

Taste The Adventure

Exploring the Intersection
of Food Experiences and Adventure Travel

By Nicole Petrak and Christina Beckmann

In partnership with Jim Kane,
Off the Table and Culture Xplorers



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[Introduction]

Sampling steaming dishes from a multitude of vendors in a crowded alley of Hanoi. Fishing from the beach on the shores of Greece and toting the catch to a local restaurant to have it cooked to order. The sacrosanct ritual of beginning the day with friendly negotiations and chatter over morning pilau in Uzbekistan.

A rising consumer consciousness about food quality and sourcing, in addition to the environmental and health effects of food systems, has resulted in a growing desire for local and natural food products. This rise in consciousness coincides with a surging interest

in celebrity food content available through television, online social media, and events. The result is greater attention on niche food cultures as well as a new demand for food experiences both at home and afar. Over a billion people now travel annually,¹ and they are hungry for new ways to partake in and consume culture.

Even for travelers who do not make their destination and activity decisions solely around food experiences, the UNWTO has observed

1 "Over 1.1 Billion Tourists Travelled Abroad in 2014," UNWTO, 2015, accessed August 17, 2015, http://dtx4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_barom15_01_january_excerpt_0.pdf.

[INTRODUCTION]

that “the fact that gastronomy is increasingly occupying a substantial role as a secondary or partial motivation for tourists” is significant.² Given that more than one-third of all tourist expenditure is on food and drink, the growing interest in food experiences clearly signals an important opportunity for tourism businesses.

The intersection of food and adventure tourism brings together two niche industries that can have a supportive impact on local economies, play a role in conservation, improve the image of destinations, and attract subsections of travelers who are able and willing to spend money on high quality products and experiences. It also creates a broader set of active experiences for adventure travel providers to connect their customers to the identity and culture of a place.

This report provides a brief summary of current trends in food tourism, and explores the experiences of adventure tourism companies incorporating food experiences into their products: their customers’ preferences, the types and prices of trips they offer, and the challenges and opportunities they are discovering in providing this type of travel experience. The report includes the results of original survey research conducted with adventure travel companies from 54 countries, and shares insights obtained from a focus group of nine food tourism pioneers.

² Carmina Fandos Herrera and Javier Blanco Herranz, “Gastronomy’s Importance in the Development of Tourism Destinations in the World,” in UNWTO: Global Report on Food Tourism: AM Reports, vol. 4 (Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2012), accessed August 7, 2015, http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/import/Projects/Gastronomic_Cities/outputs_media/Food_tourism.pdf.



[Summary of Current Trends in Food Tourism]

As with any industry, quantification requires definition. This section provides a brief explanation of the current debate on defining food tourism, followed by a summary of current trends and statistics within the industry.

Defining Food Tourism

Much like “adventure travel” ten to fifteen years ago, defining the adventure food and culinary tourism trend—a composite of many different and evolving definitions and

experiences—varies widely across regions and industry participants. The larger food tourism industry itself is in the process of examining and negotiating self-definitions and terms while seeking ways to communicate a set of products outside the traditional understanding of the “gourmet” traveler traditionally focused on restaurant and fine-dining-based experiences.

The UNWTO stated in its 2012 Global Report on Food Tourism that “one of the most utilized definitions of gastronomic tourism used in [global academic] literature is that proposed by Hall and Sharples (2003), according to

[SUMMARY OF CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD TOURISM]

which food tourism is an experiential trip to a gastronomic region for recreational or entertainment purposes, which includes visits to primary and secondary producers of food, gastronomic festivals, food fairs, events, farmers' markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, tastings of quality food products or any tourism activity related to food. In addition, this experiential journey is related to a particular lifestyle that includes experimentation, learning from different cultures, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the qualities or attributes related to tourism products, as well as culinary specialities produced in that region through its consumption.”³

Even with this more inclusive definition, a broader term was needed. The World Food Travel Association (WFTA) stated on its website that the organization had used “culinary tourism” to describe their industry until 2012, but stopped when their research indicated that the term was misleading to their mission, as most English-speaking readers interpreted the term in an elitist way: “‘Food Tourism’ is inclusive and includes the food carts and street vendors as much as the locals-only (gastro) pubs, dramatic wineries, or one-of-a-kind restaurants... ‘Gourmet’ is not food tourism, rather it is a subset of our larger industry. The Association’s own research shows that only 8.1% of all foodies self-identify with the ‘gourmet’ label.”⁴

The issue of terminology becomes even more complex when it comes to the intersection of food tourism and adventure tourism. As food experiences become a more significant component of adventure tourism, as they already are within mainstream tourism, operators and advisors struggle to

communicate to potential guests realistic, meaningful concepts of what to expect from food experiences on their adventure tours. Shifting terms have been used recently to describe adventure trips with a food focus, such as “rural gastronomy,” “agro-tourism,” and “food adventures.” As adventure and culinary travel increasingly intersect, matching expectations with many possible definitions is a growing challenge.

3 Carmina Fandos Herrera and Javier Blanco Herranz. “Gastronomy’s Importance in the Development of Tourism Destinations in the World,” in UNWTO: Global Report on Food Tourism: AM Reports, vol. 4 (Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2012), accessed August 7, 2015, http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/import/Projects/Gastronomic_Cities/outputs_media/Food_tourism.pdf.

4 “What Is Food Tourism?,” World Food Travel Association, 2015, accessed August 7, 2015, <http://worldfoodtravel.org/what-is-food-tourism/>.

Quantifying the Food Tourism Opportunity

While studies that focus on regional and global markets of food tourism are still scarce, a look at a few key markets helps illustrate the scale of the burgeoning trend. According to the UNWTO's 2012 Global Report on Food Tourism, the number of annual trips booked in Europe that were primarily focused on food and wine was 600,000; the number grows to 20 million annual trips when these are included as a secondary demand. Annual growth is expected to be between seven and twelve percent.

In 2013, China Daily USA reported that as China's massive outbound market grows more sophisticated and independent, food tourism has overtaken shopping as the second most popular activity.⁵

Futhermore, according to the 2013 American Culinary Traveler Study, almost a third of American leisure travelers (30%) deliberately chose destinations based on the availability of activities related to local food and drink (such as beer/wine festivals, markets, farm-to-table experiences, and special events with celebrity chefs). Over half (51%) of all respondents said that they travel to learn about or enjoy unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences, and nearly two-thirds (61%) were interested in taking a trip to a destination within the U.S. to engage in culinary activities within the following year. This translates to 39 million American travelers who are "deliberate" culinary travelers (choosing a destination based around food experiences), with an additional 35 million who are "opportunistic" (researching and engaging in food tourism after the destination is chosen for other reasons).⁶ The study found that culinary travelers usually seek out additional activities, including those rooted in culture, heritage, and nature.



San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas © ATTA / Rachid Dahoun

⁵ Xu Jungian, "Affluent Tourists 'Go It Alone': Seek Culture, Good Food," China Daily USA, 2015, accessed August 7, 2015, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2013-08/22/content_16912831.htm.

⁶ The American Culinary Traveler Study: 2013 (Alexandria, VA: Mandala Research, LLC, 2013), accessed August 7, 2015, <https://tourism.az.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/The%20American%20Culinary%20Traveler%20-%20Summary%20by%20AOT.pdf>.



AW Baja © ATTA / Mark Crawford

[Research Approach]

Given the importance of food experiences in adventure travel, and recognizing that adventure travel tour operators are building their knowledge about the opportunities and challenges as they develop itineraries that appeal to travelers and honor local people and traditions through food experiences, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), in partnership with Jim Kane of Off the Table and Culture Xplorers, set out to investigate the following questions:

- Where and with what types of food and adventure itineraries are companies finding the most success?
- Where are the most significant challenges in successfully incorporating food tourism experiences into adventure itineraries? How are operators meeting these challenges?
- What do adventure travel tour operators hear from their travelers with respect to the importance of food and local culinary experiences in their trips? What activities and themes are most popular?

[RESEARCH APPROACH]

A survey, “Food Experiences and Adventure Travel,” was undertaken using the ATTA’s database of tour operators, activity providers, and travel agents in July 2015. Responses were received from 281 people representing 54 countries. There were 122 partially completed surveys and 159 fully completed surveys.

In addition, a virtual focus group comprised of nine food tourism pioneers was held via a teleconference in July 2015. The focus group participants are named below.

The focus group, which was followed up by individual interviews, was moderated by Christina Beckmann, Director of Research and

AdventureEDU at the ATTA, and Jim Kane. The participants discussed the following topics:

- Is there a difference between culinary travel and food adventure?
- What are the next frontiers of food travel?
- Are there pitfalls to avoid or to be aware of in food tourism?
- What are we missing? What has not been asked in the survey that is important to the ongoing conversation about adventure and food travel?



