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THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

Eshkuvvatova Zilola

Student, “Silk Road” International University
of Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Translation and practice of translation (English)-124

Nilufar Khalimova

Scientific supervisor, “Silk Road” International
University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Nilufar.khalimova@univ-silkroad.uz

Abstract

The article discusses how to develop gastronomic tourism in Uzbekistan. It is noted the long history of Uzbek gastronomy associated with the Silk Road and its integration with the cultures of the national dishes, drinks, unique sweets and facts about the cultures which are related to gastronomy. It describes what reforms are being performed by the government today to develop gastronomic tourism. It examines some of the drawbacks that associated with sanitary hygiene and the improvements of technology in this tourism industry and provides the best alternative solution in case of such situations. Finally, it shows what specific strategies which the country has for developing gastronomic tourism, and it is mentioned how strategies are significant not only for the development of gastronomic tourism, but also for the economic benefits of Uzbekistan and a further rise in the international reputation of the country.

Keywords: Gastronomy, gastronomic tourism, culinary heritage, gastronomic culture, local restaurants, local residents, festivals, hygiene requirements



Introduction



Abstrakt

Maqolada O'zbekistonda gastronomik turizmni qanday rivojlantirish haqida so'z boradi. O'zbek gastronomiyasining Ipak yo'li bilan bog'liq uzoq tarixi va uning milliy taomlar, ichimliklar, noyob shirinliklar madaniyati bilan integratsiyasi va gastronomiya bilan bog'liq madaniyatlar haqida faktlar qayd etilgan. Unda bugungi kunda hukumat tomonidan gastronomik turizmni rivojlantirish uchun qanday islohotlar amalga oshirilayotgani tasvirlangan. Unda sanitariya-gigiena va ushbu turizm sohasidagi texnologiyalarni takomillashtirish bilan bog'liq ba'zi kamchiliklar ko'rib chiqiladi va bunday vaziyatlarda eng yaxshi muqobil yechim taklif etiladi. Va nihoyat, unda mamlakatda gastronomik turizmni rivojlantirish bo'yicha qanday aniq strategiyalar mavjudligi ko'rsatilgan va strategiyalar nafaqat gastronomik turizmni rivojlantirish, balki O'zbekistonning iqtisodiy foydasi va mamlakatning xalqaro nufuzi yanada ortishi uchun ham qanchalik darajada muhimligi ta'kidlab o'tilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: Gastronomiya, gastronomik turizm, oshpazlik merosi, gastronomik madaniyat, mahalliy restoranlar, mahalliy aholi, festivallar, gigiena talablari, strategiyalar

Аннотация


В статье рассматривается вопрос развития гастрономического туризма в Узбекистане. Отмечается долгая история узбекской гастрономии, связанная с Шелковым путем, и ее интеграция в культуру национальных блюд, напитков, уникальных сладостей, а также факты о культурах, связанных с гастрономией. Описываются реформы, проводимые в настоящее время правительством для развития гастрономического туризма. Рассматриваются некоторые недостатки, связанные с санитарно-гигиеническими нормами и совершенствованием технологий в этом секторе туризма, и предлагаются оптимальные альтернативные решения в подобных ситуациях. Наконец, показаны существующие конкретные стратегии развития гастрономического туризма в стране и подчеркивается

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важность этих стратегий не только для развития гастрономического туризма, но и для экономической выгоды Узбекистана и дальнейшего повышения международного престижа страны.

Ключевые слова: Гастрономия, гастрономический туризм, кулинарное наследие, гастрономическая культура, местные рестораны, местное население, фестивали, гигиенические требования, стратегии

