one pasture, cattle to another (Manga, 1979, cited in palocut.hu, n.d.).

## 4.3 Belief and traditions of *palóc* folks

Alongside their large workload, people of *Palócföld* were famously merry-makers. Evidences for this are feast days, appertaining to calendar days all year. Elements from the Christian church menology and pagan belief patterns alike affected the celebrations. Betlehemian striplings wagged from door to door to perform the birth of Jesus-Christ for little eatables (palocut.hu, n.d.). At the dawn of Whit Sunday, young men set up the may tree at the house of unwed girls they loved. Later the day, the most beautiful girl in the village was chosen a may queen and traditionally a ball was held in the evening. The treasury of folkways through the special life events is markedly rich too, whether was it the nuptial of a wedding

which lasted for days, the birth of a child or burial feast, and were held in esteem by *palóc* people.

Typifying the Western Christianity, where Hungarians and *palóc* communities bent towards, these people very much prize their Virgin Marie. They talk and sing to her in their prayers (Czárán, 2005). Medieval Franciscan monk order applied as a substantial factor hereabout *Gyöngyös, Szécsény, Fülek* and *Pásztó* (palocut.hu, n.d.). Since belief and traditions are tightly attached, and next to Christian religious habits, various pagan ones maintained, we can deduce very intriguing details of these folks' ancient form of living. Indeed it is prodigious to see that for centuries, a small ethnic group can guard and pass on such memories, withstanding the hardship of history.

#### **4.4 Gastronomical traditions of *Mátra-Cserhát* area**

Several factors are implicated in the nurtural prospect of a certain land, be it climate and landscape conditions, wildlife or the form and technical prospect of agricultural husbandry. Characteristics of the vernacular kitchen can be scrutinized through raw materials, methods of preparation and flavours, aromas of the finished dish (Cs. Schwalm, 2002, cited in palocut.hu, n.d.).

Main ingredients were wheat and less frequently rye flour, from which sourdough bread was prepared, potatoes, onions, cow and goat's dairy produces. Meat was eaten only on weekends. For greasing, pork, goose and duck fat was used.

In *palóc* dietary, soups had notability and were consumed nearly every day, hence so many recipes, from light broths to thick, '*habart*' soups, with bean, cabbage and smoked ham or sausage. Potatoes were not only used in savoury foods like dumplings (*ganca, haluska, laska*) but in baked goods and desserts, etc. *bukta* which is a rise-dough pastry filled with jam or the Hungarian cottage cheese, *túró*. Frying was another preferred preparation method, pastries like *pampuska*,

or *herőce* were made like this, then were sprinkled with powdered sugar and accompanied with jam. Both were served during *Farsang*-interval, after Christmas and before Easter. As for flavourings, *palóc* goodwives seasoned with less paprika but more likely with onion, garlic, pepper, and dill. General favourite flavours were braised onion, cabbage, and crispy grieves called *tepertő*, *túró* and *író*.(Cs. Schwalm, 2002, cited in palocut.hu, n.d.).

The diet of these folks was shaped rather consciously, providing enough energy for all-day hard work in the fields. The traditional dishes required few ingredients but had flavours which can be rarely recalled today.

#### **4.5 Heritage of *Mátra-Cserhát* area**

Inquiring about the scope of *Mátra-Cserhát* mountains via geographical, botanical, economical, and cultural aspects hands the core knowledge of my research.

In our world with multiculturalism in the centre, current inhabitants of the region must get familiar with these aspects. Communities are converged with a corresponding identity. *Palóc* customs are an example for this, as they mean the identity of an attenuated but still living culture.



## 5 Methodological aspects

### 5.1 Intentions

As being inspired by the slow food movement, their methods of shepherding people back to their roots, and to the straightforward enjoyment of simple food, my intentions were to not only theoretically but actively experience the phenomenon myself. Furthermore to involve and meet local producers and other gastronomic specialists in person, hear their stories and discuss about the concept of slow food. I am very much intrigued by gastronomy myself, there came the eventuality of organizing a gathering with the motto of the evergrowing phenomenon of slow food in the *Mátra-Cserhát* Area. These motives are presented in the primary and secondary researches of the thesis.

### 5.2 Breaking down the primary research

The chosen method of primary research are in-depth interviews, that could enable to evaluate my first hypothesis. Instead of formal interviews, I better preferred to guide to grounds of a conversation.

The concept is based on the Granaries of Memory project carried out by Slow Food movement – as it was detailed in the paragraph 2. *Basis and literature review – The slow food movement* - and focuses on the stories of ordinary people who eventually labour in gastronomy. Much as the research is prepared in written form, recording video was not reasonable. Meeting in person was a key factor, this way a real relationship unrolled instead of formal, electronic interviews. 'A possible solution of our disjoint food industry is a co-operation, where there are no more sections without connecting each other. Everybody is a little bit of a cook, a farmer and a food producer (MAD, 2017).'

Food Paths Network, the training course released by Slow Food CE also proved to be an adequate guideline. More particularly, the course details a well-

tried mapping technique that sets in with theoretical framework, where the mapping of the area is conducted through existing documents. This is useful because of cognition about unique potentials which all GCH (gastronomical cultural heritage) possesses. In this research the aforementioned part is found in paragraph 4. *Theoretical mapping of the Northern Hungarian Region*. The technique continues with the field-work, which are compiled interviews throughout which the actual encounter takes place.

According to my deems an in-depth interview facilitates not only one-dimensional insight but digs down to the roots and indicates the real essence of informations.

### **5.3 Breaking down secondary research**

As for secondary research of my thesis, I aimed to remain alongside the active concept. Since the secondary research targets the genuine response and verification (or refusal) of the second hypothesis, a deliberate idea that I abided by was a case study. Hereupon this case study I determined to organize an event, more precisely a dinner with a bonded group of friends. The theme of the dinner was the GCH of *Mátra-Cserhát* region which moreover is the guests' homeland.

The connection to the research is explained by the apropos of the event, which was to share a piece of the primary producers I met and interviewed. So the menu for the evening was assembled with ingredients originating from the interviewees. It was my purpose that the participants not only get acquainted with these quality and flavoursome foods but try them in real life and earn an authentic experience. With the help of experience one can genuinely get involvement. And involvement makes real changes, counter to incidental insensibility of plain words.

By means of the dinner theme a certain cooperation could take place which is one of the basic invocation of slow food movement. Farmers and gastronomic specialists, who I recieved advice from when constructing the programme,

provided their workmanliness. Besides their economy they can promote such important message, which is the goodness, cleanness and fairness of slow food and the gastronomic cultural heritage of home of theirs, the participants and incidentally mine. In turn, the guests, after trying the above-and-beyond products of local producers, perhaps realize the incomparability with ordinary food products and opt for getting to know and purchasing from regional farmers instead.

Although in my research, intangible factors uniquely play a major lead, tangible aspects must contribute for an overall demonstration. In view of this, after the experiment I asked for the opinion of dinner guests. I inquired about their approach to „slow” mentality before and after the event as well as their thoughts on the importance of gastronomic and cultural identity, and whether the dinner they attended could be a well-functioning solution for spreading a suchlike lifestyle amongst other people.

I assumed that an experiment carried out via dinner relied on local produces can manage to grant eligible proof to the hypotheses, so can return an answer to the research questions of the thesis.

#### **5.4 Unusual circumstances: Note from the author**

The research had been deduced in the first quarter of year 2020. From the end of February, an exceptional situation reared its head in the form of COVID-19 disease. The sudden pullulation of coronavirus without existing remedy extremely affected numerous countries, *inter alia* Hungary. Everyday life ceased in our country due to – at that time – ordained partial quarantine.

This condition occurred while I transacted the primary and secondary research and tampered their realization as personal meetings became contraindicated and dangerous along of handing over the disease.

Because of this, the last two interviews I administered online via webcam converses. I also had to rethink the concept of local producer's dinner, my secondary research. Instead of cancelling and changing the form of experiment, I decided to adapt to the situation which could handle a whole new perspective of the case study. The new scenario was founded on an online conference dinner and home delivery version of the freshly prepared meals. This made the dinner non-recurring.

As the disease and its inference entered into the picture, some matters of the thesis topic like the opposite of word of mouth and documented information even electronically, or human relationships in real life opposed by virtual connection get into accentuated limelight. I definitely intended to grab and direct the given distinctive circumstances to benefit my research on slow living, bonded with Mother Earth and its habitants.

## 6 Transition

### 6.1 On the relationship between the terms food and language

For the first sight, the sight, which usually carries some kind of shallowness in all sense, the terms food and language has the least or even nothing in common.

In reality although, if we examine the meanings, these two words can be close relatives. According to Christof Koch true language enables *Homo sapiens* to represent, manipulate, and disseminate arbitrary symbols and concepts. (Koch, 2012, p. 38). Language is the way of expression of ideas, mentalities. It is the tool of human communication, for telling long ago forgotten and actual, live stories. It is spreading one's beliefs in the hope of acceptance and co-operation with other individuals. It represents all the colorful, diverse personalities. It is the symbol of standing out for a good cause.