STEPHANIE LAWRENCE
TRAVELING SPOON



JEN MURPHY
AFAR MAGAZINE



EVARIST MARCH
NATURALWALKS



JIM KANE
CULTURE XPLORES



KATHY DRAGON
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ELLE ARMON-JONES
THE BIG FOODY FOOD TOURS



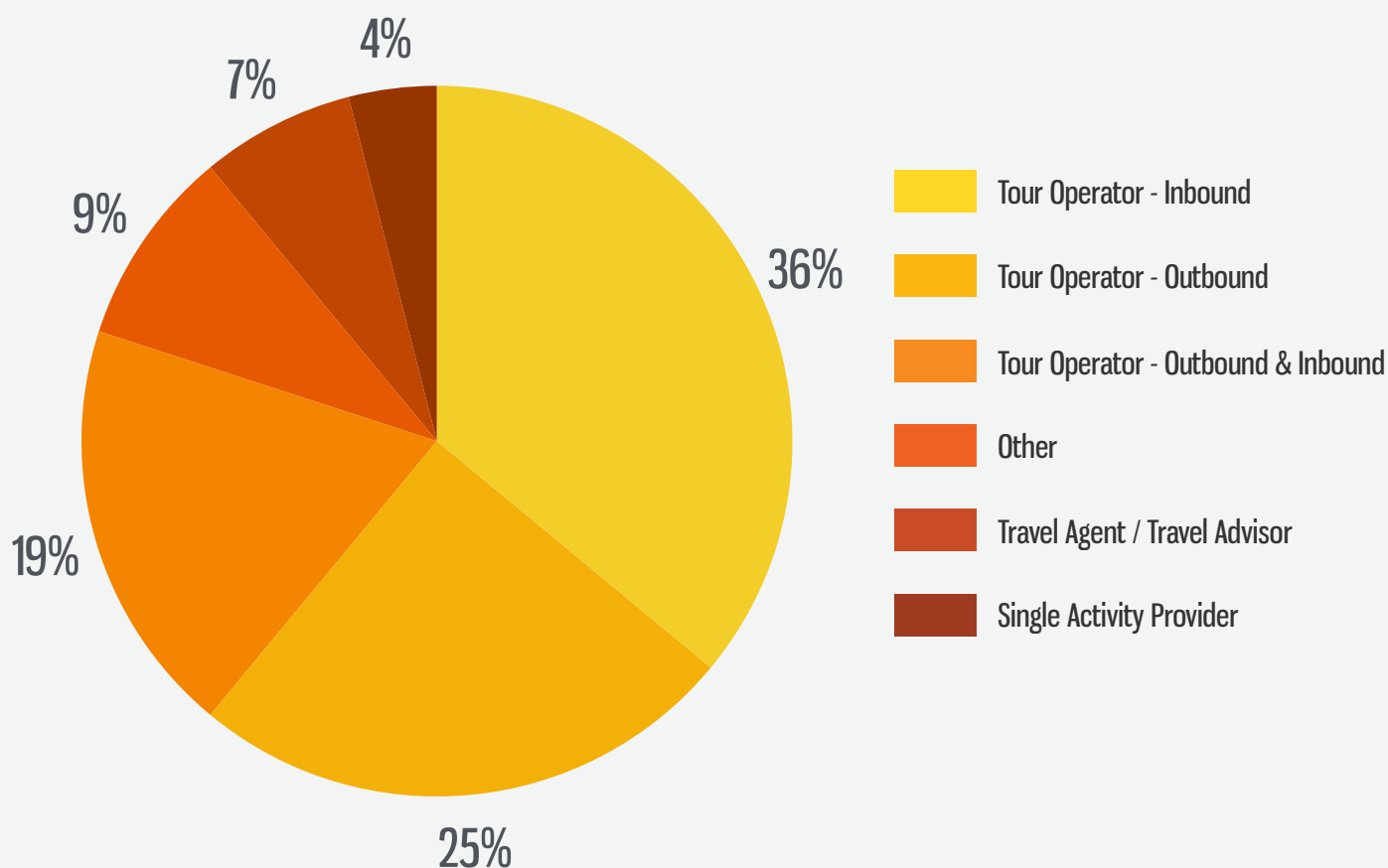
ERICA KRITIKIDES
INTREPID TRAVEL

[Food Experiences & Adventure Travel Survey Results]

Respondent Profile

The respondents to the Food Experiences and Adventure Travel survey were 80% tour operators (36% inbound, 25% outbound, and 19% both inbound/outbound). Seven percent were travel agents/advisors, and 4% were single activity providers, such as cycling operators. Nine percent responded “Other.” The top three regions of survey respondents were North America (44%), Europe (20%), and South America (15%).

In which area of the adventure travel business do you work?



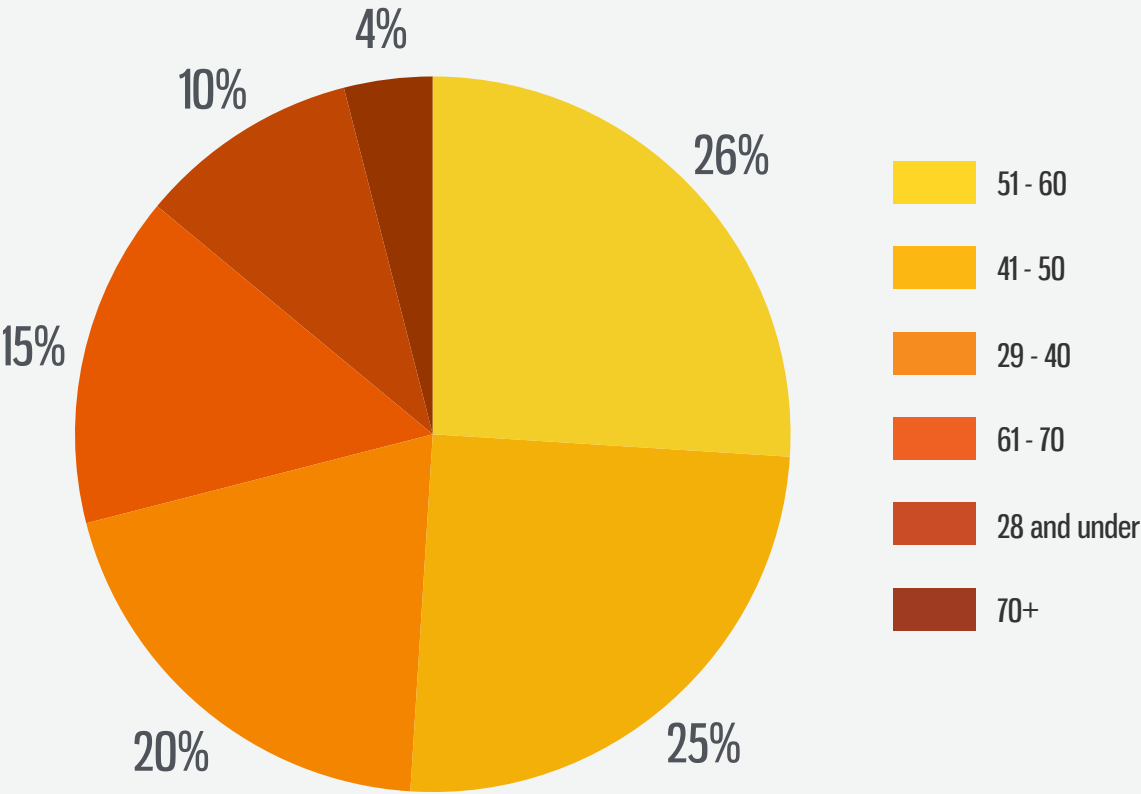
Customer Profile

The average number of customers served per respondent was 3,315.



The age mix for clients can be seen in the chart below, with approximately the same number of customers in the 29–40, 41–50, and 51–60 age brackets.

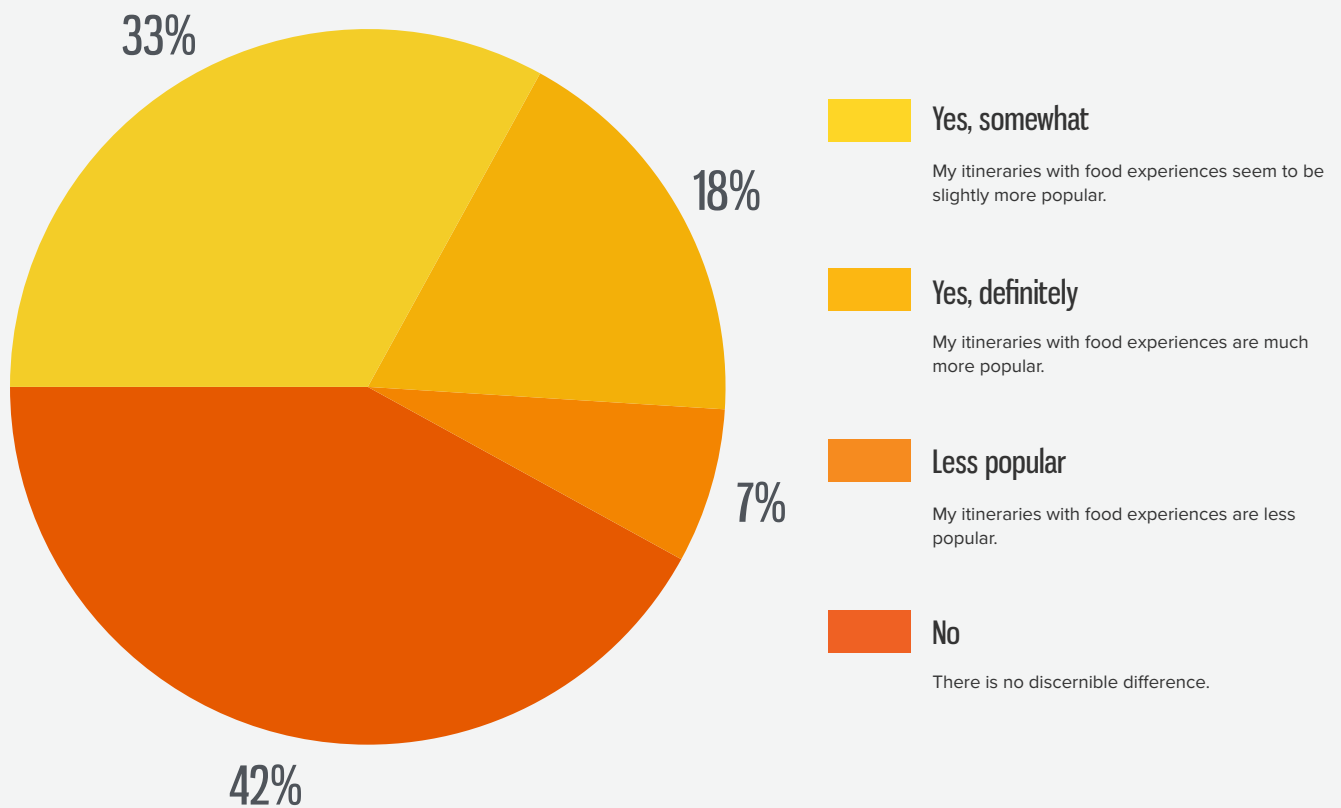
What is the age mix of your clients?



Customer Interest in Food Experiences

Adventure operators and advisors estimate that the incorporation of food experiences into the physically active style of adventure itineraries appeals to a full 50% of their clientele. More than half of operators (55%) report already having integrated experiences of this kind (e.g., foraging for local delicacies, harvesting shellfish via kayak, walking with a shepherd tending their flock) into existing adventure itineraries. (See Appendix A for a list of experiential food activities that respondents indicated have been added to their itineraries). Of these, over one half of respondents said that adventure itineraries that integrated food experiences were more popular than those that did not; of these, 18% said they were significantly more popular.

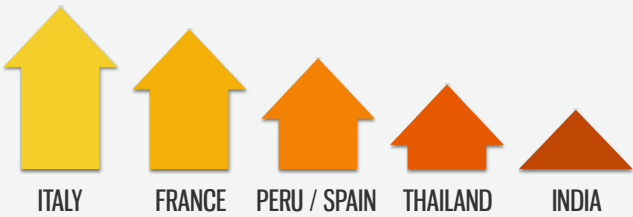
Have you noticed differences in popularity between itineraries that incorporate food experiences versus those that do not?



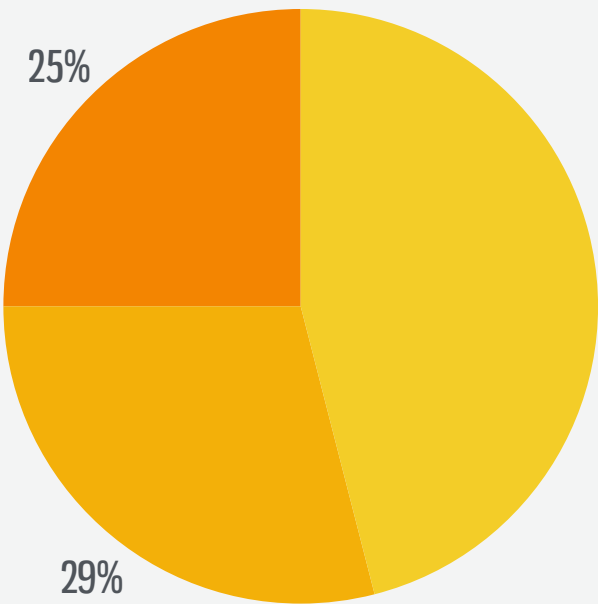
Adventure Travel and Food Experiences Product Profile and Pricing

On average, one in four adventure itineraries has a “high” food focus, in that they “revolve around food as a lens for better understanding the destination and connecting with the people, landscape, and culture.” As shown in the chart below, a total of 46% of adventure itineraries have a “moderate” food focus, or “provide a window into how locals eat,” and offer the option to take a farm tour, producer visit, or cooking class. Twenty-nine percent of adventure itineraries were “low” food focused, meaning that even when local food is provided, the primary focus of the trip remains on nature or an activity without cultural or interpretive emphasis on the food.

