

MAPPING THE GASTRONOMIC HERITAGE

DUBROVNIK



Recent archaeological and geological surveys provide proof that Dubrovnik as a settlement was established already in the Classical Age, or according to Nikola Ranjina some time before the fall of Troy, meaning around 1200 BC. It was expanding following the influx of new population after the destruction of Epidaurus in the 6th century. Strengthening of transport between the east and west at the time of and after the Crusades fostered strengthening of Dubrovnik as a maritime-merchant centre. Under the Treaty of Zadar in 1358 Dubrovnik became free from the Venetian influence, what was crucial for further prosperous development.

In the 15th century the Republic of Dubrovnik completed the process of establishing its legal and statehood position. In the same period the merchanting with the hinterland was well organised and at the beginning of the 16th century the Republic achieved full freedom of trading on the whole territory of the Ottoman Empire. When the power of the Republic of Venice started diminishing in the same century, the Republic of Dubrovnik entered its golden age. The foundation of prosperity was the maritime trade that reached a global level.

Despite the prosperity of the Republic it was still necessary to import two key provisions; cereals and meat. To meet shortage the inhabitants of the border villages as well as the government of Dubrovnik, to meet the needs of the overall population, were buying those provisions in the hinterland of Herzegovina.

On the territory of the Republic there are records of the existence of “skale” (trading places) and “stranjevi” (commercial houses, wine cellars). On “skala” different fruit and vegetables, edible herbs and roots, eggs, pulese, fresh and salted fish were sold. The subjects of the Ottoman Empire were bringing meat, cereals, cheese. They were trading bread also, so in Konavle there was a common expression for that bread “vlaški kruh” (Vlachs bread). Small-scale traders were selling wool, cotton, silk and finished garments, shirts, gowns, slippers.

“Stranjevi” were gathering places for wine drinkers, or some type of a pub, where the business was done by a “tovjerner”, a local appointed by the owner of a “stranja”. Apart from the locals the guests were also Vlachs from the neighbouring Herzegovinian villages. Wine was considered a daily food product within the walls also because quality drinking water was available only when the water supply system was built in 1438. Up to then drinking water used to be transported from Mlini and Rijeka dubrovačka.

The maritime crisis on the Mediterranean in the 17th century adversely affected the Republic too, and a catastrophic earthquake in 1667 brought about its struggle for survival. In the 18th century the trade was somewhat revived, but already in 1808 Napoleon abolished the Republic. The Con-

gress of Vienna merged the region of Dubrovnik with the remaining part of Dalmatia and Croatia as well as with their political destiny.

Beginnings of the development of tourism are recorded in the mid 19th century when, until the beginning of the First World War, the middle class interested in travelling, meaning tourism, appeared. Dubrovnik was not far behind this completely new trend, and already in 1868 the first hotel “Miramare” was opened as well as a number of boarding houses. Soon, in 1896, a luxurious hotel “Imperial” was built being completed in only two years.

In 1901 4.742 visitors were recorded, in 1902 5.112, and in 1903 as many as 7.662 visitors. Such a strong growth was brought about, above all, by transport connections. Faster and more numerous steamship lines, and in 1901 even a narrow gauge railway was also put into service.

In the second period of the development, between the two wars, tourism became a necessity of the wealthier classes. Gradually the less wealthy ones started travelling, the workers were granted the right to annual holiday, tourism acquired a seasonal character, new types of tourism emerged with the tendency of mass tourism. In 1936 on the territory of Čilipi a small airport was built. On the narrow city area during 1938 there were 48 hotels, boarding houses and pubs recorded. Already in 1960 the existing airport was relocated to the current location, and during 1964 and 1965 the Adriatic Highway passed through the territory of the former Republic.

After the Second World War tourism became, thanks to increased free financial means, a necessity for a large part of developed population. Tourism in Dubrovnik kept growing in accordance with the needs and global trends. An interesting thing was a local unwritten rule that the hotels had first to buy off the local production of fruit, vegetables and meat. Between a hotel supply manager and small-scale producers there was a very informal communication ensuring easier trade. We can call it a forerunner of the Italian (Coldiretti Veneto) “zero kilometres” (“chilometro zero”, a type of an economy where a product is sold and consumed in the immediate production zone). However, despite the unquestionable development and affluent tradition of the Dubrovnik tourism there is a feeling that tourism is “just happening”, meaning that we are less of a creator and more of a victim of the tourism dynamics. The gastronomic offer, with rare exceptions, is uneventful, serving only to imaginary expectations without trying to put forward the local traditional varieties. Progressively tourism has become a monoculture, and in that way a possibility to express its uniqueness is lost, with the exception of historical heritage. The settlement within the walls, that the locals call “Grad” (“the Town”) year after year is being depopulated and there is a danger of turning that beautiful space of exceptional history into an empty soulless shell.