If we contemplate on the term food a little deeper, it is realized that the above mentioned qualities are just as strongly attached to it alike. There is the commonly used phrase: You are what you eat. It is oftentimes reflecting to the importance of healthy eating which is essential for well-being. However the sentence can point the fact that food has the ability of expressing personality traits. When we crave certain food groups, or dishes, it can tell about our mood (thinking about a desire for heavy, maybe oil fried and sweet when feeling sorrow or neglected, and wishing for fresh, colourful and exciting dishes when feeling vitalized and lifted). Food has the ability to generate. To tell stories, and revive memories from our childhood, which can move our entire inner-self. We can also experience with the help of food. A good example for this is the experience of creation, when cooking a dish or even before, the experience of origin, the follow-through process of how a group of ingredients, each coming from a different point of mother nature, through different inherited techniques of human interference, becomes a finished, harmonizing dish, ready to nurture us and our family, and friends.

Another is the experience of unity. Good food can bring together even the worst enemies. So many kinds of company can gather around a table: the close and wide family, a romantic couple, children in kindergarten, colleagues in their lunchbreak, businessman at a formal dinner, or complete strangers on a blind-date. And while eating, people talk. Talk about their life, their current happenings, they talk about each other and what they think about a certain issue. They talk about political and economical solutions to serious problems affecting mother nature, from which we all come from and belong to, when our life is finished.

Food, and more particularly the idea of slow food is the language of a new era, a mentality, which was known and practiced by our great-grandparents, who grew up and lived their lives in symbiosis with the nature, were practicing domestic methods of traditional cultivation, cooking and baking, taught by their ancestors, who learnt them from their ancestors. They were part of the so-called space-time rhythms of nature, which is characterized by the sacred rotation of seasons, being acted upon all living creatures on our planet; the biodiversity itself. With the development of the capitalized world and mass production, a world that is based on technology and monetary capital, adapting to this ancient flow of time was replaced by artificial and chronometric rhythms (Grimaldi, et. al, 2019).

We can conclude that food has a very similar importance in the history of a nation to the language their inhabitants speak. In our days when it is getting harder year by year to gain the original, 'good, clean, fair' food products, we must strengthen the recognition in people, and familiarize them with the opportunities still remained. These opportunities, the language of slow food are around us, we just have to recognize and subsist them.

Tradition is not required to be cherished, since it is not ill. It is not required to be guarded, since it is not a prisoner. We can only keep our traditions if we live them. (Sebó, n.d.)

## 7 Conversations – a field study

### 7.1 Introduction

'The founding of libraries was like constructing more public granaries, amassing reserves against a spiritual winter which by certain signs, in spite of myself, I see ahead' says Marguerite Yourcenar in her work, *Memoirs of Hadrian* (Yourcenar, 1951, cited in [granaidellamemoria.it](http://granaidellamemoria.it), 2015). This sentence opens the introduction of Granaries of Memory project and is more than relevant in case of my set of interviews and converses for various reasons.

Yourcenar reveals a tendency which if one looked more closely was yet foreseeable in the 1950's. This tendency is the thorough diminishing of spirituality from everyday life. Spirituality not only means esotericism and post-existence, it embodies the persistent, sacred rhythm of our planet. This rhythm is not respected by man for many centuries now, the leading act is instructed by capitalism and greed from one side and consumerism, immoderateness from the other. Exploitation rules our world and who once wants more, going to want even more the next time. Our society must perceive that today's economy and non-incidentally, food production system is fueled by a vicious circle.

The last generations who carry or have seen the attitude of pure and righteous bond between human and nature are before long passing away. We must ask them, learn from them and experience ourselves the true gift of heritage. In a deeper sense it is the mission of ours, descendants to do so.

It was my mission hereupon, to seek out local food producer and gastronomical specialists, people who agree with this contexture and would like to return back to symbiosis with our land, *Mátra-Cserhát* of Northern Hungary.

Let this thesis be a representation of their calling, serving as a granary of ancient knowledge throughout which we can find an unexpected harmony between logical and emotional intent (Grimaldi, et. al, 2019).

## **7.2 Demonstration of interview questions**

Whilst assembling the research questions I proposed to find out the opinion of the interviewed persons about the mindset which is well-determined by slow food movement. This part of the interview which was more of an exchange of views, consisted of questions about gastronomical cultural heritage, simple traditionality, and regional merits. I would have liked to acquire about the specific territory they deal with, their business or project profile, and the characteristics of such, and was also interested in the exact food or gastronomic products they manufacture. I was furthermore interested in their public presence and relationship with customers.

The set of elemental interview questions were the following:

- 1. My thesis is based on a personally substantial message, the 'grain' of which is reviewed by my first question. Do you believe is sustainable methods which spare our nature and surroundings? Furthermore in the fact that our grandparents and great-grandparents bear such individual values that are just as earnest for the new generations if not more?**
- 2. Would you please describe the profile of your business?**
- 3. What sort of products do you manufacture?**
- 4. What is the story of your business? How did it form throughout the years?**
- 5. Is your business inherited?**
  - *If yes, why did you decide to continue? Did you change anything on its profile, perhaps customized it somehow, or preserved the original products and techniques?***



- *If no, what was the intention of choosing this exact profession? Where does the ambition originate from?*
- 6. Is the concept of neatly founded and produced goods – from the moment of design till the moment of selling – close to you, and your business?
- 7. What is your inspiration when you come up with your product ideas (traditional procedures, memories from childhood, similar manufactures)?
- 8. Do you think simple traditionality, attachment to bequest, and local gastronomical heritages are present in your profession in any way?
- 9. Does seasonality appear in your business, etc. in terms of your products and their manufacturing?
- 10. How does an average day roll by at you? What is the daily routine on your holding?
- 11. Where can your customer community be found? Does your produces have a narrow or wider market sphere? How and where do you connect with your vendees?
- *Do you prefer face-to-face contact with your customers? If yes, do you adopt this in your business?*
- *What do you think, does personal interaction and connection help in good accomplishment and good commerce of –with „slow” terms –, producer and co-producer?*
- 12. Are you in connection with other primary producers and similar businesses? Do you find this factor an important one?
- 13. Are you with your business an associate of any gastronomic event? Perhaps events which target the propagation of regional merits and heritage?
- *If yes, what is your experience on advancing aspects of your business and regional merits by means of these events?*
- 14. Are you familiar with Slow Food movement?
- *If yes, do you find a similarity between its mission and yours?*

**15. I would like to finish off with the first question, this time regarding a new perspective. Do you believe in a business based on sustainable methods which spare our nature and surroundings, moreover draws from gastronomical cultural heritage of the area? Do you believe in the success of such holding in the 21st century?**

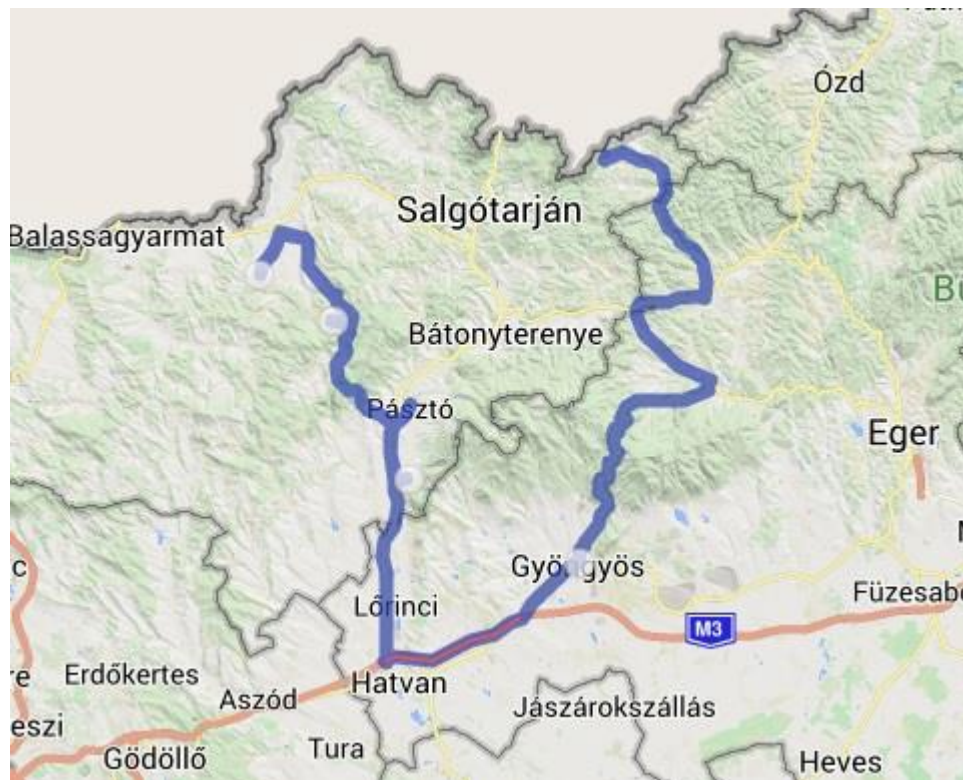
The interview questions were framed by the base question of the interview, this way my interviewee could receive a picture of where the conversation is going to proceed at the end.