For operators offering “high food focus” itineraries, the average reported price per day for such trips was \$472 USD. The top five countries for which travelers are currently expressing interest in adventure itineraries with a specific food focus are (in order): Italy, France, Peru/Spain (tied), Thailand, and India.



How would you characterize your trips in terms of their food experiences?

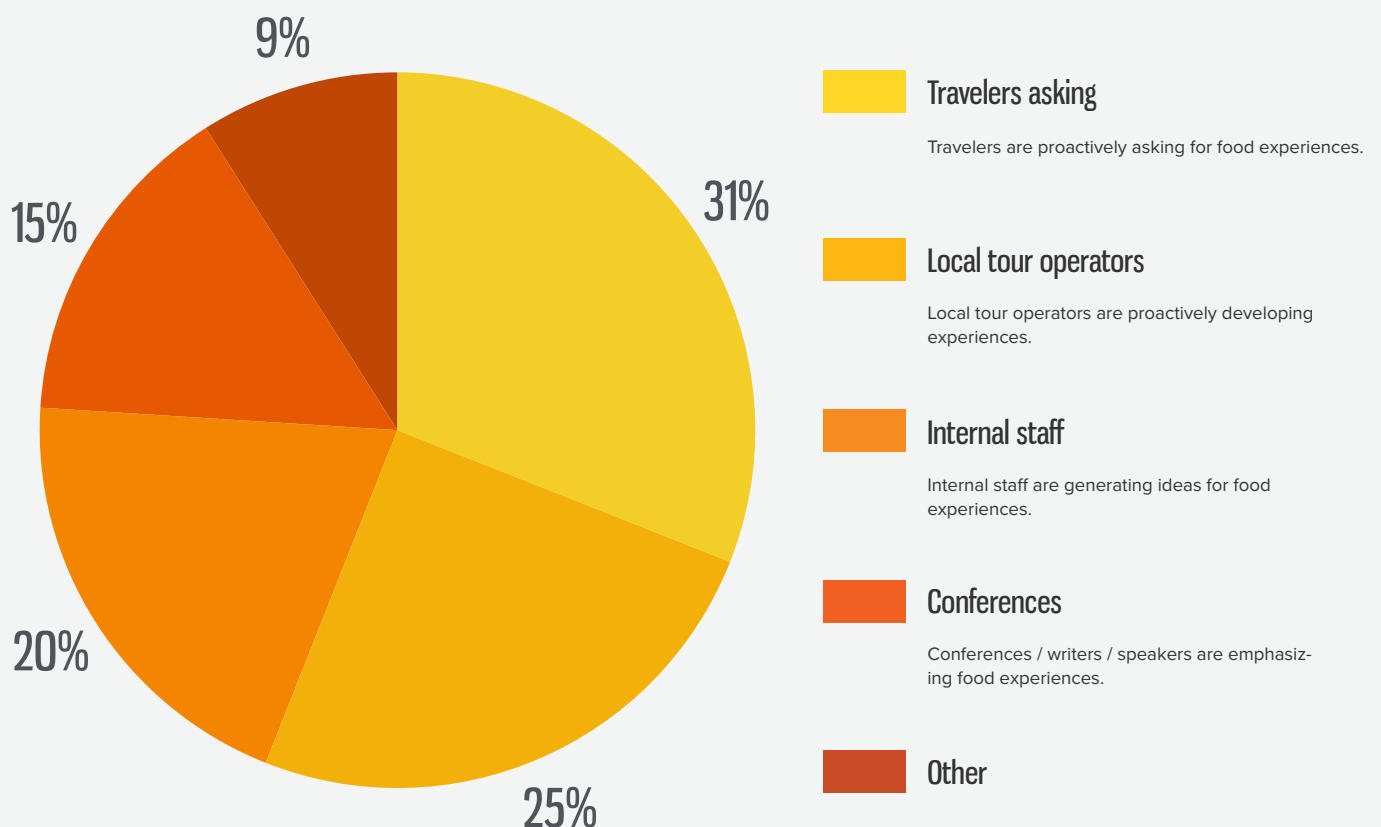


- Moderate food focus**
Our trips provide a window into how locals eat and the option of taking a farm tour, producer visit or cooking class.
- Low food focus**
Our trips emphasize nature and activity although we do provide local food throughout the trip.
- High food focus**
Our trips revolve around using food as a lens for better understanding the destination and connecting with the people, landscape and culture.

Motivations for Incorporating Food Experiences

Of operators who have incorporated food experiences into their adventure travel offerings, almost a third (31%) cite traveler requests as the impetus. One in four operators cite the proactive development of such experiences by local operators as the reason for the addition of food elements into itineraries, while one in five (20%) report that other internal staff were the driving force in incorporating these elements. Fifteen percent cite information from industry conferences as the driver.

Source of motivation to innovate and incorporate food experiences into your adventure travel offering



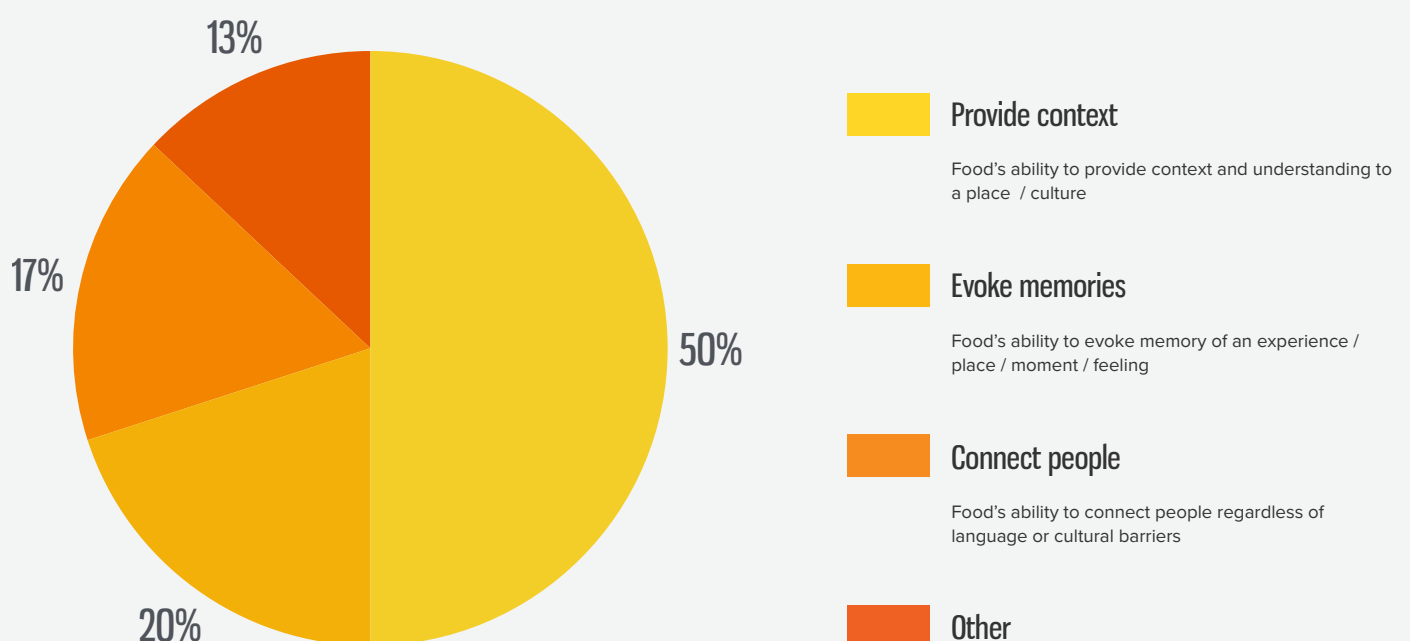
[FOOD EXPERIENCES & ADVENTURE TRAVEL SURVEY RESULTS]

Nine percent also mentioned “Other” motivations, such as:

- The abundance of high quality food culture and availability of local food partners and experts based in particular destinations.
- Offering local food is economically sound as well as fresh and often healthier than alternatives.
- Owners and companies have long incorporated food as part of itineraries as a matter of personal interest and/or branding; the opportunity to highlight those aspects is simply timely due to the rising awareness of food cultures.
- Food is central part of selling a cultural experience and highlighting what makes it unique.
- Guests frequently enjoy sharing photos and commentary of food experiences across social media, making it a focal sales point and easy way to encourage consumer generated content.

In addition to motivations, respondents were asked to share other reasons for bringing food more prominently into their itineraries:

Reason that best describes why you have chosen to incorporate food experiences into your company’s adventure travel offerings:



Activities Preferred by Travelers

With respect to the most frequently requested food-based activities, two activities proved to be universally popular with 50% or more of each survey segment having received requests from guests:

1. Cooking classes, with 91% of travel agents receiving guest requests, as well as 73% of outbound operators, 68% of inbound/outbound operators, and 65% of inbound operators.
2. Visiting local wineries, breweries, or distilleries (91% of agents, 83% of outbound operators, 74% of inbound/outbound operators, and 64% of inbound operators).

The next most commonly requested activity was sampling street food, with more than 60% of travel agents and outbound tour operators reporting their clientele showing interest. Requests for farm visits or visiting an artisanal food producer were popular among all operators, but less so for travel agents with only 27% of agents receiving these requests. In contrast, fifty-five percent of travel agents indicated that guests had requested travel or learning from a celebrity chef, while only 20% - 26% of tour operators received these requests. Minority trends with a healthy percentage of agents and operators receiving requests include observing behind-the-scenes food preparation or food sourcing with local people (45% of travel agents and 42% of inbound/outbound tour operators), and foraging with a local specialist (18% of travel agents and 39% of inbound/outbound tour operators).



What percentage of your guests do you think would enjoy incorporating a food experience into the physically active style of adventure travel?



Do your guests voice an interest in any of the following?