One of the most tragic years in the history of Dubrovnik is the Serbo-Montenigran aggression of 1991. A significant part of the territory was occupied and devastated in the period from 1 October 1991 until the liberation in October a year after. Today, the historical heritage damaged in the war has mostly been restored, and tourist facilities brought back into function.

After the Croatian War of Independence the tourism has turned towards globalization, and the choice of ingredients has been determined by a questionable economic feasibility. Nevertheless, also thanks to the talks we conducted, we have noticed some indications of the tradition going through a quality revitalisation. For the elderly nostalgia is crucial being evoked by frustration due to lack of quality imported food. The younger generations, thanks to their education and training, understand the high quality and uniqueness of the local tradition, and along with the indisputable trends in tourism, step by step, they are implementing the traditional products, and generally the valorisation of organic production, seasonal rhythm, traditional ways of preserving and preparing food. Moreover, awareness is growing regarding the importance of linking the local gastronomy with the history, legends and myths as additional elements for better understanding and experience of the territory of the former Republic of Dubrovnik. On the other hand, the abandoning of the Town and “buy-to-let businesses” continue, as life within the walls is expensive and hard. The lure of quick and relatively easy profits finalizes the process of turning tourism into a monoculture, what had started even before the war.

Positive examples that we have come across during the talks are just a tiny core of a possible change in understanding tourism, creating a new entrepreneurship environment that will not only react to outside stimuli, but it will be actively shaping a type of tourism we really want to be involved in. Establishing the required infrastructure, promoting organic and traditional production, coordinating the elements of tourism from sale to transport, accommodation and supply could, in due course, solve the problems of the Town overcrowdings and offer renaissance by creating new and creative tourism with the same or better financial results.

The countryside feeding the Town

It is a well-known fact that trade, maritime affairs and numerous less important crafts were prevailing economic activities in Dubrovnik. In the immediate vicinity around the Town, in the area of Pile, Danče, Ilijina glavica along with vineyards there were mostly gardens, in the sense of intensive horticultural farming. In the area of Gruž and on the slopes of Srđ there was a forest.

Around the Town - primarily the area of Astoreja that spread at the time from the Duboka ljuta River, after the loss of Cavtat and Obod in 1302, to Poljice, or for better orientation, the today's hotel Vrtovi sunca - was the area of production of a number of products important for food supply of the Town, as well as many other products that are not the topic of this text. Astoreja did not have sufficiently large arable land plots. The land was mostly rugged with karst fields but rich with groundwater springs that enhanced the land fertility. In the Middle Ages around those springs farming plots had been formed where intensive agriculture was being developed. Different fruit and vegetables and some cereals were planted. Vineyards were also there, and on the hills sheep and bovine herds, horses and donkeys were grazing. The locals were also involved in fishing and bee-keeping as well as other crafts. When talking about vegetables there were Brussels sprouts,

cauliflower, different sorts of pumpkins, lentils, broad bean, garlic, onion, dill, asparagus, barley, vetches, chickpeas, etc. The fruits planted were olive trees, sour cherry, cherry, apple, pear, fig, mulberry, peach, melon, watermelon, service trees, almond, walnut, orange, grapes, pomegranate, etc. Concerning the cereals there were wheat, barley, oat and millet.

The Island of Mljet mostly produced quality wine and oil, and the production of fir-wood barrels was also recorded. The red and white wines of the Island of Mljet were transported to Dubrovnik for abundant nobles' tables. It was recorded that on the island, beside the traditional vineyards, there was a large number of the so-called mixed cultivation plots, meaning vineyards on whose border lines olive trees were growing. A valley with some fifty arable fields stretched along the central part of the island. In the 19th century mostly olive groves, vineyards, orchards, sparsely sown fields and pastures were present.