My conception of questions proved to be convenient and answered the purpose of the research.

### 7.3 About the interview partners

Whilst conducting the interviews I received the honour to have an insight to the everyday life of seven persons, all laboring in different fields of gastronomy or food production. Amidst these professionals, there are cheese makers, an out-of-the-way farmer, a herb 'witch', truffle experts, beekeepers, a talented chef and last but not least, an antique restaurator, who even though is not directly related to the topic, may know most about the meaning of heritage.

*Figure 2: Interview destinations*



*Source: Own editing*

On the map, all premises are marked, where these people live and enrich the GCH of their community. Some of them are only engaged in vicinal services, and there are ones whose products are renowned throughout and beyond our country.

The real attainment of these producers and specialists lies within their simple but mighty moral values which is more vital, more needed today than ever before.

### 7.3.1 *Mekkentő goat-cheesemakers*

When I was walking to the house of the cheesemaker couple, who are behind those relishable pieces of goat cheese I am a big supporter of from years now, a typical local atmosphere unfolded of beautifully maintained, long acreages, which commenced in the brook-bank of *Zagyva* river. As I arrived, the head of the family, Gyula opened door and greeted me with a big smile on his face.

I first learned from *Mekkentő* goat farm a few years ago, when they started to vend their goods on the market of my hometown, Pásztó. After trying I immediately became a frequenter at their stall. They have an exceedingly pleasant and creamy taste, even if its a young creamcheese or a smoked, matured one.

The interview took place in their in-house shop where all their well-deserved cheese awards were hanged. After I asked my first, momentous question about whether they believe in sustainable methods and the earnestness of values by our grandparents, Enikő, the other member of the couple answered with a definite yes.

At *Mekkentő* goat farm, they put out each and every confection with traditional techniques. The results are healthy, natural products, with unartificial additives. Enikő thinks this way they can keep traditions and serve the healthy diet of customers. They are the ones who husband all the goats in their backyard, who I met in person later on, and was so content with by the reason of springtime, having more than a dozen of tiny goatlings cavorting around.

The story of *Mekkentő* starts with an incidental idea. As it was narrated by Enikő, the founder was her husband. It was previously mentioned, that they have

a backyard and a long acreage as elements of their estate. They worked in their day job (Enikő etc. is an accountant) for 8-10 hours and did not have time to cultivate their lands so they decided to lease out the territory. After a while, the reaper in question could noticeably make a fair profit from the cultivation. This was the point when the couple started to negotiate about afterall husbanding the land themselves. Gyula came up with the brainchild of getting hold of a goat, saying that the animal could pasture their acreage and serve their family with nutrient milk. On average one goat gives around 1 litre of milk, nevertheless it happened that they milked their stock resulting in 3,2 litres for the first time, which was a top-notch coincidence since they started to manufacture cheese and other dairy products. For today they skipped their dayjob and work as full-time primary producers.

At first they dealt with *gomolya* only, which is a traditional Hungarian type of cheese, beloved by *palóc* culture. During the time of deepening in the art of cheesemaking, via books and relevant resources of the internet, they experienced with many types. It was their curiosity and challenge-sense, which fueled them to develop. Their current repertoire consists of cream cheeses, several semi-hard cheeses, and smoked types, these are prepared by kneading, which gives the cheese an interesting elastic texture. Cheese is reckoned their main profile, but yoghurts with homemade fruit ragout are also prepared next to *orda*, a type of goatmilk process, prepared from whey. By the way it is known as *ricotta* in Italy.

As for the day at a life of a goat farm, it is early waking and late bedtime. The first duty in the morning is to take care of the stocks, which means feeding, cleaning up and milking. Then they set up the fresh milk and post-productions come in the afternoon. For example the matured cheeses require washing and handling every day. In the world of cheese, these types are the most cherished as they require accentuated care. The teenager daughter of the couple is helping in the tasks too and she often accompanies them on market days: *-She has rather good skills for cheese-kneading.-* noted Gyula, so they hope for taking her in the family business someday.

Seasonality is an existing term in the dictionary of a cheesemaker. Enikő and Gyula detailed that the season of goatmilk is falling from springtime until late-autumn. This can be manipulated some with the coupling, their goats foal in slightly different time thus they can extend the interval. In practice they intermit for a month in winter. When I inquired about the response of clients, they told that it is needed to explain the wherefore but the customers are understanding in all cases. Being seasonal has its sacrifices but is a proof for sincere quality.

The couple sell their artifacts three days a week on markets of Pásztó and Hatvan and managed to evolve a group of customers who optimally purchase their supply. A vast majority of these customers were attracted through word-of-mouth reference of satisfied purchasers and frequentables. This phenomenon speaks for itself. The couple regularly deliver to *Castellum Hotel Hollókő*, a five-star hotel, hereby their name is reaching far. Albeit it is rather important to them to keep face-to-face contact with purchasers. Enikő told that numerous friendships developed throughout such way meanwhile the 8-9 years. Straightaway contacts and notions inspire and implete them in the future. Gyula added that when one is getting tired on an everyday-basis and slows down a little, due to a feedback of tasting something excellent, it can subside as a lifting power to work on again.

The main point we touched upon when I reached my last question was sustainability and how Enikő patronizes that more and more purchasers are arriving with their own containers to avoid plastic wrapping. Themselves too are working on finding a resolution to eliminate the problem of enviromental-pollution on their farm.

The goat farmer couple of *Lőrinci* village swear by the verity that cheesemaking is only practiced well if it is coming from the bottom of the heart. It is a lifestyle as it is, in fact a daylong hard labor, that can only get rehearsed in this sole way.

### 7.3.2 *S&F Manufacture*

When the 24 years old Susán-Fekete Vanda is observed in real life after looking at the flyers of their apiary on artisan fairs, the customers cannot believe their eyes that she is so young. But it is very much true and she stands the strain beautifully if it is about leading their beekeeping and jam manufacture with her husband.

Their business engages in two fields: organic honeys and jams. As for honey, they chose a special path, and their mission is to endear the exceptional world of honey to common people, as well as motivate them to daily intake. They mainly pinpoint children, thus Vanda visits the local nurseries and elementary schools several times a year, within the confines of an initiation called 'Breakfast with honey'. On this program they bring a few jars of their cream-honey, and children can taste it, while Vanda teaches them about how honey is made and how they get hold of it as apiarists. She convivially added on this point that the little attendees are always astonished by when she tells them the fact that one bee flies so much for a jar of honey that it can get to the Moon.

The couple prepare variety-honeys which are ones collected from a single species of flower by the bees. Today, they more likely cure them on flower- and spice-bed such as chilli, bourbon vanilla or lavender infused honeys, and at the moment they experiment with rosehip-bed. This way one can enjoy the hale benefits of both the honey and its bed. Vanda said that they also cream certain honey types, for example sunflower-honey. It is a natural process including crystallization on more levels. She explained that the consistency of honey is just as creamy when it is mixed with butter on a buttered bread. These are flavoured with real fruits, spices and even chocolate, due to whichever children can take a liking for sure.

If jams, she mentioned their intention of using traditional techniques. Both Vanda's and her husband's grandmothers were great jam-makers with notoriety

in their villages. The couple uses their well-tried recipes and brew the jam exclusively in kettle with woodfire. She warrants that jams cooked according to this method taste positively unlike, with a bit of a smoky refrain. Rosehip jam was emphasized since it is nowadays prepared classically only by a handful of manufactures. They use no gelling agents and additives, and cook their rosehip jam for three days because the berries also require plenty of pretreatment. The exclusion of any additives is kept on condition of every bottle of jam, *vide* apricot, blackberry and strawberry jams. Moreover their plum jam is so sweet that it does not require additional sweetener.

The formation of S&F manufacture begun when Vanda married a beekeeper. Her husband owned bee families back then, but only put out honey for personal ettles. Then came the idea of a business and they were thinking about take in jams too, and learned every tip and trick of their grandmothers in person. The current profile came together in 2017, and lately the products of the couple were honoured by the trademark of *Bükki National Park*.

For my question of whether beekeeping was an inherited profession, Vanda answered in the name of her husband that although not on a direct branch, but his grandfather kept bees at the time. When he was a boy, her husband oftentimes helped in. They proudly possess his genuine utensils.

Alongside the bees, the couple grow their own fruits as the ingredient of their jams. It happened that their produces were not enough and at that case they only purchased tested fruits without any pesticides. According to Vanda, this is a substantial aspect regarding their business.

Their goods stand out with a delicate appearance – that was designed by Vanda -, further she said first impression is watershed in the general, fast-paced rhytm of potential purchasers. Therefore too they one and all offer tasting to ensure their without-a-doubt high quality. She always loves talking to their



customers, perhaps ask them about opinions and personal recommendations, which they implement with pleasure.

