

Chapter 68

Ways to Promoting Rural, Cultural and Gastronomical Tourism in Mărginimea Sibiului

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ABSTRACT

In 2009, the touristic potential of Mărginimea Sibiului is recognised both nationally and internationally for its unique ethnographic, cultural, architectural and historical heritage and it has also won the Golden Apple Award of World Federation of Travel Journalists and Writers. In 2015, this area with rich traditions won a price for promoting local gastronomy. Cheeses of Mărginimea Sibiului are an important part of this region’s culinary and cultural tradition, and its diversity comes from specific production techniques. The Sheep Cheese Route provides an excellent opportunity for discovering the pastoral world of Mărginimea Sibiului, with its picturesque settlements and calm lifestyle. Due to continuous shepherding and transhumance, the 18 villages connected to the route have succeeded in keeping their strong local identity. Mărginimea Sibiului has always been known in Romania as the land of sheep, cheeses and meat delicacies. Its traditional products reflect the richness of the land but also the region’s cultural diversity.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Tourism has long been considered as a potential means for socio-economic development and regeneration of rural areas. Tourism has known in recent years due to new directions of development preferences changing in this sector. The market has seen an increase in demand for simpler vacations, tourists heading and more attention to specific regions or “corners of the country” than travel to countries par excellence (Soare & Costachie, 2013).

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According to Štetić, Pavlović, & Jovanović (2015), rural tourism has long been considered the means of accelerating economic and social development, and has become a development tool for many rural areas. The relationship between rural tourism and other tourism forms practiced in the rural areas is extremely important, because it establishes the connections between natural, human, economical and social parameters, in order to insure all factors that lead to tourist growth and durable development (Nedelcu, 2014).

Rural areas are considered to be archives of older ways of life and cultures that respond to postmodern tourists' quest for authenticity. For some rural areas gastronomic and wine festivals are becoming a vehicle to promote the gastronomic products of certain tourist destinations, some of them characterized by an important cultural identity (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; López-Guzmán, Vieira-Rodríguez & Rodríguez-García, 2014).

Mărginimea Sibiului is a place where there are many who visit it and few that ever forget it. This is the land where morning wake-up call comes from cowbells and horse-drawn wagons; the place where the fragrant hay cocks, the blossomed pastures and the scattered sheep flocks make you think of far-off lands. This is the place where in wintertime children still toboggan on their sledges down hidden narrow roads wrapped in wood smoke from the people's stoves. For many this may only be an image depicted from a movie, but for the people from Mărginimea Sibiului this is their everyday life.

Mărginimea Sibiului comprises 18 villages spread at the foothills of the Cindrel and Lotru Mountains. Its history is so ancient that legends speak of times when these regions were inhabited by skilful, peace-loving giants.

Shepherding has remained a traditional occupation and if you come to Mărginimea you'll see there's no pasture without a flock of sheep and the barking of guard dogs. Customs and traditions have been preserved to the present day and young or old craftsmen will always welcome a visit from those wishing to discover the secrets of their crafts. These priceless treasures preserved year after year have won the region the title of European Destination of Excellence in 2009 together with the *Pomme d'Or* prize for excellence in tourism. In 2015, this area with rich traditions won a prize for promoting local gastronomy.

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TASTE OF MĂRGINIMEA SIBIULUI IN "TRANSYLVANIA GOURMET-FOOD CULTURE FESTIVAL"

In September 2015 was held the first Transylvanian gourmet festival, organized by the My Transylvania association in Sibiu. The success that was gladdened by the unique event, prompted the organizers to continue thus for three weeks in August-September 2016 "Transylvania Gourmet-Food Culture Festival" which will celebrate and promote culinary culture authentic from southern Transylvania by organizing 13 events. Healthy food is the heart of this project and is celebrated as such: seasonal menus are offered of traditional products varieties, no preservatives, no additives and prepared according to traditional recipes, multicultural. The project includes Sibiu City Menu (launch of a common menu in ten participating restaurants throughout the period in which the festival takes place), meetings with producers from the area, launching a common label "Local Taste" for restaurants and producers from the southern

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