	Industry type	Cooking class	Visiting a farm	Trying street food	Foraging with a local specialist	Visiting local wineries or distilleries	Visiting an artisan food producer	Behind-the-scenes food preparation or food sourcing with local people	Traveling with or learning from a celebrity chef
Other	63%	100%	60%	38%	38%	75%	38%	13%	
Single activity provider	43%	14%	0%	43%	57%	14%	14%	29%	
Tour operator – inbound	65%	65%	48%	35%	64%	44%	47%	23%	
Tour operator – outbound	73%	54%	63%	31%	83%	65%	52%	21%	
Tour operator – outbound and inbound	68%	61%	55%	39%	74%	74%	42%	26%	
Travel agent/Travel advisor	91%	27%	64%	18%	91%	27%	45%	55%	

“Other” activities requested by clients included:

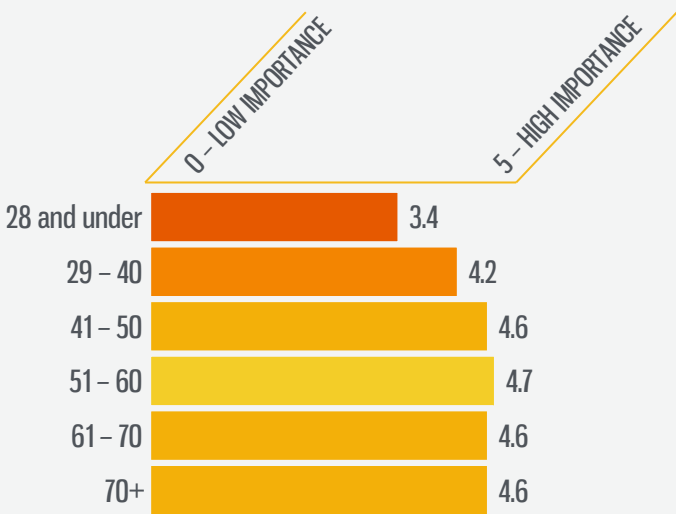
- Food and beverage pairing
 - Food experiences at local markets
 - Organizing picnics
 - Meals/classes in a native’s home
- Wine tasting
 - Beer trails
 - “Catch and eat” activities
 - Walking with a shepherd

TRAVELER PREFERENCES BY AGE

Respondents were queried about the preferences of different age groups with respect to food quality, the authenticity of “local” food, and the importance of learning about the role of food in culture.

The quality of food is of high importance to all guests over the age of 28 years old, with importance peaking between 51–60 years of age.

How important would you say is the quality of the food to your guests?

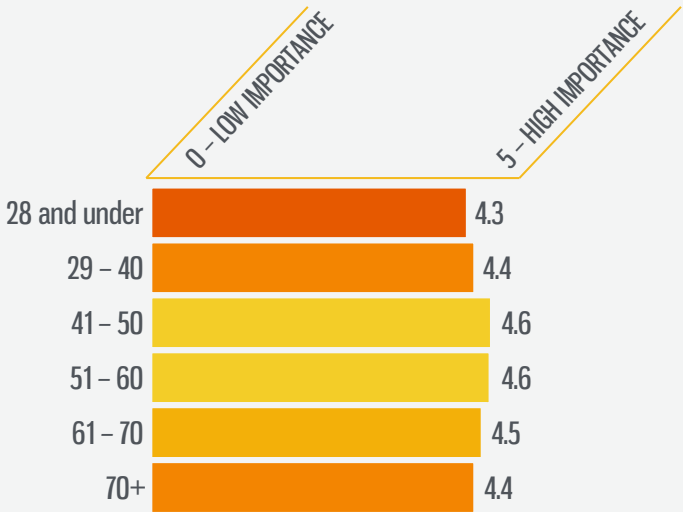


On a scale of 0 (Low Importance) to 5 (High Importance), operators reported that guests between 51–60 years of age prioritize food quality the most (4.7). Guests under the age of 28 appear to attach the least importance to food quality (3.4).

Trying authentic local food is also a very important aspect of a trip for people of all ages. While slightly less critical, eating locally derived

and styled foods still rates strongly for ages 28 and under (4.3) and 29–40 and 70+ (4.4). Ages 61–70 rated the importance of local food a 4.5, while ages 41 - 60 rated it highest at 4.6 out of 5.

How important is trying local food to your guests?



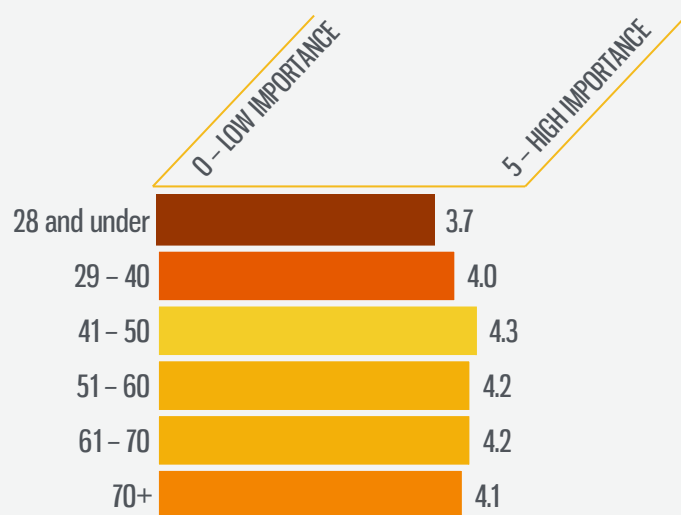
WHILE OUR ‘GRASS ROOTS’ FOOD TRIPS HAVE HAD STRONGEST APPEAL WITH THE 30–39 YEAR-OLD AGE BRACKET AS PREDICTED, INTERESTINGLY THEY ARE ALMOST AS POPULAR WITH THE 50–59 YEAR OLD BRACKET, AND OVERALL THE AGE SPREAD IS IMMENSE – FROM 18–82.

- ERIKA KRITIKIDES, INTREPID TRAVEL

[FOOD EXPERIENCES & ADVENTURE TRAVEL SURVEY RESULTS]

The role of food in learning about culture received slightly less interest than quality of food and authentically local food; however, scores of importance remain strong across all age groups except the 28 and under category, which averaged slightly above moderate importance (3.7). A slightly younger crowd took the highest importance score in this category, with 41–50 year olds leading with a rating of 4.3. All other ages selected between 4.0 and 4.2 for this consideration.

How important is learning about the role of food in culture to your guests?



As appealing as it may be to try and organize people into age-demarcated groups, an interesting point of discussion from the focus group provides a reminder that the desire for food and adventure experiences is appealing to people of all ages. Erica Kritikides from Intrepid Travel, shared that their Food Adventures trips, originally conceived as a product for a younger traveler age 25–39, turned out to be almost as popular with guests in the 50–59 year old age bracket. She explained, “With Intrepid’s

Food Adventures, we saw an opportunity to offer food trips that were more ‘grass roots’, affordable and adventurous (focusing on street food, home-cooking, local markets, restaurants and nightlife). We were confident that there was a market for foodies who were less concerned about the luxury frills (five star hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants, etc.), and more interested in getting the insider’s guide to a destination’s best ‘everyday’ food scene. But while our ‘grass roots’ food trips have had strongest appeal with the 30–39 year-old age bracket as predicted, interestingly they are almost as popular with the 50–59 year old bracket, and overall the age spread is immense – from 18–82.”

MARKETING TERMINOLOGY

The top three terms that respondents reported resonating the most successfully with their travelers were “Local,” “Organic,” and “Sustainable.” Operators also reported that, with regard to different age groups, “organic” has the most appeal to the 28 and younger set, while “local” appealed the most to all other age groups. This might reflect the relative newness of the term “organic” in various markets.

Which of the following terms most resonate with your travelers when it comes to food experiences?

- 1. LOCAL
- 2. ORGANIC
- 3. SUSTAINABLE
- 4. ARTISAN
- 5. SEASONAL
- 6. KILOMETER ZERO
- 7. ENDEMIC
- 8. PERMACULTURE

For each age group which term has the most appeal?

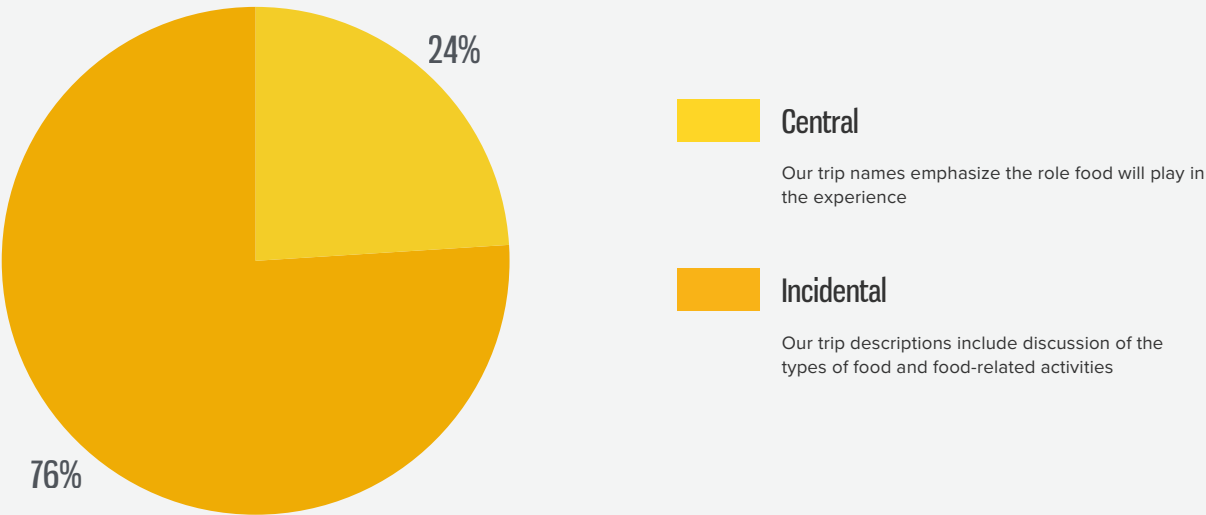
AGE GROUP	TERM
28 and under	Organic
29 – 40	Local
41 – 50	Local
51 – 60	Local
61 – 70	Local
70+	Local

[FOOD EXPERIENCES & ADVENTURE TRAVEL SURVEY RESULTS]

Almost one in four survey respondents acknowledged that experiential food activities are “central” to the marketing of their itineraries (e.g., trip names emphasize the role food will play in the experience), while those who describe marketing food experiences as incidental still make up the majority, at 75%.

Outbound tour operators are the most likely to make culinary aspects central in their marketing material (30% of outbound operator respondents), followed by “Other” respondents (29%), inbound/outbound operators (24%), inbound tour operators (21%), and single activity providers (20%). Travel agents and advisors are the least likely to make culinary central to their marketing materials, at just eleven percent.

Would you say the food experience is central or incidental to the marketing of your trips?



Central or incidental by company type:

AGE GROUP	CENTRAL	INCIDENTAL
Other	29%	71%
Single activity provider	20%	80%
Tour operator - inbound	21%	79%
Tour operator - outbound	30%	70%
Tour operator - outbound and inbound	24%	76%
Travel agent / Travel advisor	11%	89%



[Focus Group Results]

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN PROVIDING FOOD TOURISM EXPERIENCES

Through discussion and interviews, nine food tourism pioneers and experts shared their knowledge about the current and upcoming trends on the frontier of the food tourism industry and how these may translate to adventure tourism. Key findings from their broad discussion have been organized according to the trends identified below.