Regarding the clientele, the inquiries showed a changing tendency throughout the years. At the start, the couple attended many gastro-markets and artisan fairs nearby, and owing to their delicacies, they succeeded in quickly building up a base group of local customers who keep returning for their pleasant tastes ever since. At the moment the manufacture has numerous partners, etc. Geopark of Salgótarján, a no-waste based store in Szentendre and Bioco medicine company. These partnerships opened their clientele to a national direction.

Vanda and his husband funded their manufacture in the grounds of sustainable – their jars for example are returnable -, traditional food production. They draw from their descendant's past and think to the future of developing with utter respect and support of heritage.

### 7.3.3 *Pásztor Judit, the herb 'witch'*

Judit is known and called as 'the witch' of her neighborhood in the most sincere sense. She is the one who wakes up earlier than the village of *Rimóc* – where she and her family reside -, and greets the sunrise in the nature, walking on still dewy fields, collecting herbs.

She had been handling herbs and spices for more than 10 years, determined by their picking, and processing for various gastronomic and medical reasons. Her goal had always been to familiarize all benefits and natural methods of virtuous plants found in the valleys, hills and forests of *Cserhát*.

Her products include assemblages for mainly herbal teas, several syrups, jams, soaps and tinctures, which is a plant-solution in alcohol - she swears by the

*pálinka* made by her family. Autogenous processing techniques, reaching back to hunnic history and folk remedies are very near to Judit. She is certainly reading into literature and publications in the topic. Over and above when not in the borderland, she is experimenting her book-read learnings. For instance I was told about a technique she recently put to proof: it is basically filling a big pot with preferred herbs, leaves, flowers, and sugar, then closing down and burying it in the soil. Owing to the effects of fermentation and Earth-energies, it turns into a dark, thick julep in 40-50 days. Judit's version encompassed *kakukkfű*, which is the herb of respiratory system.

The human of today must get to know about these crafts again, and extinguish a mindset which is schematized to the only level of herbal teas and brews because there is so much multicolouredness in the ethnical knowledge-base of ours. Today people are not even conceiving about it, they instead visit the closest pharmacies and embrace synthetic drugs. We had words about the traditional inhalation drawing in spices and volatile oils. Or incensing, that appertained to our hunnic lifestyle, and was adopted for healing and sterilizing functions. Judit yet cleanses the air in their home with a censer. She is also within sight accompanied with a herb-stuffed pipe many times, being an unfailing vixen.

The prime step of Judit's herbal journey was planting her own garden with all kinds of weeds and shortly the thought of an own land was born where she can continue with the project. Years had passed since and there are still plenty of works to enroll so she spends as much of her time next to her day job as she can. The extended family helped her on several occasions for which Judit is rather thankful. She narrated that on these events grandchildren and children carry out a tenacious teamwork while herself is exceptionally found besides the kettle cooking up something delicious for her busy relatives. These occasions are opportunities to drive together the family.

At a time, she was commissioned to guide and carry out a herbal garden in the neighbouring village of *Varsány*, and to multiple requests, she led herb-picking

tours for small group of inquisitives. Currently her private land takes a sort of obligatory precedence as they have no time to undertake other projects. When the land is in its ready-made condition, Judit dreams about opening it up for the passing tourists. It will be sure good, when a wanderer enters, looks around, picks a handful of herbs, brews a tea with the utensils on location and gets on.

(I was very pleased with this image and became even more content when tasted one more piece of the herb-oil infused cheese I was offered which Judit herself ripened.)

Then I continued with my question of seasonality, that she answered with an absolute yes. She said that every part of a plant has its own time suitable for picking, because that time they possess the largest concentration of active agent. For example roots are advised to be picked from late autumn until early springtime. I myself was receiving the best advices from Judit henceforward, when was in the hunt for edible herbs and flowers in the course of preparing for the primary producers' dinner *via* the case study of the research.

As for the customer-community of hers, Judit's reputation spreads with word-of-mouth manner. She sends her packages as mails, mostly for medical utilization. If asking for advice, she is willingly and responsibly available for anybody with all spheres of her herbal knowledge.

Her opinion on my last and significant question is that there is an urgent need for businesses and projects being sustainable, and spare our nature and surroundings, especially in our homeland, the countryside, since all possibilities are given. We can imagine a family of five in a low-standard district in *Budapest*. We can also imagine that this family hardly ever get hold of substantive food, by the reason of the lack of GMO-free options and their financial situation not enabling quality.

Judit and her husband gather the first dosage of their own farm eggs every second morning to send to their children's family, because they cannot purchase inartificial eggs in the city.

In the present, our country must strive to find a solution where processed, imported foods are not more available than clean, home-grown goods.

#### 7.3.4 *Mátrai Buffalo Reserve*

I would say an exeptional encounter took place when I paid a visit to the *Lapos* farm on *Kiskoncsúr* plateau at the foot of *Mátra* mountain, a tableland subtended as far as the eye can reach. I greeted Ferenc, who is the singular farmer of the estate and is responsible for the premise, the appliances and the animals alike, and we began our tour around the barton, while intertalking. As we crossed through marshy ranges and descended to the well in a 36 m fall, Ferenc explained that he chooses to run each and every visitant off their feet, including the members of the Hungarian *Kossuth* Award-winner *Kaláka* music group, who had taken the hurdle of climbing fairly well.

At the reserve, 100 individuals of indigenous water buffalos live, which pasture on a 150 hectar province. They are the part of an only 6-7.000 (female) stock in the country which used to exist in a number of 125.000 before the World Wars. These species of buffalo was kept for three uses in the onetime peasant world: their milk, meat and labour. – *They are one of the eldest, in genetic entail the most unbroken domestic animals of our nation.* - added Ferenc while we were stroking *Zsuzsi*, one of his favourite animals. Along with buffalos, horses, ponies, chicken, sheep, and a 60 membered stock of again autochthonal fallow donkeys inhabit the farm, which is the other breed rescue project of Ferenc. He received the honour of being voted in as the associate of the National Buffalo Rearing Council in 2018, this way can directly participate in their boosterism.

The entire herd lives coherently, *quasi* throughout the entire year in a semi-wild livestock method. There is an absolute harmony amongst the animals, due to the buffalos' tameness and above average social intelligence. Ferenc related to an example about when there are calves on the farm, while grazing, a 'nurse' animal is pointed out to guard the separated group of littles. The buffalos rotate for this position in every two hours.

The farmer unfolded that livestock breeding and domestic animals resided in his past too. His grandfathers' family who are originated in *Gyöngyös*, were dealing with such occupation, alongside horsing and silviculture. Another family-orientation of professions was winemaking. Viticulture is rich and noted hereabouts *Gyöngyös* area with numerous talented experts, so Ferenc aimed to carry on with the family tradition animal husbandry-wise. Although he had been caring for Hungarian grey cattles before, he never handled water buffalos before. Being a liker of challenges, he brought off his first four animals: *-It did not took three weeks for me to realise what level of admiration I approach this breed with.-*

In our days, Ferenc, his wife and children left the family business and are managing in the everyday life of the Buffalo Reserve, that follows an entirely rural path, without electricity and connected water. The scope of activities include processing meat products. They vend all kinds of fresh meat as well as prepare dry products, such as hams, surface ripened salamis, and saussages. In fact their red meat goods, more specifically their *debreceni* double-saussions are manufactured according to a Hungarian *grand prix* recipe from Dékány Ferenc.

They dispose of a wide customer-clientele country-wise. It was striking for me to hear that the private customers are from Budapest and not from local premises. It is very much meritorious though that the farm delivers for Czakó-Kert, the popular sustainable bistro and market in *Buda*, and the two-*Michelin*-starred fine dining restaurant, *Onyx*. However Ferenc did not continue with winemaking himself, the farm is in collaboration with several wineries, including Losonci Bálint

in *Gyöngyöspata* and Gál Tibor in *Eger*, where the farm attends the saturday-markets in organization of Slow Food *Eger-Máttra*.

Development of their artifacts is constantly running, but as Ferenc added, they still deputize our ancient customs and knowledge. A valuable human knowledge, that was malignly perishing in the last century, he said. At present the elemental morals are not in place, instead exclusive success- and profit-orientation is the path. -In the background the situation perhaps is, that our society does not want to step out from their artificial bubble. There is no trust, no harmony and reverence for the laws of nature. Sithence this mentality enabled mankind to head forward at the start of our history.-

The Mátrai Buffalo Reserve deems sustainability its labour of love not only ecologically and biologically but in the scope of stress-free animal slaughter which is an issue for present-day animal husbanding units. Condign extermination is a humane act and provides primer meat material contrarily to unbeseem methods. Ferenc wishes to experience our country's jurisdiction to turn towards the interest of the cattle.