Uzbekistan’s territory was recognized in ancient times as the main logistics and trade center of the Silk Road. Trade caravans stopped here to rest, exchange goods, and most importantly, different peoples and ethnic groups had an unprecedented influence on one another’s culinary traditions. In particular, the gastronomies of many peoples including Chinese, Turkic, Persian, Indian, and Western, has entered, and all of these have merged with the culinary of the ancient Uzbek people, which is still reflected because the territory of Uzbekistan is located at the crossroads of the Silk Road. Therefore, the gastronomy of Uzbekistan is very unique and of primary importance. A large number of tourists visit Uzbekistan not only to see its historic sites, but also to enjoy the taste of the food culture and special national dishes of the people who living in this country, which has been shaped since the Silk Road era and continues to change. This trend contributes to the rapid development of gastronomic tourism in Uzbekistan. Exactly, it is not true to consider gastronomic tourism only as the simple branch of tourism. It can increase the number of tourists visiting to Uzbekistan and the income gained from them. As a result, the country may have the opportunity to make major investments in the development of gastronomic tourism itself, as well as other sectors of tourism in the near future. At the same time, Uzbekistan may create its own culinary brand and promote it almost to every corner of the world. This article discusses interesting information about Uzbek national dishes and the culinary culture of the people who live in the country, the efforts made to develop gastronomic tourism in Uzbekistan, the quality of service provided by local restaurants to tourists, how they should comply with sanitary and hygiene requirements, how to take firm measures to

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prevent violations of these hygienic rules, and finally, what strategies should be carried out for the effective development of this tourism branch. Before that, it is appropriate to give a brief definition of gastronomy itself so that all readers of this article can understand it fully. The etymology of the term “gastronome” traces back to the Greek words “gastros” (stomach) and “nomos” (law or doctrine), and its contemporary usage remains closely tied to these original roots (Kilichov, 2024). It is not only about cooking, but also it is a science and art which studies the relationship between food and culture. Gastronomic tourism is the travel of tourists from far or near to taste the national dishes of a region. Uzbekistan possesses a distinctive culinary heritage. If the government considers the further development of gastronomic tourism as a priority and tries to improve the infrastructure for it, Uzbekistan can achieve the highest position in the field of gastronomy among most countries of the world.



According to Kilichov (2024), Uzbekistan is a perfect destination for gastronomic tourism because its traditional cuisine is among the richest and most diverse ones of East. Many national Uzbek dishes reflecting a deep culinary heritage have been preserved for a long time. For centuries, the fertile valleys, steppe traditions, and nomadic way of life have influenced the types of food consumed by Uzbeks (Sagindikova, 2025). This culinary heritage has been preserved with a tradition of passing on from generation to generation for long times. In addition, trade relationships with other countries which have been continuing from ancient times have also played an invaluable role in the formation of some flavors and cultures in Uzbekistan gastronomy. Nowadays, the most popular Uzbek national dishes are pilaf, shashlik, samsa, manti, and lagman. Fayzieva et al. (2025) proves that according to tourist’s pilaf is a hallmark of Uzbek cuisine and almost all of them try to taste this dish when visiting to Uzbekistan. “The Pilaf Culture and Traditions” of Uzbekistan is included in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It is not correct tendency to view pilaf only as a dish. This dish is a symbol of family love, values and hospitality. Pilaf is a traditional dish that is usually prepared at family gatherings, at the time which guests visit to the house, at weddings and on holidays. Almost every region has its own style of preparing pilaf. In



Samarkand, there is a layered pilaf with carrots and rice, “To’y oshi” in Tashkent, “Devzira osh” in Fergana, Andijon, and Namangan, “Oshi sofi” in Bukhara, and “Suzma pilaf” in Khorezm. However, the main ingredients of this dish are meat, rice, carrots and linseed oil regardless of the region. There are also many types of shashlik depending on the type of meat, ingredients, shape and method of preparation. These include jazz kebab, minced meat kebab, chicken kebab, fish kebab, quail kebab and hip-liver kebab and others. There are wonderful types of samsa and each one has a unique taste. Samsa is mainly made from meat, pumpkin, potatoes, cheese or vitamin-rich greens. Somsa is wrapped in different shapes depending on the ingredients inside. Somsa can become in shapes like rectangular, triangular, round and crescent- shaped. For example, somsa is made from greens in spring is often crescent-shaped. In terms of regions, there are masters in making samsa from Jizzakh, Samarkand and Bukhara. Jizzakh somsa is the most famous throughout Uzbekistan. Thousands of tourists from different parts of the country come to this region to taste it. Jizzakh’s kazan patir which is prepared in large quantities also captivates many people with its delicious taste. This kazan patir was invented in ancient times so that nomadic cattle-breeding people would not need a stove. Manti is considered one of the most delicious traditional dishes of Uzbekistan which also has various shapes and it is made from products such as meat, pumpkin, and potatoes. When more than 100 tourists were asked what dish, they would try firstly when visiting Uzbekistan, they answered as the following:



Figure -1

Dish name	Percent (%)	Reason
Pilaf	75%	Symbol of national cuisine
Samsa	14%	Very popular as a street food
Shashlik	8%	Meat lover’s choice
Manti	3%	Special dish for those who like doughy dishes

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Uzbekistan has healthy drinks such as tea, kimiz which made from horse milk, ayran, yogurt and various fruit juices. It is known that black tea is a drink that retains heat and green tea is a drink that keeps cool (Sidikova, 2021). Therefore, black tea is drunk more in winter and green tea is drunk more in summer. Local people have a amazing national tradition related to tea. This tradition is that tea is drunk after returning to a tea-pot for three times, and tea is given starting from the oldest person or guest at the table. Uzbekistan not only has delicious meals and drinks, but also has unusual desserts. For example, sumalak can become eaten both as a meal and as a dessert. Because of its sweet taste that does not contain sugar, it is considered a dish with its unusual sweetness, nutritional value, and ease of preparation. It is prepared every spring in the circle of relatives and friends. Similarly, there are various dried fruits, halva, nisholda, baklava, halvaitor, kushtili, chak-chak and others. Thus, it is impossible for anyone with a delicate taste not to be amazed by Uzbek national cuisine and culture.


An incredibly rich culinary heritage of Uzbekistan can make a worthy contribution to the development of the country. Therefore, extensive initiatives are being taken to strengthen the gastronomic sector of Uzbekistan’s tourism. For example, the Gastronomic Tourism Association was established in 2019. The main task of this association is to promote Uzbek traditional dishes internationally and improve the quality level of restaurants and the skills of chefs. In 2023, presidential decrees No.135 and 238 paid great attention to such reforms as financing the advertising of national Uzbek cuisine and brands on international television channels and creating incentives and opportunities for local hotels and restaurants. In addition, many gastronomic streets were established by presidential decree, and bus and minibus services have launched to remote mountainous regions with developed regions such as Zamin and Bostanlik. Gastronomic streets have been established near touristic destinations of Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand. There are restaurants and cafes serving only Uzbek national dishes in such streets. The government also organizes various festivals and major events. As an example, “Delicious Uzbekistan” is a significant international festival held every year and it is attended by famous professional chefs from many countries. According to Sagindikova (2025), such

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events do not only present traditional heritage recipes, but also, they encourage innovation and creativity within modern Uzbek culinary arts. Additionally, crucial efforts are being done to develop gastronomic tourism not only in urban areas, but also in rural areas. In these areas, local residents are also being provided with facilities to establish gastro-zones for tourists in their own homes, and they are primarily recommended to decorate these places in the oriental national style. It is because tourists can feel the traditional atmosphere and give them an unforgettable impression along with tasting national dishes.



Today, there have been several successes in improving the quality of service in restaurants, and ongoing to further increase this number. For example, positive changes are made in restaurants, digitization, payment methods and more promotion of staff qualifications as part of the state program “Dramatically increasing the flow of tourists in 2024-2025”. Most restaurants in attractive places visited by tourists have multilingual QR-code menus. This can be a solution to some problems related to the language. Almost every restaurant has already a payment system with international cards like Visa, and tourists can pay with their personal cards. This reduces the obligation of tourists to cash out money on their card account upon arrival in Uzbekistan. Free training courses that are organized by the Tourism Committee advance the language skills of staff who service tourists, and 60-70% of them communicate fluently in English, especially in regions such as Tashkent and Samarkand. Effective methods such as the rating system and mystery guest are widely being used to evaluate the quality of restaurants. Centers catering high service quality are provided with tax breaks and the “Tourism Friendly” tag. Special agents often visit any restaurant as an ordinary consumer and assess the quality of service based on more than 50 criteria.