Home-based experiences: home-dining & home-cooking vs. restaurant dining:

This was a very popular food element reported by tour operator participants in the focus group, one that is relatively easy to incorporate on even the most time-stretched adventure itinerary. The experience can be as simple as stopping for lunch with a local family, or it can be more elaborate and inclusive of other culinary elements

[FOCUS GROUP RESULTS]

like foraging: “With our visits to tribal areas, we go native: our guests collect seaweed and our hosts show them how to prepare a delicious and healthy seaweed salad. Usually the native people can find some octopus, squid or fish to complement the salad.”

Incorporating aromas: focusing on sense of smell to heighten/deepen food experience:

Several focus group experts indicated aromatic ways of experiencing food to be a future trend. While no major examples of this trend have yet to be seen in the Food and Adventure Travel survey results, this trend may appear in adventure itineraries in coming years.

Spirits and microbrewing:

The focus group indicated that small batch liquors, craft cocktails, and microbrewing are urban trends that will find their way into regional and active food movements. Comparing this finding with the results from the Food Experiences and Adventure Survey, it was found that while most of the survey respondents mentioned the role that wine played in culinary itineraries, only a few mentioned breweries.

Custom blends (from spices to wine, food travelers are being given opportunities to craft a food product unique to them):

This is another future trend that has not quite shown up in adventure itineraries yet. One operator noted that blending wine was part of a day’s winery activities. Personalization of experience is a major trend impacting all consumer industries, and incorporating it into food can be a creative and meaningful way to provide it on a group trip.

Healthy habits (catering to health-conscious travelers, whether in menu planning or sharing knowledge of health benefits of certain local foods):

“People who seek out adventure travel tend to be health conscious and are looking for delicious yet sustainably raised, organic foods while they are traveling,” explained Jen Murphy from AFAR. Survey respondents also noted the following when it came to healthy habits:

- “We send a variety of organic foods, and our chefs at camps are geared to make specialty dishes of diverse vegetarian dishes and accompaniments.”
- “Using native products, called superfoods, rich in proteins, antioxidants, etc.”
- “Avoid [using] preservatives and other chemistry, using fresh, organic local products.”

Placing food in context:

The panel indicated that there is a multitude of ways to create a narrative for guests about how food is tied to larger systems, such as ecosystems, immigration, traditional medicine, conservation, politics, and cultural heritage. Tour operators have been effectively using food experiences to expose culture and socioeconomic factors in destinations, and there is an opportunity to deepen these experiences to include these other factors. Some examples noted by the group:

- “Reindeer stew or ‘bidos’ farmed and

[FOCUS GROUP RESULTS]

prepared by the Sami people in Arctic Norway and Sweden. Experience includes insight into Sami way of life and activities.”

- “Hiking to/visiting a local community’s farming grounds to learn about the local produce and the artisanal farming techniques and rituals.”
- “Take a bicycle ride into the countryside through local villages surrounding Battambang, Cambodia. Along the way, stop and experience rice paper-making, fruit drying and preparation, production of the famous prahok (fish paste) and rice wine-making. Finish up at the best kralanh (sticky rice in bamboo) stall in the district.”
- “Harvesting fresh vegetables and fruits, collecting fresh eggs from open farms, and cooking at local homes helped out from the local people, teaching our guests to cook their traditional dishes, which locals eat in their normal life.”
- “Local Andean products helps customers to be adjusted to the local environment and help them to understand about the local culture and how it was developed through the years.”
- “Day-trips on my boat: activities include deep sea fishing, [with the] catch prepared in beautifully situated restaurant in the fjord. Gives customers the pleasure of sailing the fjord, the excitement when catching fish, and a gourmet experience.”
- “Foraging in the remote forests for berries, sea asparagus, greens for salads, mushrooms.”
- “Foraging with women from rural villages in Lebanon during late winter/early spring season.”
- “Jungle trekking with local ethnic group and foraging for endemic edible plant species.”
- “Our Palawan Sand Castles guests retrieve sea urchins off their kayaks and take them back to eat with a beer ahead of dinner.”
- “Suggest morning recipes with the chef (also a guide/tour leader); list the ingredients that will dictate the cycling itinerary for the day. Carry a large cooler and make it back to the lodging to process everything in a full hands-on immersion with mamas and nonnas.”
- “Truffle hunting with dogs.”
- “Help local women to harvest oysters from the SineSaloum river mangrove.”

Foraging (accompanying local experts to learn about and collect wild edible plants and other foods):

This burgeoning trend perhaps illustrates most clearly how food can be integrated into an experience that has elements of all three adventure tourism pillars (a **nature** based **activity** that has **cultural** context).



New Zealand © ChameleonsEye / Shutterstock.com

[Dinner Conversation]

EXPLORING ISSUES, EXPECTATIONS, AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND ADVENTURE TOURISM

Far more than just a necessity for staving off the hunger of weary travelers, food is now recognized as an integral part of the tourism experience. Tourism industry participants, from policymakers to destination marketers to tour operators, agree that food can be used as a tool to conserve and brand regional identities, and as a means through which to integrate traditional industries into new niche markets and products.

And as the travel industry continues to expand its use of food, a range of global food issues—such as the social and environmental impacts of different food systems, food equity (the access to local, affordable food), and food sovereignty (the right to define a place’s own food and agriculture systems)—cannot be ignored. Policy-makers and operators have an obligation, as they do with adventure tourism, to ensure that

efforts to promote and capitalize on food tourism are enacted in a way that respects the integrity and the capacity limits of the tourism products.

In the following sections, the major challenges and opportunities that adventure travel providers face when integrating food tourism into adventure products are explored.

CHALLENGES

Operational Challenges

When asked to rank the greatest challenges in effectively incorporating food experiences into adventure itineraries, respondents to the Food Experiences and Adventure Travel survey indicated that the top three challenges were:

1. Developing the relationships needed with producers, chefs, and farmers
2. Working with guests' dietary requirements while offering an authentic food experience
3. Scheduling with local chefs or other local culinary hosts

Other comments indicated the challenges of sensitively working with local communities, ensuring food safety and managing prices.

Based on qualitative answers, the greatest challenge in developing the needed local relationships is the time-consuming nature of networking with the right food suppliers and

building the necessary trust for collaboration. But operators seemed to be in agreement that this can be accomplished with proper time and effort, whereas dealing with the second largest obstacle—traveler food allergies and preferences—is a far more complicated issue.

Food Allergies and Preferences

As Erika Kritikides of Intrepid Travel shared in the focus group, while some accommodation can be made for travelers' unique food preferences and health requirements, the tour operator must understand and communicate limitations to prevent guest frustration:

“Undoubtedly, the most important expectation to set is the extent to which certain dietary requirements can be catered to – for example, gluten intolerance, lactose intolerance, vegetarianism, no seafood, mushroom allergies. Travelers will have a tendency to assume that dietary requirements can be catered to in the same way they might be in a western-style restaurant. The reality is very different, especially with respect to street food, home-cooked meals and indeed cuisines that are heavily meat or gluten-based. Japan provides a perfect example: while seemingly a great place to travel for gluten intolerance, in fact gluten can be found in everything from soy sauce to miso to wasabi pastes. Gluten-free substitutes are not easily found. To help clients on our Real Food Adventure Japan in the past, we have sent gluten-free versions of important items (miso,

soy sauce, wasabi) from Australia. We also include a section within our Trip Notes with information where we feel that dietary restrictions may impact a traveller's ability to fully enjoy the trip activities. That is not to say that those with dietary restrictions cannot have amazing food experiences when traveling, but it is important as a travel company, that you are clear on what you can and can't deliver on."

The issue of complicated food preferences is not just a Western one; while trying local food is now the second most important activity for Chinese outbound travelers, they continue to struggle to adapt to entirely Western palates, and operators and hoteliers who can provide "comfort food" similar to what is eaten in China at key moments (usually breakfast and evening tea) are succeeding at attracting this key demographic. The consensus from the Food and Adventure Travel Survey respondents is that sending along common alternatives for food allergies and other extra foods is very difficult and expensive during active and remote trips. Fresh, local food can also be a challenge, depending on how accessible it is, and modifying authentic local food for such needs is not always possible.

Greater Expense

The price of adding a culinary aspect to an itinerary was also an oft-quoted challenge, whether it was from the cost of local, organic supplies or from the cost of augmenting a trip with additional supplier/partner costs from food suppliers, such as farms, chefs, and restaurateurs. Several survey respondents

commented that while there is an increased interest in food and culinary aspects to a trip, adventure trips that center around food aren't always more popular, namely because of their intrinsically higher price tag. A common theme from both the Food and Adventure Travel Survey and the focus group was that in adventure trips, a strong culinary component or emphasis on local, high quality food is not necessarily *requested* from all customers but is often expected and always appreciated. Several operators concluded that they were adding some food focused elements to their regular adventure trips while maintaining a higher price point for those customers who were willing to pay more for a "foodie" itinerary. Others remarked that they provided optional "gourmet" experiences to regular itineraries in order to accommodate the trend affordably. Finally, it was noted that in itineraries that are more remote or physically demanding (e.g., camping, rafting, "hut" trips) "good food is an unexpected bonus" that can provide a competitive edge.



Culture Shock

Additionally, guests with no reported food limitations can find themselves unexpectedly uncomfortable with local food on a trip, either in the way that it is stored, prepared, or sourced. One operator explained, “There is no problem with local communities: they are honored to share their food culture. There is also no problem with guests as the vast majority want to experiment. My problem is tactfully warning them on occasions against trying food that I fear might upset them, either physically or emotionally. The former is obvious. The latter is a big issue. For instance, there is a famous dish in the Ancient Rice Terraces region of Northern Luzon called Pinikpikan: it is prepared by beating a chicken so the blood permeates through the skin. It is a cruel way to die. Guests need a culturally thick skin as well as a strong stomach!”

Another significant challenge reported was maintaining an “authentic” experience while meeting acceptable food preparation safety and hygiene standards in certain destinations; in others, government regulations and higher insurance premiums posed obstacles to adding food experiences involving the ingestion of local products or products from homes or farms.

Time Constraints

The amount of time required to provide certain food experiences in a quality way, particularly when the experiences are more participatory than presentational, is also a challenge for adventure operators, who report struggling to fit these elements into already crowded itineraries

that may have long transport needs and variable times for activities to complete. Food experiences that have been advertised may be cut if adventure activities take longer than planned, causing problems with itinerary expectations amongst both guests and food partners.

Focus group panelist Kathy Dragon of Whole Journeys elaborated: “Operationally [tour operators] often use [food experiences] as a component to ‘fit into’ adventure activities but need to know these experiences take longer. The local people are often so passionate about sharing their knowledge and what they’re doing. These experiences need to be relationally focused and they take time to evolve, guests participate and then sit and eat. Operators have to adjust for that.”