### 7.3.5 *Chef Bokros Barnabás*

At the time when I have already contrived and started to engross in the topic of connecting the phenomenon of slow food and regional heritage, we attended a wine festival in the delightful *Parádsasvár Castle Hotel*, where local wineries lined up. There I met and tasted the eats of Barnabás, who is the head chef of the castle hotel. After trying the extraordinary hamburger, the buns of which was tinted black with squid ink and straddled a juicy buffalo meat patty deriving from, practically, the *Mátrai Buffalo Reserve*, I was immediatley ascretained to include him in my dissertation. Barnabás is the ideal representative of fusing old with new, regionary with international trends, which is believed not only by him but many, including myself, the future of gastronomy.

When contacting him - hence the isolation restriction of the actuality, *via* videochat - he ensured me again about his idea of gastronomic future being patterns of private producers', local patriotism, and sustainable economies.

Barnabás is a cook for 23 years now and holds the position of *chef de cuisine* for 16 years. He started working in his hometown, Mátrafüred and had got about several catering units, including *Costes Downtown* and *Bori Mami Bistro Restaurant* in Gyöngyös, with whom he attended in group and won the audience award of the admitted *Gourmet Festival* in 2018.

His ambition was developing like many of his fellow colleagues', sharing the cook-career. Firstly, one just begins to enjoy cooking. The more he likes it, the more he gets interested. This is the genuine force that actuates the creative energies in Barnabás ever since. If getting to know about a new technique, he prefers to „dig deeper” in that certain knowledge. - *The more we learn, the less we, as a matter of fact, know. This is how our world works* - he said, correspondingly to other discourses partners on my interview list. A sentence substantiated as a corporate lesson of these subservient persons.

The chef reckons of vital importance the art of recreation and self-charging. Whereas he light-heartedly added that being the father of four, it is not an easy matter for him to take some relaxation. He exerts it in his daily routine from time to time, because it very much pays his way when it comes to inspiration and tuning up in the kitchen. Until this day, he cooks with his senses. It is may or may not a problem, but is a trait of his, that he could not uncloak throughout the years. When his fantasy is released, he relishes to build upon a core recipe – which is often a traditional one – and have a spin on it. Sometimes he takes the characterizing elements and compose something astounding. As an example he mentioned one of his recent developments, *sztatpacska* (or *haluska* in Palócföld) prepared as a dessert, with sweet sour cream and tonka beans, a dish that shakes people out of their unifacial approach of food.

In the period when Barnabás was at home with his children, he visited particular restaurants every weekend to help in at kitchens of all kinds. The intention of his was to catch a glimpse of these, one and all peculiar medias. He further prefers to visit his father who owns a large garden with plantations. The duality of innovation and tradition yet meets in his experienced impressions.

Barnabás supervises his kitchen in the castle hotel founded on the mentality of seasonal flavours, raw materials originating from local farmers and producers and waste reduction enabling sustainable operation. He encourages fresh vegetables in season –*It as easy as it sounds. You have a strawberry in late-August and one in December. The latter has nothing to do with the flavour of the one ripened under open sky. Produces taste well in season. Natural tastes have time to ripen, bear high levels of nutrients, vitamins and sugars in contrast with their manipulated, greenhouse associates, not to say that ingenuous species are ever so resistant to infestants and extreme conditions.* -

In the kitchen they work together as a community, including Barnabás, speaking of what he mentioned the non-preference of chef-behind-desk management style. When he is not working from home and occupied with paperwork or procurement, the chef likes better to cook, and taste, to find out what works and what must be changed along the menu. In his opinion, talking through and observing every participants' opinion in the kitchen is the key of an excellent team and constant development. Barnabás was raised according to the view that there is no person on Earth from whom one cannot learn anything. Due to this all employees take the floor in his kitchen since everybody might have a clear-sight.

To my question on his relationship with local food producers, he positively replied with a yes, including that they continually refresh their connections, if a new primary producer appears. – *It is our interest and responsibility to do so. Thankfully, my observation is that there is a growing tendency, not only locally, but country-wide, to complying and building-in authentic, regional ingredients and*



*recipes.* – He also believes that Hungarian hospitality is beyond versatile typified by well-trained workforce. To my surprise though, because as per some advices, a large group of talented cooks and gastro-experts are trying their luck abroad. Barnabás did not agree, and explained that Hungarian professionals are on remarkably high workload-level. In the kitchen one factor is more relevant than talent: this is diligence, that can forward success just as much in Hungary as in foreign land.

We adverted the coronavirus situation in a few minutes. Besides many distressful incidents occurred by the phenomenon, Barnabás has the intriguing vision of the Hungarian gastronomy benefiting from the return of many home-comer cooks and chefs. This way high workload will join by foreign experience.

The chef answered my question about the operability of a business – in current regards, a kitchen – being environmentally and GCH-wise conscious in the 21st century Hungary with the following, final sentences: - *This is going to be our future. My kitchen is no place to prodigalize and waste. We use up as much as possible, what others get rid of in general. In the old days, pursuant to our descendants' mindset, each and every part of the pig was utilized during a pig-slaughter. The finesse moreover is that every piece of meat product was applied with a thought-out intention. This intention is inherited by gastronomy till today. In the kitchen, the more imaginative the utilization of raw material is, the more that kitchen is destined for.* –

### 7.3.6 *Truffle and self-sustainable farm of Zenit*

The last interviewees I visited in their home were my associates and good friends for some time past, a couple who engage in picking and treating of the noble mushroom, truffle in the nearby woods around Hollókő, where they in fact evolved a homestead based upon self-sustainability.

It is scarcely known that our country is declared a world-power and imperium of truffle – the third member of the truffle triumvirate next to France and Italy. In fact the largest concentrated habitat of truffle is found in a small Hungarian town, *Jászszentandrás*.

During the reign of Franz-Joseph, king of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the largest percentage of truffles were exported from the country, vastly mutilating the natural resources, detailed Laci, who indeed forged the idea back at the time.

Both Laci and Tímea ply a trade off the beaten track, Timi being a publisher and expert of astrosophy, and her partner, Laci dealing with dog training for many functions. One day, he came across an article about Italian dogs trained for truffle-hunting, which was their first impression. Some years went by, and the couple happened to move to Hollókő from the capital. They believe that there are the exact times when a certain project is back by life itself, and then came the right instant when truffle entered the scene. This occupation requires manifold qualifications starting with personal- and dog trainings, ceased by territorial licences. Whereabout the couple had a calling for constructing an authentic yurt – which was the ancient accomodation of our hunnic predecessors-, an envisage that resulted in interconnection with their truffle activity.

Today, they organize lunch and dinner events inside and out the yurt in their estate, which they merely refer to as *Zenit*. These events are dedicated to the propagation of truffle amongst the commoners who pay a visit, furthermore their mission is to make the unattainable available. Laci explained that tracing back to the Roman Empire, the implied species of funghi was the privilidge of the highest classes solely. Momentarily it is affordable for regular persons, knowing that it is categorized as a spice and only a slight amount is needed to raise the dish to a whole new level. Into the bargain, truffle comports with simple and rather uncostly ingredients such as eggs and dairy, for example butter, cheese or cream.

Throughout these informal gatherings, Timi, Laci and the guests together prepare a three course meal, and talk about the marvelous world of truffle. They are pleased to hear new questions about the fungus during each and every occasion. The couple sees as the potential of these lies within the intensity of first impression. That, in terms of truffle is ever watershed. They had never met anyone who professed about the flavour, aroma, and texture neutrally. Truffle can be either loved or not in the least.

It is significant to mention that the couple does not consider themselves plunging truffle trackers, they esteem their natural habitat's well-being over generating profit. Tímea stated that a close connection to nature and wildlife had always been ensuing both of their lives, sith Laci acquired expertness in numerous fields of folk medicine: he is qualified and acknowledged in osteopathy and medicinal leeching. –*We are people, whom the directive to renew is pronouncedly present, but we everlastingly get motivated by traditions and time-honoured customs.*- said Timi, and added that they do not overplan anything, instead embrace what opportunities offer to them.

When preparing aliments, they follow a similar philosophy. Although when in season, there is always some truffle preserved in olive oil and *pálinka* on truffle-bed in their pantry, along with jams, syrups and Hungarian vegetable ragout: *lecsó*, all canned from their produces on the farm. As primary producers, they too sell a modicum of these for the passers-by. In many instances they execute individual, personal requests, Laci made a mention on one example of a truffle butter-order recently.

The phenomenon the couple is very proud of, is the support and collaboration in the commonwealth of *Hollókő* village. A system had developed amongst the local farmers, food producers and artisans, rest on goods-swapping. They trade truffles for wine from the yonder winemaker, or cheese and honey from associate craftsmen. Appreciable view-point is, that in this manner, one is not given over to money.

Timi and Laci are regular participators of GCH-based events in *Hollókő*, and co-operate with the F&B department of *Castellum Hotel Hollókő*. When occasion serves, they attend private events as performer guests, and take part in truffle-themed competitions as well. One time previously Laci and his team won the *dessert prize* of an international cooking championship with a vanilla custard truffle-pancake.