Nowadays, most restaurants pay great attention to hygiene requirements in Uzbekistan. As an example, every employee who work in restaurants must undergo a medical examination every 6 months, and their results must be entered into an electronic database. Restaurants have a exact dress code in order to appropriately serve food to the consumer, hair must be completely covered with a special cap and nails must be trimmed, and anything that are worn on the hand

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during working hours is prohibited. Each worker must be in clean and well-groomed clothes. Products with “Preparation time” and “Expiration date” must be only stored in refrigerators. In addition, it will be mandated from each restaurant to install air filters which trap toxic fumes and odors in areas where food is cooked, and grease from flowing into sewers in order to prevent pollution of the environment from June 1, 2026. Food waste is no longer just thrown away, but it is recycled and used as fertilizer for agriculture products. However, some of restaurants still do not follow certain rules such as hygiene. Therefore, the inspection system should be tightened and criminal liability should be strengthened. If a certain violation of the rules is detected in any restaurant, a financial penalty should be imposed according to the established procedure. Softening or exempting from punishment will not reduce such conditions but rather will increase them. If such a case is identified in a restaurant again, it is advisable to suspend its activity for a certain period. Moreover, consumers can know which restaurants are safe and reliable for them by creating an open electronic rating system and assessing restaurants using “green”, “yellow” and “red” signs.


Gastronomic tourism is becoming an important aspect in the development of Uzbekistan’s tourism industry (Fayzieva, 2025). Therefore, if more comprehensive strategic reforms are implemented in Uzbekistan to develop gastronomic tourism, achievements of the country in tourism can increase at an incredible rate. The key factors regarding the image of the product Gastronomy are: to take chefs, on board as interpreters of the territory, the development of high quality and credible promotional tools such as gastronomic routes, organization of events, media and Internet use, and social networks (Cunha, 2018). Chefs should be seen not only as people who prepare food, but also as people who explain and present the culture, traditions, history, and local products of the area like gastronomic guides and they should also be trained in this regard. Uzbek national dishes can be advertised by inviting world- famous bloggers, sportsmen, famous people from foreign countries to Uzbekistan (Nurbekovna, S. A., & Abdukhafizovna, N. K. 2025). They may make gourmets who love to discover new tastes and foodies who see gastronomy as a hobby

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interested in tasting traditional dishes. Therefore, they try to visit this country specifically to learn its national cuisine and culture. If such people like and are highly regarded it, they will exactly share their impressions of Uzbek national dishes with others when returning to their country, and perhaps others also will be interested in enjoying these tastes. Furthermore, it is necessary to improve gastronomic maps that show where and what dishes are prepared well. This will avoid tourists from spending a long time for finding the dish that they are looking for. Tourists will not have to wait for their ordered dishes by introducing an online booking program in all restaurants. Gastronomic tourism offers an authentic lifestyle experience that focuses on gastronomic events involving high-quality food and locally produced ingredients (Cunha, 2018). Organizing gastronomic events and routes can give tourists unforgettable life experiences. Farmers should organize exhibitions where tourists can view their natural products grown on farms. It is also possible to organize gastronomic routes for tourists that take them to the homes of local people, and agricultural lands where the local products are grown. There, they can participate in how the locals prepare food, and see how agricultural products are grown.

Conclusion

The article has discussed the further development of Uzbek gastronomic tourism. It is closely studied the diversity and culture of the amazing Uzbek national cuisine in order to further improve the potential of tourism. The existence of reforms being performed by the government for gastronomic tourism of Uzbekistan is highlighted. The drawbacks that can leave a negative impression not only of food in some tourists, but also of Uzbekistan as a whole, and recommendations for their solution are highlighted, and information is provided on several certain strategies for the rapid development of tourism in Uzbekistan. As mentioned above, it is important to think not only that the rich culinary heritage of Uzbekistan includes national dishes and culture, but also that it is of great significance for the economic growth of the country. Gastronomic tourism possesses the potential to contribute to vital financial benefits for Uzbekistan and allow the country become widely recognized

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worldwide by creating a unusual gastronomic brand. Therefore, if all reforms that are important for gastronomic tourism continue to be implemented, Uzbekistan will be among the most developed countries in gastronomic tourism in the near future.

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