A few operators spoke to the fact that local food and ingredients can be so basic and limited (such as the “subsistence level cuisine of the Himalayas”) that adding flavors to appease guest expectations actually denigrates the authenticity.

Sustainability

While the full spectrum of sustainability issues facing the food tourism industry at large is outside the scope of this report, sustainability is still a multifaceted challenge at the intersection of adventure travel and food travel. Given the growing demand for the type of “high touch, hands-on” food experiences that pair so well with adventure travel, it is easy to see how this kind of travel may soon challenge operators and destinations to maintain capacity limits and ensure authenticity and cultural integrity.

The UNWTO stated, “The recent history of global tourism development is littered with nominally sustainable models and manifestly unsustainable actions. The idea is not to create new indiscriminate pressure on culinary heritage, but to leverage it rationally with an eye to sustainability. It is not about ‘touristifying’ gastronomy, by creating new offerings or scaling up existing ones. It is not so much about creating in order to attract, but rather attracting visitors to participate in the destination’s own cultural reality, well explained and interpreted, through cuisine, local products and all the services and activities that surround them.”⁷

Some examples of different kinds of sustainability risks in food and adventure activities:

Risks to environmental sustainability:

In the United Kingdom, local pickers and mushroom specialists have complained that the New Forest, part of the Hampshire National Park, is being stripped of edible mushrooms due to the uptick in interest in “wild food” foraging in response to celebrity food shows and local tours that are attracting visitors from all over the nation. There is a commercial picking ban in the forest, but critics claim that the allotted 1.5 kgs per person per day currently allowed is now unsustainable due to the popularity of paid tours and that a blanket ban (which would also negatively affect locals) is the only way to stop the foraging tourism from destroying the forest’s mushroom population. One local stated, “Everything that can be eaten is being picked. They are exploiting the forest and earning a lot of money from doing it... It’s not the people on the courses doing the picking that are to blame; it’s TV chefs and such that have really set the whole thing alight... There are more and more courses in mushroom picking being run and the hotels in the area are jumping on the bandwagon too... The forest suffers as a result of all the picking, and local people are fed up with it.”⁸



7 Iñaki Gaztelumendi, “Global Trends in Food Tourism,” in UNWTO: Global Report on Food Tourism: AM Reports, vol. 4 (Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2012), accessed August 13, 2015, http://dtxtq4w60xqp.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/global_report_on_food_tourism.pdf.

8 “TV Food Programmes Which Encourage Foraging Are Blamed after the New Forest Is ‘Stripped Bare’ of Edible Mushrooms,” DailyMail.com, 2015, August 14, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3174060/TV-food-programmes-encourage-foraging-blamed-New-Forest-stripped-bare-edible-mushrooms.html>.

Risks to the sustainability of a high quality experience or way of life for locals:

Erica Kritikides explained, “Often, authentic, local restaurants, street food stands and food markets are already an important part of the social fabric of the destination. On some organized food tours I have taken in my travels, I have experienced a sense of unease where locals clearly do not appreciate a group of tourists intruding upon the restaurant/street food stand/coffee shop/market stall, which is such an important and personal part of their daily life – and treating it as a curiosity or novelty. Another concern is the volume of culinary tourists flooding certain ‘authentic’ places that have been ‘outed’ on online travel advisories or touted as unmissable foodie experiences. One notable example of the detrimental impact of culinary tourism can be seen in the restrictions on the size of tour groups now allowed into La Boqueria in Barcelona (no more than 15 between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m.), as the sheer volume of tourists (many of whom were part of food tours and cooking class tours) was impacting negatively on the operation of regular trade.”

Risks to the sustainability of the authentic local product:

A key issue discussed in the focus group was how to define the popular buzzword “authentic” and how authenticity is changed or challenged as the popularity of tourism expands. For example, as demand grows to involve an increasing number and/or frequency of guests in an

authentic participation of food production (grape picking), how does an adventure supplier provide an experience that is both meaningful to the guest and non-interruptive to the producer?

Stephen Taranto of La Paz on Foot (a Bolivia-based responsible tourism operator focused on sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and biodiversity conservation) suggested, “We need to talk with our rural community partners and be aware of the tipping point, asking the question ‘How much tourism is too much?’ If it grows too much, then the time they need to dedicate to other [non-tourism-related, traditional activities] could be reduced, and the very things we are trying to conserve and preserve are at great risk of being negatively impacted.” The pressure to do this is especially intense in communities that are financially disadvantaged, where tourism may initially be an economic boon but where catering to the immediate demands of tourists can lead to the breakdown of food, nature and social ecosystems.

Authenticity may also be compromised by the tendency for tourism to promote a historical vision of cultural food rather than honoring where a community may currently exist in terms of its innovation (modern cuisine) and modernity (fusion foods based on immigration and cultural shift). In addition, a community’s focus on concepts such as healthy cooking, sustainability, or multiculturalism may be ignored. Kritikides explained, “Often, culinary authenticity correlates to what is ‘traditional’ – eating bouillabaisse in Marseille, pho in Hanoi, pachamanca in Peru. This view of culinary authenticity is essentially historical, backwards-looking and – at its worst – mono-culturalist. In fact, the reverse is true: no food culture is static.”

Operators seeking to incorporate food culture into adventure tours are encouraged to educate clients about the expanse between traditional and modern cuisine and how culture plays a role in each: “We must also take into account the emergence of new cultural values, which increase the richness and cultural diversity of the country. In this regard, Tradition and Innovation coexist in a natural manner. Gastronomic tradition is in a process of continuous evolution, and the challenge for professionals is to incorporate innovation in order to renew and adapt their offerings to the needs of the new cultural consumer.”⁹

“OFTEN, CULINARY AUTHENTICITY CORRELATES TO WHAT IS ‘TRADITIONAL’ – EATING BOUILLABAISSE IN MARSEILLE, PHO IN HANOI, PACHAMANCA IN PERU. THIS VIEW OF CULINARY AUTHENTICITY IS ESSENTIALLY HISTORICAL, BACKWARDS-LOOKING AND – AT ITS WORST – MONO-CULTURALIST. IN FACT, THE REVERSE IS TRUE: NO FOOD CULTURE IS STATIC.”

- ERIKA KRITIKIDES, INTREPID TRAVEL

⁹ Iñaki Gaztelumendi, “Global Trends in Food Tourism,” in UNWTO: Global Report on Food Tourism: AM Reports, vol. 4 (Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2012), accessed August 13, 2015, http://dtxq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/global_report_on_food_tourism.pdf.

¹⁰ “UNESCO Culture Sector - Intangible Heritage - 2003 Convention,” Section, UNESCO, [Unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00559), 2015, accessed August 14, 2015, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00559>.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Food and Adventure Tourism as a Conservation Tool

At its best, adventure tourism plays a key role in protecting the landscapes and cultures that make its destinations so unique and desirable to tourists. Culinary experiences add another dimension that operators can use to highlight cultural narratives and create immersive guest experiences, as well as underscore the value of conserving traditions to both host communities and guests. Since 2010, UNESCO has recognized the value of iconic food and drink experiences by designating various regional culinary products, and the cultural traditions surrounding them, as “intangible cultural assets.”¹⁰

- Gastronomic meal of the French (2010)
- Traditional Mexican cuisine—ancestral, ongoing community culture, the Michoacán paradigm (2010)
- Turkish coffee culture and tradition (2013)
- Mediterranean diet (Cyprus – Croatia – Spain – Greece – Italy – Morocco – Portugal; 2013)
- Ancient Georgian traditional Qvevri wine-making method (2013)
- Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year (2013)

- Kimjang, making and sharing kimchi in the Republic of Korea (2013)
- Lavash, the preparation, meaning, and appearance of traditional bread as an expression of culture in Armenia (2014)

More nations have since applied for the designation in order to highlight and protect their food culture, and this label certainly helps to elevate a culinary experience as worthy of touristic participation. Adventure tourism can enhance its efforts to highlight and preserve lesser known and poorer destinations and communities by finding sustainable ways to incorporate traditional and modern food systems into adventure itineraries.

Food and Adventure Tourism as an Empowerment Tool

Incorporating food experiences, such as agro-tourism tours, can help boost economically marginalized communities. Stephen Taranto shared the example of tours to Lake Titicaca, Bolivia, that combine adventure sports, trekking in national parks, and even beach time together with cooking workshops and visits to locally owned and managed agro-tourism:

“We bring the community and visitors together for a set of activities – a walk, a look at gardens and homesteads, learning about seeds, how the locals grow and preserve their food. Then we have an ‘Apthapi’ – in Aymara, the local language, it loosely translates to ‘potluck.’ All the families bring something from their home and lay out colorful Andean cloths

down to share a picnic on the ground with travelers. We’ve worked on this program for a long time to rescue the old ways of preparing things.”

Zeinab Jeambey, of the Food Heritage Foundation, expressed to the focus group how food heritage and rural gastronomy can increase gender equity, as women in many regions are the primary knowledge sources for recipes and know-how. Darb el Karam (Arabic for “trail of generosity”) is a food tourism trail connecting nine villages within the Shouf Cedar Biosphere in Lebanon where visitors can participate in agro-food activities and taste local culinary specialties.¹¹ By putting visitors in contact with farmers, shepherds, and food producers - keepers of rural food culture - Darb el Karam raises awareness among tourists regarding the origin of an ingredient or a traditional dish and its cultural and emotional ties to the destination while diversifying the income of the hosts through tourism.

Jeambey said, “As we worked with women in different areas of Lebanon to create a program highlighting tradition and fresh, local food, we began to see a huge change in the community. The women were the leaders and the knowledge holders in this area; they just needed to learn how to communicate it to the world. Once they started to receive tourists, community interaction changed – the women and the farmers began to lead collaboration, and the economic and societal role women played increased. They built bridges and empowered themselves via food tourism and heritage.”

11 “Food Tourism Activities,” Food Heritage Foundation, [Food-heritage.org](http://food-heritage.org/tag/food-tourism-activities/), 2015, accessed August 7, 2015, <http://food-heritage.org/tag/food-tourism-activities/>.

Tourism and Global Food Responsibilities: An Opportunity

In tourism, making positive operational choices and educating clientele about issues, such as the global impacts of our food systems, food equity, and food sovereignty, are both a challenge and an opportunity. Increasingly, people are looking at both personal and national responsibilities regarding food and its impact on health, environment, climate, and societies. As awareness around these issues grows, the intersection of food and adventure tourism can spotlight rural international systems in a way that is favorable towards sustainability. Taranto shared the example of indigenous highland quinoa farmers of Bolivia, where La Paz on Foot makes a stop on its adventure tour. Taranto spoke of his guests' "eye-opening experience of learning that the miracle grain the North is going crazy about is often being produced in socially, environmentally and economically dubious ways. This aspect of 'food adventures' can be a challenging story to convey to adventurers seeking 'good stories' to take back home." He explained how embedding the lesson into a sociocultural context of over-farming, soil erosion, and increased use of synthetic fertilizers in a way that is both engaging and provides scenarios and examples for his guests to understand that they have positive options and can make an impact with their newfound knowledge.