Above all indeed they host up-to-par dinner parties in their home, farm *Zenit* for big and small, in the heart of their self-sustaining garden, where they enjoy everyday working on the plantations of tomatoes, peppers, squash and more. They are accompanied by their dogs, a cat and latest inhabitants, a cock and its hens. Without any synthetic additives they cultivate their personal ecosystem, believing that energy can neither be created nor destroyed - only converted from one form to another, which is known by the law of conservation of energy (Campbell et al, 2018).

### 7.3.7 *Antiquarian Ladóczki Vilmos*

Though the last interview I conducted happened to occur with somebody not directly linked to the food industry and gastronomy, my hopes were that Ladóczki Vilmos, due to being an antique collector, perhaps know more from national heritage and ancient bravado than any other conversation partners of mine. Gratefully we covered notable topics research-wise with Vili, who is a generally known person in *Medvesalja* area, a part of Palócföld which lies right after the Hungarian-Slovakian border.

The antiquarian lives in a farmhouse which on the margin serves as a regional museum for the interested tourists, friends and potential vendees. I personally visited the location several matters before and can only acknowledge that the experience is like a journey through time. When one steps in his door they

find themselves in front of an overpowering amount of antiques hanged up high until the ceilings. These antiques are mainly domestic tools, *inter alia* kitchen utensils originating from both rural and industrial scopes. Plenty of these objects have 200 or more years of history, in fact his oldest antique is a glass-barrel from the 17th century.

As a response to my first question during our converse, Vili unfolded why he believes in the fact that our grandparents, and great-grandparents still carried habits and manners of peerless worth. According to him, average men of today find that objects well-tried in the days of old have lost their function and do not hold on today, but basically the opposite is the reality. With reference to antique means visitors often ask him, whether that pot or vessel is worn-out, not usable any more. To this, his answer is, for the most cases, a 'no'. He added that once attended a cooking competition on which all dishes were stewed in genuine *gömöri* cooking pots and generated such olden flavours that no cauldron can these days, not to talk about the cast-iron pots which are heavy but most of all durable.

To the art of cooking not only the raw materials, the execution and serving belong to, but the kitchen objects and serving equipment likewise. As Vili said, if we would fly back in the gastronomical history, we could find out what beautiful, detailed items were used even for the most simple tasks by our ancestors. Dining provided an esthetic event, in the media of simple peasant families similarly. All utensils were manufactured with pretension of integrity by the own two hands of the individual. The new generations in turn, with regards to continuous developmental eagerness, wrote down these as something obscurant.

- *Over years, we let go of our customs, our furnishings, language, and culture got impoverished.*- said the antique collector. He could refer to the historic influences of the West and the industrial revolution and consumerism, when natural materials got replaced by synthetic ones, and also included socialism, during which the entirety of private properties, including household items became standardized. He said: *-There was a deceptive period in the history of Hungarian*

*and many other nations' history, that is now called retro. Thenabouts families parted with their primeval properties and procured objects made of materials like plastic and teflon. The involved substances are not of long standing, such way siding the consumers' society.-*

In olden times certain items held emotional worth too. He told me about common occurrences when young men fabricated kitchen tools, etc. meatforks, whisks and rolling pins, detailed with folk motives of the appropriate era, to their loved ones and wives-to-be. The outcomes were proper artistic-creations and held dear by their owner in their whole lives. Our forbears deeply honoured natural materials and equipments made from these substances, that bear a treasury of folk lifestyle. When something broke, it was not a solution for menfolk to discard immediately, they instead craftily amended, because they had the skills to undertake. This mentality was the aboriginal sustainability. These folks deliberately insisted on their roots and past, and Vili himself aims to follow them in the row by qualifying in restoration and conservation besides collecting.

He narrated his story starting in his childhood, the first period of which took place in the capital, *Budapest*. Being a boy in public care, his new home became Szurdokpüspöki, a village in *Nógrád* county where the world of authenticity opened out for him. He was surrounded with ceramics, enamel, copper and wood, and became infatuated with archaic way of living. He was forewarned that if putting in hand at the science of antique-collecting it will never terminate. He smiled at this point and gave: *-This scene happened 25 years ago. He was right as I see.-*

The antiquarian is the proof that engaging in our heritage is not a vocation but a walk of life. These people are palladia of national culture and mannerism. They pass on their knowledge in forms of antiquities to ones who hold possession of a decent exquisiteness. His customers are spontaneous yet conscious visitors mainly coming from his wide circle of friends. Another days foreigners come by, and most of all are curious about textiles and drapers, woodwork and ceramics.

Vili is the proprietary of precious assets, and wittingly refuses to sell matters that does ratify our national reserves, for example ethnic rarities and Hungarian patents.

Among all antiques, Vili specializes in glassware. In his repertory, numbersome of delicate gastronomical tools can be viewed, from measuring cups, through milk jugs, marzipan perches to butter churns.

Throughout the years he found that the ethnology of the Carpathian basin and Hungary is special, since vasty of intellectual and phisical creating force used to typify their communities. And he believes in every initiation that is realized with heart and hand, and cherishes pure virtue *vis-a-vis* monetary-centered visions. His mission first and foremost continues with revealing to people how our heritage can be saved and and entailed to the younger generations by exerting and renovating ancientries.

## **7.4 Conclusion on conducted interviews**

After meeting with these one-by-one diverse persons and families, I can ascertain that I learned so much from each of them, not solely in point of view of research, but of myself as well. I would encourage anybody to come round in their surroundings and engage in the stories of local craftsmen. Our gastronomical cultural heritages are around us, in their splendid variegation, providing identity to us and our community.

Howbeit each of my interviewees' answers were unique and individual to my research questions, which enriched my documentations, all of them happened to prefer – sometimes without asking about it – and embolden the concept of slow food. They had discerned the ancient merits of *Mátra-Cserhát* area, perhaps had the fortune to grow up being surrounded by it, and undertook its propagation as their mission.

I am able to confirm by witnessing that there is an evergrowing phenomenon of producers of gastronomy flourishing with the virtues of slow food mentality in the *Mátra-Cserhát* area, this way proving my first hypothesis.



## **8 Slow 'web dinner' – a case study**

### **8.1 Introduction**

When contriving the active part of my research, and coming up with the gathering-in-sequence as the case study, two intentions I had in mind.

The first were my objectives *via* the thesis. I proposed to effectuate a proper event and timeous involvement of common inhabitants of the region, who can view, smell and taste slow food with their own senses. In the present-day accelerated world our society had created, phisical impression can be a key to reach people and render. After attending the dinner, guests could have a fresh experience to ask them about, serving authentic, true answers as opinions.

The second objective of mine was to personally get involved with the cause myself. I would have liked to patronize all by purchasing from private producers and cooperating, asking for advice from gastronomial experts. Making certain, that raw materials and ingredients from a sustainable, devoted business can mean a whole new level of quality and character. And with these as a base ingredients, cooking and gastronomy do more than well, considering even the simplest cuisines.

### **8.2 The menu**

In fact, when laying out the menu for the dinner, attaining it as simple as possible was the objective. I figured simplicity suited as a sort of enhancement of the features of 'slow' elements.

As inspiration I everyhow preferred to implement and connect the current trends of gastronomy and traditional flavours. This way the dinner adequately represented the synthesis of old and new. I was motivated to exert currently favoured techniques and textures while honouring our traditions, that could

eventuate simple yet sophisticated courses. I moreover negotiated with chef Bokros Barnabás who embraced the ideas I suggested.

Figure 4: Menu of the 'web-dinner'



Source: Own editing

The menu consisted of four courses. For the starter I beforehand preferred to display the traditional gomolya cheese of *Mekkentő* Goat Farm, though as I learned it is not the cheese type that can handle heat. Instead Enikő recommended their grilled cheese which she custom-prepared for the event in a mint-spiced version. I therefore purchased it in its plain interpretation too, and accompanied it with jams from S-F Manufacture. Vanda was absolutely right with their flavour touched by smokey notes from kettle brewing on wooden fire, which suites their jams muchly well. I paired the plain grilled cheese with their plum jam and the

mint one with their thick rosehip preserve. To assemble the spring salad, we collected shepherd's purse and chickweed from a nearby, pollutant-free field, according to the instructions of Judit, the herb 'witch'.

The soup with potatoes was flavoured with fresh, homegrown spices and herbs of parsley, thyme, sage and rosemary, together with a great many of garlics, that were previously roasted in the oven. The finished, rather light soup was blended finally with a bit of cream and was topped with chopped spring ramsons. Its heat was given by my partner's grandmother's matured hot paprika.