Jim Kane of Culture Xplorers agreed by stating, "You can educate in such a way that is realistic but still positive and uplifting. Emphasizing success stories and comparing some cautionary tales to best practice models, you can show that better ways to approach these systems can still be delicious and accessible. The client doesn't feel depressed but uplifted."



Marketing

Seventy-one percent of respondents to the Food and Adventure Survey conducted for this report indicated that their adventure itineraries incorporate experiential activities around food (46% of them with a moderate food focus, and 25% with a high food focus), and over a third of operators cited consumer requests as a driving factor in adding culinary activities. Of those, over half said that food-focused itineraries were more popular than other itineraries; 18% of these said that they were significantly more popular. These numbers reveal a significant opportunity to use food experiences and a destination's culinary attributes as a fundamental marketing tactic.

A quarter of the survey respondents said that they are making the food experience(s) of their itineraries "central" to the marketing of their tours—meaning that not only do their trip

descriptions include a discussion of the types of food and food-related activities, but their trip names emphasize the role that food will play in the experience. Outbound operators were most likely to give the food aspect a central marketing focus, followed by inbound/outbound operators (24%). This is likely due to outbound marketing teams being in tune with the increasing desire of North American and European clients to have more educational and hands-on experiences with food while traveling. Inbound tour operators (21%) and travel advisors are much less likely (11%) to make food central to their marketing materials.

As previously mentioned, an integral part of marketing is to convey to guests what a “food adventure” or “culinary adventure trip” means in the context of that particular organization and trip. With industry terms for this type of

experience still nebulous, operators must, as with activity levels for adventure components, set accurate expectations. For example, the guest should know if home-based meals will be significantly simpler than restaurant options, if there are portions of the trip where their dietary restrictions cannot be met or substituted, or where those substitutions may become repetitive. Communication is also important to give the food experience a deeper context to culture and environment, and where necessary, to contrast traveler norms and expectations with the realities of the destination and to create teachable moments. Kathy Dragon of Whole Journeys explained that some clients initially feel that a home-shared meal in India seems inauthentic because the hosts have help from servants in the kitchen; while this may seem to be something only elite households or professional food vendors do in the West, it is actually very normal and “authentic” in India and needs to be conveyed to guests in a way that deepens their understanding of sociopolitical and cultural norms. This is a moment in which the way that food is prepared has the opportunity to create either tension or deeper intercultural exchange between the host and guest, depending on the guide’s ability to anticipate misunderstandings and navigate the exchange.

The communication that takes place prior to a trip is also part of the marketing opportunity. The modern travel arc begins when the consumer becomes inspired and starts to research possible trip options, and ends after the trip when the traveler reminisces by sharing photos/videos, comments, and reviews across various social networks. Skift reports that “culinary tourists share millions of [food and beverage]-themed photos daily across social platforms like



Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and especially Flickr. This increases travel consumers' awareness of different cuisines and cultures, and it fuels their desire to experience them."¹²

According to one academic study, people who photograph their food and food experiences and share them on social media, and use those platforms to view photos of other people's food, represent a very real marketing opportunity for travel providers, as the "food images influenced them in terms of novelty and providing information. Active members also appeared to be more likely to seek out new places to travel for new food experiences, and food photography had a greater influence on where they consider traveling."¹³

While there is much that operators can do at an individual level to differentiate their products via food culture, marketing food experiences successfully is an endeavor to be undertaken by partnering and cooperating at a regional level. The reputation and brand of a unique food culture is essentially a communal one. Not only do operators need to collaborate with food producers, vendors, and culinary professionals, they also should strategically tap into government and DMO efforts to support "tourism websites and marketing initiatives dedicated to food, the development of culinary events including festivals, documentation of culinary heritage, and food related activities such as dedicated food tours and cooking holidays."¹⁴

It is for this reason that ideating and increasing strategic branding is even more critical at the destination level. While a majority (88.2%) of respondents of the 2012 Affiliate Member Survey by the UNWTO named gastronomic

experiences as a "major" strategic element in defining the brand and image in their destination, only 63.6% believed that their country had its own gastronomic brand.¹⁵ Of the 7 out of 10 respondents who reported that their organizations generated marketing and promotions based on food tourism, it was found that food tourism, at least on a destination level, lends itself well to event-based promotions (91%), dedicated websites and media (78%) and specialized guides (61%). The same organizations reported that 79% of them already had food event products, followed by gastronomic routes and cooking classes and workshops (62% each), local foods fairs (59%), and tour-friendly visits to markets and producers (53%). Primary recommendations from the UNWTO regarding the strategy for building food tourism systems include involving chefs as interpreters and figureheads of the territory; development of high-quality and credible promotional tools (food guides); the organization of food events (festivals, contests, markets); and use of the Internet and social networks (websites, food blogs, and TV/Internet shows).

The UNWTO also points out that gastronomic routes are becoming one of the most developed products in food tourism, defining them as

12 Samantha Shankman, "How the Rise of Digital Media Drove Food Culture and Tourism," Skift, 2015, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://skift.com/2015/03/02/how-the-rise-of-digital-media-drove-food-culture-tourism/>. The Rise of Food Tourism.

13 Ingjie Liu, William C. Norman, and Lori Pennington-Gray, "A Flash of Culinary Tourism: Understanding the Influences of Online Food Photography on People's Travel Planning Process on Flickr," *Tourism Culture & Communication* 13.1 (2013): 5–18, accessed August 18, 2015, http://www.academia.edu/7400164/A_Flash_of_Culinary_Tourism_Understanding_The_Influences_of_Online_Food_Photos_on_Peoples_Travel_Planning_Process_on_Flickr.

14 C. M. Hall, L. Sharples, and R. Mitchell, *Consuming Places: The Role of Food, Wine and Tourism in Regional Development* (London: Butterworth Heinemann, 2003).

15 Iñaki Gaztelumendi, "Global Trends in Food Tourism," in UNWTO: *Global Report on Food Tourism: AM Reports*, vol. 4 (Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2012), accessed August 13, 2015, Web.

“systems that constitute a comprehensive and thematic tourism offering, generally branded, and are defined by one or more itineraries in a given geographic area, (although in reality, gastronomy has no borders), with a series of tourism products or sites, such as factories and restaurants, which are listed in tourist guidebooks and revolve around a specific food, product or dish, generally with differentiated quality, or gastronomic events or activities.” Such routes also incorporate historical sites and other attractions, with the goal being to entice tourists to spend more time in a region and travel more widely, spreading the economic benefit. Examples of gastronomic routes include areas of Turkey, Alsace, Andalucía, and Mexico. Ireland’s Wild Atlantic Way, the world’s longest coastal touring route, is an example of a gastronomic route that has been well-designed to highlight adventure travel activities along a culinary route.¹⁶ Traversing six Irish regions, all unique in gastronomic offerings, the route includes biking, hiking, wildlife watching, and a host of water activities as well as food activities. In *Saveur Magazine*’s Good Taste awards, based on a survey of travel experts, the Wild Atlantic Way was awarded the Best Culinary Road Trip in September, 2015. Another example is South Africa, which uses its rich food and wine culture, complete with several route options, to help differentiate it from other destinations in the extremely competitive African safari space.

Culinary branding is also a dynamic tool for destinations that need to revive their image as a viable tourist destination. In April 2015, NPR documented the calculated efforts of several middle-income nations, such as Peru, Korea, and Mexico, to mainstream their cuisines at a global level as a way to show their international clout and rebrand their difficult reputations as

40% OF INBOUND TOURISM TO PERU IN 2013 WAS PRIMARILY FOOD TOURISM (WORTH ABOUT \$700 MILLION USD).

unstable or dangerous destinations. In 2006, Peru’s Export and Tourism Promotion Board launched a culinary campaign called “Peru Mucho Gusto” designed to shift perceptions of the country from the terrorism violence it experienced through the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁷ The endeavor combined national celebrity chefs, cooperation with food producers to promote foods like pisco and quinoa, local and international food festivals, the funding of regional cookbooks, and the recognition of excellent Peruvian restaurants in major urban hubs worldwide. Efforts have been successful: according to the Peruvian embassy, 40% of inbound tourism to Peru in 2013 was primarily food tourism (worth about \$700 million USD).¹⁸

¹⁶ <http://www.wildatlanticway.com/home/> (accessed August 16, 2015).

¹⁷ <http://www.peru.travel/es-pe/que-hacer/actual/gastronomia.aspx> (accessed August 15, 2015).

¹⁸ Maanvi Singh, “Who’s behind the Latest Ethnic Food Trend? Maybe It’s a Government,” NPR.org, 2015, accessed August 16, 2015, Web.



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[Check Please!]

A strong contingent of adventure travel operators have been pioneers of food tourism, incorporating a range of food elements into adventure itineraries and focusing on understanding and experiencing culture through a culinary lens. Whether this means providing authentic local meals in private homes or structuring active trips to include foraging, harvesting, and cooking food, culture is emphasized. Operators working at the intersection of food and adventure must be aware of and manage many of issues, including safety, sustainability, authenticity, local cooperation, communication, and a host of additional operational concerns. At a regional and destination level, a coordinated narrative based on history, culture, and values must inform the local food identity and brand, and multilateral cooperation across industries must be fostered. High quality products and consumer protection must be balanced with sustainability of nature, resources, and cultural authenticity.

Food tourism also brings a host of complications and challenges with respect to capacity planning, striking the balance between economic growth and sustainability, and the pressure to modify product based on demand. At the same time, food tourism can offer real benefits to conservation initiatives and financial support to communities. It also provides adventure travel businesses with a portfolio of both cultural and nature-based activities that mesh beautifully with adventure travel ideals.

Together, the two sectors of food and adventure travel represent growing tourism niches that can help mitigate mainstream tourism challenges around demand and capacity by popularizing in-depth, small group experiences that respect and focus on a preserved culture and environment. They both represent opportunities to bring real financial gain directly to host communities while making traditional, heritage-based systems into strongholds in regional economies.

Food tourism can be the perfect partner in adventure travel, allowing travelers to work and wander through nature, learn from locals, and sit among new friends while savoring the taste of a newly discovered land.

¹⁶ <http://www.wildatlanticway.com/home/> (accessed August 16, 2015).

¹⁷ <http://www.peru.travel/es-pe/que-hacer/actual/gastronomia.aspx> (accessed August 15, 2015).

¹⁸ Maanvi Singh, "Who's behind the Latest Ethnic Food Trend? Maybe It's a Government," NPR.org, 2015, accessed August 16, 2015, Web.