The theme of fresh spices was continued with the headliner of the dinner, the buffalo sirloin. The parsley, rosemary, thyme and sage, together with a few cloves of garlic were finely chopped and mixed with soft butter to achieve a herb-butter, that was rubbed into the pieces of buffalo meat. I opted for sirloin in virtue of the suggestion of Ferenc, the farmer of the reserve, as it is suitable for roasting and curing. My pieces of sirloin were matured for days before freezing. After being defrosted, its beautiful, deep red colour and soft texture was revealed. The then trussed meat was roasted for more than three hours under foil with the herb-butter incepted in and browned at the same time. For adequate instructions I invoked a literature, entitled: *A bivalyétkek dícsérete, bivalyétkek régen és manapság*. A book that was published by The Hungarian Buffalo Breeder's Association, and which I was gifted by Szalai Ferenc, one of the organization delegates.

We accompanied the main course with *nudli*, a *palóc* traditional dish, that is prepared with potatoes, one egg and flour. Adding carrot purée meant a sweetening swirl, and coloured our noodles sightful light orange.

For the dessert I was inspired by the *orda* creampots from *Mekkentő* farm, and fused the Hungarian ingredient with French cuisine. Light but creamy *orda soufflés* were the rewarding endpoint of our dinner, freshened up by the zest and

juice of lemon, that was adopted to the syrup absorbed by the soufflé. Some edible violets decorated the dessert.

For the rest of ingredients, decent procurement facilities were considered. All vegetables were provided from the local market.

### **8.3 Interventions and conclusive agenda**

I wished to include all my interviewees in the dinner project, but the unforeseen coefficient of *corona virus* had interverted the original scenario. As a number of conversation partners I could not visit and meet in person, including Ladóczki Vilmos who I designated to request for supporting the gathering with fine tableware, rethinking was necessary in many respects.

Besides the circumstances, Tímea and Laci from *Zenit* farm, whereon there is no truffle season yet, could not currently contribute to the dinner. That in turn disembosom the couple's kindness and devotion, is their deed that me and our entire friend group participating in the dinner were invited to be guests of *Zenit* as the voluntary quarantine is over, for a truffle-themed brunch.

As the situation had escalated, it became obvious that a traditional, directly held dinner could not be realized. So it was the time to find out how we can avoid personal encounter and set up the event doing justice to hygiene-appeals by the Hungarian Government.

The final plot formed as a circumstance-friendly web-dinner, that as far as possible, still delivered the message and motto of the evening: a pleasurable experience with food, good company, and sustainable, clean, quality slow food by local producers.

Social media and the internet, besides plenty of their inconveniences and drawbacks, represented the striking solution in the current instance. I invited the

attendants to form a collective chat-group, which was remunerative in terms of essential information flow and potential enhancement of agitation and excitement amongst the group members. I for example previously shared the self-designed menu in the group, that facilitated the prospective guests to look forward to the programme.

The previously procured, 100 % degradable food boxes, on behalf of sustainability, made it possible to transfer and deliver each, freshly served meal to the guests. We had chosen our guests bearing in mind their location, ergo only transporting to my town, Pásztó and surrounding villages, and the food delivery was performed by three of my family members at the same time, to gear up the process as much as possible. When all packages arrived to the households, our prospective guests would sit in front of the webcam and after introductions of the forthcoming dish and its resources by me, we would taste them one by one together.

Our dinner was inhaled by bottles of *Pinot Noir* 2018 from Losonci Vinery in *Gyöngyöspata*. The wine connoted the exquisite match with every menu items, especially goat's cheese and jams, and the main of buffalo sirloin.

## **8.4 Opinion of the author on the experiment**

When the day of the event approached, several preliminary tasks must have been fulfilled, etc. acquisition of the ingredients from private producers, vegetables from the market and mapping the nearby fields to allocate where to pick the edible plants and flowers from.

The day of the dinner commenced in the early hours for us. My work was reelevated by two of my family members throughout the day, who assumed temporary positions of a side-cook, and besteded in labour processes. Over the course of time we performed a rewarding teamwork and made an advance featly. One of us chopped the ingredients while the other hand-rolled nudli pasta which

the third continually cooked in boiling water. The meat managed to make it to the oven in time and was looked after periodically.

As the hour of the set-out approximated, duties condensed and multiplied. The rather problematic agenda ensued with the arrangement and packaging of the dishes, which finally lasted three-four times more than expected. Eventually, the dinner began an hour later. It pointed out for me how much well-worked-out time management is a key for successful dinner parties.

However take-away dinner was an experiment I have never rehearsed before. It turned out to be a feasible form of event elapsed in uplifting and honorable spirit from beginning of cooking until the last bites and conversation topics of the 'web-dinner'. It was *quasi* overwhelming and very much honourable to look at the screen and sight friends of mine enjoying the food I created with my own two hands.

Reuniting with friends in the COVID-19 situation in the light of such an important motto like slow food entailed an exceedingly memorable happening. On one hand, all of us were delighted to hear from one another and spend quality time at long last in suchlike creative manner. On the other hand, we all felt the oddity of a situation never observed before: sitting in front of a camera, and tasting the food kilometers of distance from each other, instead of being together. This especially opened our eyes and polarized the edification to cherish how much collectivity and community is important for us and humans generally. Even more polarized the edification how great of a societal power mutual dining holds.

## **8.5 Opinion of guests on the experient**

After deducing the dinner I was greatly intrigued to learn about my guests' opinion. Whereas to my pleasure, they openly offered their fairly positive sentiments and points of view throughout the nearly four-hours long 'web-dinner' itself. Subsequent the slightly uneasy start, my kitchen-helpers and I were able to

achieve and present flavourful meals according to the tasters' immediate feedbacks. Surprisingly every person relished different parts of the menu the most. Most recurrently the grilled cheese-jam combination, the soup and the buffalo were mentioned.

A privatized questionnaire was assembled to furthermore gain an insight of their detailed infelcts, comments on the phenomenon of slow food and regional traditions. I specifically asked them when answering, feel free to amplify their notions, which they seized and trustworthily executed. Unlike in terms of the previous set of questions, this case I preferred a structure of presenting the replies for one question at a time in a subalternating order.

**1. How significant do you find local values and traditions in general?**

Almost all responses found traditions very important in general. Some of the guests already pay attention to this matter *via* traditional Sunday meals every week, and practicing folkdance, or cherishing their favourite dish, the *palóc laska* by their grandmother. A few of them feel the need, yet are not as familiar with local values, nathless would like to work for carrying these forward for the future generations. One replier's idea was to try not to only implement *palóc* traditions on holidays but on day-to-day basis.

**2. How important do you find regional gastronomy? Is traditional cuisine part of your everyday life (in case of parents', grandparents' and your own cookery practices)?**

The series of answers start with a thought that there is a tendency about today's kitchen practices experiment with multifarious national cuisines, yet we return to our own tastes evermore. Some of the respondents do not find Hungarian or *palóc* gastronomy crucial in their lives, but enjoy these dishes from time to time. Other respondents very much privilege it, and adopt traditional receipts in their diet

frequently, by themselves or relatives. – *Hungarian national gastronomy is oftentimes confined to the goulash, stew with nokedli, and stuffed cabbage triumvirate in common sense, although it is so much more manifold in reality. In my kitchen I try to alloy our personal sense of taste with traditionality. We must learn again how to cook authentically.*- stated one of the guests in their answer. Another replier told about him being a cook, how pleased he is to come upon catering units and projects that not only get inspired by national cuisine, but pair it with local ingredients too, as it is unfortunately not apparent today. One answer was dedicated furthermore to the advantage of quality time one spends with grandparents who initiate into precious factures.

**3. After attending the 'web-dinner' do you sympathize with a programme of such? What do you think about the motto of the event?**

All respondents enjoyed the dinner and found the motto of slow food peculiar. Many of them had never attended before and would certainly take part in farther happenings of the sort. They see possibilities in the concept, interconnected with rural tourism, as potential propagation of *Mátra-Cserhát* area. A respondent shed light to how a trend, balancing traditionary with modern, start to rear its head in the 21st century, and how it is going to benefit our life, socially and economically alike. A couple who currently locate in *Budapest* on weekdays, have an issue with continuous rush in the city. They are managing to cook at home instead of choosing fast food options during the day, thus pronouncedly appreciate unhurried, tranquil and talkative dinings, where they can finally slow down a little.

**4. What did you think about the implementation of the dinner?**

I was somewhat graceful to hear only two elements were mentioned problematic by chance, the delay and incidental chill of a few packages. Blissfully these errors were labeled negligible besides the coviviality and performance of the dinner. One respondent was pleased by the structure of the menu, and commended the



organizers for maximizing the facilities given by the current predicament. – In these bothersome weeks, it was so elevating to take part in an experience like this. I am sure that this way although, it is going to be even more memorable than a conventional dining party, we will be referring to it certainly. – said one of the guests.

**5. How did you feel during the dining?**

As the bit of an embarrassment in the beginning of the evening passed, the respondents altogether partook in a decent and light mood, which was lifted onwards by our general favourite wine offer. One answer stated that both the flavours and the company were above-average.