[Appendix A]

EXAMPLES OF FOOD EXPERIENCES INTEGRATED INTO ADVENTURE TRAVEL ITINERARIES

Below, the raw data from from the July 2015 Food and Adventure Survey respondents has been provided, in answer to the survey question “Please share an example of how you have integrated food experiences in the physically active style of adventure travel?”:

- Also, on one tour day, tour members can go fishing and then cook their catch on the beach.
- At our Kayak Inn adventure retreat on Panay, guests learn how to cook rice inside bamboo, how to use a young coconut, its juice and flesh, and prepare a native chicken soup dinner. Yes, they may have a hand at chasing, catching and killing the chicken!
- Avoiding use of preservatives and other chemicals, using fresh, organic local products
- Bicycling to a local food provider.
- Bike ride inside vineyards and end with wine tour and lunch at cellar
- Bike ride to a cheese farm and end with learn how to make cheese and taste all different cheeses produced
- Biking and cooking tours – classes with participation and demonstration; visit to fish markets, etc.
- Biking to a local farm and cooking with a chef to use the local foods to create a healthy meal
- Blending wine
- Buy local ingredients and come over to a local restaurant to cook
- Buying different fresh foods from open markets, organizing picnics on national parks, etc.
- Cambodia – Take a bicycle ride into the countryside through local villages surrounding Battambang, Cambodia. Along the way, stop and experience rice paper-making, fruit drying and preparation, production of the famous prahok (fish paste) and rice wine-making. Finish up at the best kralanh (sticky rice in bamboo) stall in the district.
- Camp cooking, farm and water supply visits
- Catching their own Tilapia at a farm, for dinner or happy hour

[APPENDIX A]

- Cheese and Rakiya (local brand) tasting on a hiking route at a sheep farm where guests can also milk the sheep
- Coastal walking & kayaking with a botanist looking for edible seaweeds and aromatic herbs
- Cod fish on the Lofoten Islands served in a fish restaurant which is part of a complex center around the cod fishing industry of the Lofotens.
- Collecting ingredients
- Commercial Fishing Trips
- Conducting live food dishes for groups visiting here in Goa from Norway.
- Cooking class and bike tour
- Cooking classes in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.
- Cooking with herbs seen along a hike through the rice patties in Indonesia
- Cooking with the locals on a farm if it is part of the trip
- Cycling to a winery
- Day Trips on my boat, activities including deep sea fishing, with the catch prepared in beautifully situated restaurant in the fjord. Gives customers the pleasure of sailing the fjord, the excitement when catching fish, and a gourmet experience.
- Deer hunting and venison cooking
- Developing box-lunch with local products, as cheese, homemade vegan burgers. Also using eating time to share with local families that we meet during our journeys.
- Drinking wine and dried local berries in the marble caves!
- Farmhouse lunches
- Farming with locals
- Fishing and cleaning fish.
- Fishing and foraging
- Fishing and using our fishing catch for grilled fish
- Fishing in South Africa and prepping and eating the fish after.
- Fishing with locals
- Food and cooking classes
- Food as a cultural approach
- Food hike
- Foraging in markets
- Foraging in the remote forests for berries, sea asparagus, greens for salads, mushrooms.
- Foraging with a local
- Foraging with local experts
- Foraging with locals

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- Foraging with women from rural villages in Lebanon during late winter/early spring season
- Fruit picking combined with food processing (ex: mulberry picking and mulberry syrup making, and making purslane and mulberry turnovers, etc.)
- Going fishing with local fishing captains and using the catch in the evening's cooking class
- Guide cooking a fresh king crab or ceviche after a day of hiking or horseriding
- Harvesting fresh vegetables and fruits, collecting fresh eggs from open farms, and cooking at local homes helped out from the local people, teaching our guests to cook their traditional dishes, which locals eat in their normal lives
- Harvesting Grapes in the Basque Country, pressing by foot
- Having a lamb barbecue in a local farm in middle of a horseback riding day!
- Help local women to harvest oysters from the SineSaloum river mangrove.
- Hiking and foraging for wild Japanese vegetables in the hills outside of Kyoto
- Hiking for a truffle hunt
- Hiking or mountain biking to a local cheese producer in the Alps
- Hiking to a mountain to walk with the shepherd before joining his family for lunch in his hut
- Hiking to/visiting a local community's farming grounds to learn about the local produce and the artisanal farming techniques and rituals. During this experience, you source some ingredients, which are then cooked in traditional way and eaten with the guests.
- Hiking with a local shepherd around mountain meadows, then tasting house made cheese and local wine.
- Hiking with shepherd followed by cheese making
- Horseback riding from winery to winery in the Mendoza region of Argentina.
- I work with lodges that emphasize community involvement. Here people can go an visit e.g., a local coffee plantation or chocolate farm, or a homestead. They can help out on the field or learn to make tortillas.
- Impromptu food preparation event
- In most of our trips, we visit local breweries or wineries.
- In our bike trips we visit an indigenous community and cook with them and then eat all that we have cooked with them
- In that same itinerary, we offer exotic seafood dishes that are typical of the area the group visits.
- In the South, we experience a meal seated on the floor on banana leaves. They buy their own seafood, see it being cooked and then eat it.

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- Jungle trekking with local ethnic group and foraging for endemic edible plant species
- King crab safari from Kirkenes in Arctic Norway. Learning about the crabs and their location followed by King crab feast.
- Local Andean products helps customers to be adjusted to the local environment and help them to understand about the local culture and how it was developed through the years.
- Local market tours in rural Mexico, which involves lots of walking
- Local wine collecting from palm trees.
- Long distance trails and village accommodation
- Looking for bush tucker in Australia
- Making cheese
- Many of our international tours have foraging for truffles, or market tours.
- Many of our tours include cheese making classes or tours, or the production of olive oil, etc.
- Morocco – Hiking in the High Atlas Mountains to a remote village for a traditional home-cooked Berber meal.
- Offering great treks with a tasty home-made box lunch
- Olive oil tastings
- Olive oil tastings; knowledge, process, etc.
- Truffle tasting, hunting, etc.
- Olive picking
- Open market or Harvest Experiences
- Order a family in village some traditional local food.
- Our Palawan SandCastles guests retrieve sea urchins off their kayaks and take them back to eat with a beer ahead of dinner.
- Pachamanca, earth oven cooking. You set it up and then go paddle boarding while it cooks. We also sometimes do these on our treks.
- Pack the meal and carry or have it set up awaiting us
- Picking oysters, fishing-cleaning and preparing the fish.
- Purchase raw food and cooking in local resident's kitchen.
- Rafting to a coffee tour
- Reindeer stew or 'bidos' farmed and prepared by the Sami people in Arctic Norway and Sweden. Experience includes insight into Sami way of life and activities.
- Riding horseback with ranch hands to bring home a herd of water buffalo through flooded fields.
- Seafood grilled

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- Serving a hot chicken soup, sandwiches, pisco sour and nice fresh fruit for 50 people the middle of nowhere.
- Share a lamb BBQ Patagonia style in an authentic estancia! with high end wines from Chile
- Shearing alpacas, making bread in a small village along a trekking route, harvesting potatoes, harvesting and processing coffee along a trek, making chuño (freeze-dried potatoes) and having local communities make lunches for treks, carried in traditional weavings.
- Shopping with the chef at a market and then cooking and eating
- Showing how to cook asado
- Showing Visitors the brown rice in the farms, and then showing them how to prepare it and taste it
- Ski-touring to a remote barn by headlamp to have a local raclette dinner
- Spearfishing & flats fishing
- Stopping at cheese maker, chocolate maker, brewery, distillery: on a bike tour on even canoe trip
- Suggest morning recipes with the chef (also a guide/tour leader), list the ingredients that will dictate the cycling itinerary for the day. Carry a large cooler and make it back to the lodging to process everything in a full hands-on immersion with mamas and nonnas
- Taking people cherry/wild strawberry picking in the Indian Himalayas.
- Taking people fishing and rafting, and then cooking a simple meal of rice and fish curry, say, on a small island, in the outdoors, using twigs and driftwood, to the great satisfaction of the clients.
- Teaching visitors to participate of preparation some dishes like Arabic bread and toasting coffee beans
- The do a local market tour and visit the stalls that sell ingredients
- Tour in a farm with an overnight stay with the farmers of the community. And sharing the meals during their stay in the village.
- Trekking in the mountains, close to a lake that the locals are going to fishing with the tourists to catch some local fish for dinner, after and before climbing mountains.
- Trekking with herders in the Andes. Llama or alpaca jerky are part of the picnic. Quinoa as well, and we even we eat some wild fruits and plants.
- Truffle hunting with dogs
- Using local communities to share their 'real daily food' with travellers, this gives the passengers a feeling of 'tasting' the local culture and its relationship with food.
- Using native products, called super food, rich in proteins, antioxidants, etc.

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- Vietnam – Bike-riding to an herb farm outside of Hoi An to gather ingredients for a cooking class.
- Visit coffee farm on one of our treks
- Visit local restaurants that serve local dishes
- Visiting organic garden
- Walking experiences offer amazing food of local provenance – such as the Maria Island Walk in Tasmania, or the Arkaba Walk in South Australia.
- Walking with the shepherd and his flock and making goat cheese.
- We allow guests to interact with local communities and see how their Indian breads are cooked or their local brew.
- We collect some tree fungi *Cyttaria espinosae* from the woods for the salad when we have lunch with the clients.
- We created the term Active Foodie to embrace the experience of connecting food with a more physically active itinerary. The activity connects with the food experience when possible (walking through the vineyards or to the mountain hut)
- We have a ride in a buffalo farm, where we horseback ride seeking for buffaloes in the fields. We stop for lunch: buffalo barbecue, and dessert of cheesecake, prepared by the owner of the farm.
- We have an adventure and gastronomy trip to Paraty (Brazil) where we mix hikes, kayak and cultural activities together with a cooking hand- on dinner and also visit to cachaça distillery.
- We have an adventure-based trip that offers visits to cacao plantations, a tasting of chocolate based recipes and pure chocolate items. There is also an option of attending a chocolate festival if they book their tour at festival time.
- We have itineraries where we will hike through the vineyards.
- We have meals with local families or local communities!
- We hike and visit a shepherd up in the mountains where he lives with his sheep.
- We include cooking classes in all of our tours: some of them have classes every day.
- We offer bike tours, and clients need to cycle to different wineries to visit and wine tasting
- We offer cooking classes experiences with professional chefs!
- We offer tour cycling and cooking. Those tours are designed to cycle in the morning, visit farms, wineries and artisan food & cooking lesson in the evening
- We send a variety of organic foods and our chefs at camps are geared to make specialty dishes or diverse vegetarian dishes and accompaniments.
- We taste some products from the Pacific Ocean when we visit small fisherman towns.

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- We visit community projects where vegetables and fruits are produced
- When lunch pack is provided, it is always made of local food, and the guide carries an extra jar of local ajvar, or sundried tomatoes in oil, which tour participants can share together with their lunch pack
- Wine tasting and cycling tour – Italy/France
- Wine tasting; wine knowledge, terroir, methods,
- Wine tastings
- With our visits to tribal areas, we go native: our guests collect seaweed and our hosts show them how to prepare a delicious and healthy seaweed salad. Usually the native people can find some octopus, squid or fish to complement the salad.
- Working during the vendange grape harvest with local winemakers