**6. Does the dinner experience encourage you to purchase from local producers and farmers, perhaps to choose catering units engaged in their support?**

9 out of 13 guests claimed to be more committed to buying local produces after the experience. A number of them payed attention to the matter before, either for sustainability's and personal health's behalf. The event was able to affirm them in being on the right track. A vision of one replier was shared about a dining place that serves seasonal, local food in artisan pottery, accompanied with regional wine specialties. It would fill a niche in the periphery.

**7. Is company and the sense of community significant in your life?**

Being such a close friend group who generally meet every week or month, all participants found that sense of community is essential for them. – *The equilibrium amongst being alone and in company is a key for us, humans to correctly evaluate one when perceiving the other. It is nice to be together, because thoughts are exchanged and new perspectives are learnt from each other, this way the mind and body can renewel.* –

**8. What kinds of notions were inchoated in you via the alternative dinner-implementation due to circumstances caused by coronavirus (videochat-solution)?**

Some of the respondents found the idea rather creative and peculiar. Others had bifold feelings. On the one hand they were blissful to see the group together again, and to acknowledge that regarding such an irritating phase, present-day technology assists in resolving. On the other, electronical relationship is not a real relationship. We could not clink glasses, and the cast of mind was not the same this way. A comment touched me exceptionally because it said this solution showed the respondent that I did not give up on the project. The event could have been postponed or deleted but instead, I decided to comply with the predicament and customize it according to extant eventualities, which they recognized. As for other opinions, it was detailed that somehow in a paradox manner, people are brought closer as they ceased to rush for a while. There is no physical contact of a surety, still we are in each other's mind much more often.

**9. Could the idea of 'web-dinner' substitute a physically-present, conventional dinner for you, or was it completely different?**

I recieved differing answers to this question. For substitution, the uniform reply was a 'no'. Whereas some of the respondents thought it was unlike but exciting, and definitely a new experience for them, others were missing the smells, the sounds and the natural spontaneity. Because of being in an indirect medium, unclouded colloquy was aggravated. It was revealed for me by all the replies nevertheless, that the 'web-dinner' was the most fitting option.

**10. Would you - as the current circumstances elapse - attend a similar kind of event in the future?**

- *Gladly. Especially if we can taste such flavourful delicacies. –*
- *Yes and yes! We could open the doors to further advocate the regional traditions and persons engaged with it. Consuming turns to dining by the help of company and the best memories are made like this.-*
- *Of course yes, because it is pleasing to experience elaboration and devotion in the form of food, which pervaded the evening. -*

All of the dinner-guests, one by one disclosed their contentment in their final response and embraced to take part in future events of sort.

## **8.6 Conclusion on the case study**

As the dinner passed off, and I recieved the series of answerings, that deliberately reflected unimitated opinions of our attendees, the output happened to turn out more positive and beneficial than ever expected.

The moving force afterall was a cohesive, socially harmonious group of people, who I chose as the group of investigation because of its preference to highlight the power of togetherness. In comparison with a group of unfamiliar, this trait would not have been present in case. The agent of companionship was favourable from the viewpoint of slow food, and accordingly of my thesis alike.

By means of the experiment of research I was enabled to observe the manners of slow food and connect a phenomenon originating from Italy to our gastronomical cultural heritage in a Hungarian, more precisely, in a Northern-Hungarian comprehension. I could approve furthermore that local inhabitants - *inter alia* ones, who never heard of slow food and were not at all interested in traditional heritage of food before –, due to corresponding events, happen to be

inquisitive about the phenomenon. Nevertheless the second hypothesis is capable to verification.

## 9 Epilogue

While breaking down and introducing the research segments, my aims and objectives successively achieved implementation. The primary and secondary research facilitated to deepen the cognition of GCH in Mátra-Cserhát area, eventually could signify approbation to the hypotheses of the research.

A journey took place during the preparation of the thesis. I have met and got to know more about amazing and exemplary persons whom with we hold in esteem the same roots and who inspire me but could teach so much to others as well. I got hold of a perenial memory of organizing a dinner-event with heart and soul, going through all the additional circumstances and eventually receiving contentment, and own propagative ideas from the guests.

I trust in the originality of my investigation and therein it can be recognized as an elaborate, peculiar material in the quarries of Slow Food movement and *Palóc* Heredity.

The mindset of slow food is the mindset of a wise, mature society that teaches balance instead of restriction and greed. A society that we all truly belong to.

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# 11 Appendices

## Appendix 1: Conversations – a field study

*Figure 5: Gomolya cheeses of Mekkentő Goat Farm*



*Source: Own image*

*Figure 6: Goats of Mekkentő goat farm*



*Source: Own image*

*Figure 7: A cup of tea with the herb 'witch'*



*Source: Own image*

*Figure 8: At Lapos farm of Mátrai Buffalo Reserve*

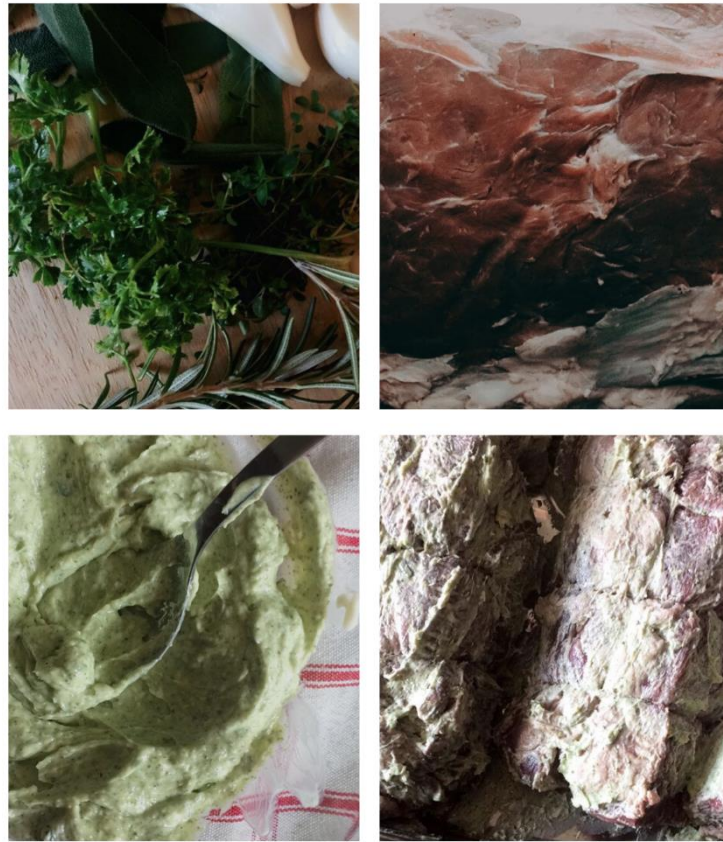


*Source: Own image*



## Appendix 2: Slow 'web dinner'- a case study

Figure 9: Preparations of buffalo sirloin



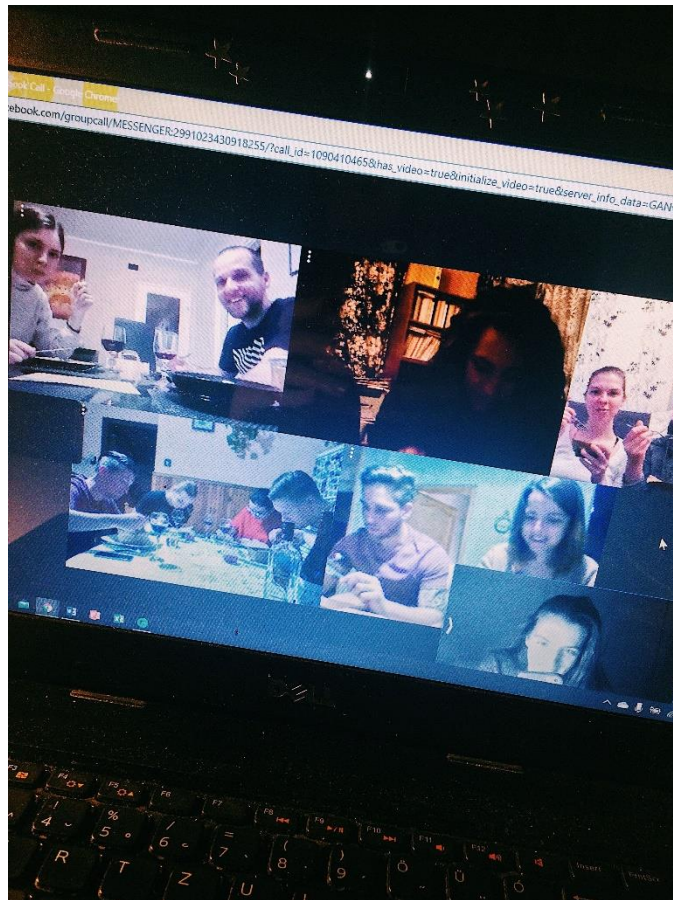
Source: Own image

Figure 10: 'Plating'



Source: Own image

Figure 11: The 'web dinner'



Source: Own image

Figure 12: Credit on social media



Source: Own image