The Konavle fertile field was one of the reasons why the old people of Dubrovnik invested great efforts into acquiring Konavle already from the end of the 14th century. After the war, between 1430-1433, those efforts proved to be successful, therefore the proceeds from the Konavle field improved the supply of Dubrovnik. Moreover, new surfaces for pastures significantly extended the range of live-stock products. Immediately after gaining control over Konavle the authorities ordered that all fertile land had to be sown with wheat. Obviously, that was not effective as Dubrovnik imported wheat for its own needs, so the limited production served primarily for the needs of the local population only partially meeting the real needs. The economic life of Konavle became prosperous only in the mid 20th century thanks to the construction of the irrigation system that at the same time tamed the Ljuta River, meaning that it minimised damages caused by frequent flooding. Since then more attention was paid to the cultivation of potatoes, industrial crops, silkworm, and olive growing. Regarding the cattle goats, sheep and cows were raised. Oxen were used for ploughing and for carrying load, and small cattle for meat, milk, wool and leather. In the mid 19th century most peasants turned to pig farming. Around 4.500 mulberry trees (dud) were being in use what represented a substantial foundation for the silkworm cultivation.

The Island of Lastovo, thanks to its broad plains, was rich with wine, oil, cereal, lentils, pyrethrum and excellent fruits. The pastures were good enough, and there were fish in abundance in the sea. Especially well known were lobsters, corals and sea sponges. The locals mostly lived off agriculture, as well as vineyards and olive groves. A good part of the fish was processed, and at the beginning of the 19th century it was exported to Italy.

Quality of the soil made the production on the islands of the Elaphiti archipelago different. So a French diplomat in the 17th century said the island was infertile, but rich with beautiful onion. The prosperity of the island was mostly thanks to the diplomats and world travellers Miho Pracat and Vice Bune Lopud.

Since ancient times Šipan was called a small island of gold, primarily because of a large quantity of produced oil. Olives were used in the area of Dubrovnik for a very long time. The latest research shows that olives had been present even before the Greeks arrived, so there goes the theory that they brought it into our region. The olive growers of Dubrovnik, thanks to such a long tradition, were very skilful, so in 1820, being talked into it by the Austrians, they went to the region of Zadar and Split to teach others how to cultivate olives and produce oil. Šipan was an island of seamen, fishermen, coral divers and shipbuilders, and the production of lime was also recorded there.

Koločep today is characterised by the Aleppo pinewoods in Gornje Čelo and the Mediterranean maquis shrubland in Donje Čelo where there is also a park with subtropical plants.

The aspirations of the people of Dubrovnik in the 19th century to take Pelješac under their control were mostly because of economic reasons, but also to have an easier access to Dalmatia. In order to protect the Ston saltpans a 5.5-meter-long fortification system was built. After having introduced feudal economy many inhabitants of Pelješac turned towards the sea making Pelješac one of the largest shipping centres on the southern Adriatic coast. Viticulture was developed on the peninsula reaching its peak of development in the 19th century. Many local seafarers provided generous investments into the land, development and maintenance of the vineyards. So today on this peninsula we have a lot of wines of excellent quality that do not fall much behind the best worldwide famous wines. The only important difference is the lack of quality coops and adequate certificates of quality and geographical indication.

Depending on the type and quality of soil and availability of water on the territory of the Republic wine, oil, fruits, vegetables and, for the old people of Dubrovnik very important meat were produced. It is very interesting to mention here that fish was considered food for the poor, and apart from few days of fasting, fish did not reach the tables of the nobles. Thanks to the developed trade or contacts with distant countries many spices and seasonings were popular on the tables of the Dubrovnik nobility. A fusion between different gastronomic influences and local production created what today we call Dubrovnik cuisine. One of the particularly appreciated spices was pepper, but as it was very expensive only the nobility could afford it. Therefore, the commoners used cinnamon (kanjela) that thanks to its piquant taste could to some extent replace pepper, and it has remained widely used in a number of recipes typical for the local cuisine.

The traditional gastronomy was very often the diet of the poor. The ingredients were chosen by their availability, and preparation method by the existing “technology” that generally was very primitive. However, some of those technologies proved to be extremely good having survived until today. It seems that simplicity was the key for a quality preparation of food, and such trends are present in the kitchens of some of the contemporary chefs.

Choice of Interlocutors

Based on the conducted research we have come to a conclusion that the following should definitely be interviewed: a cattle breeder, winemaker, shellfish grower, farmer, fisherman, caterer, chef, trader, researcher, innovator. Unfortunately due to a limited number of interviews we were not able to meet all the interesting people we have reached. We wanted to show how in different ways, different people have been inspired by the tradition and rich heritage of the Republic. Direct experiences testify not only of the existence of interest in the sense of lucrative tourist offer, but even of a general aspiration to return to the nature and values of the Dubrovnik tradition.

We have selected interlocutors remember well the past times and huge changes happening in the last 60 or so years. Apart from their memories we focused also on the experience regarding revitalization of the tradition and its implementation into a daily life and tourism. Judging from the words of our respondents we can conclude that there is a growing tendency to return to the nature and to commercialize the tradition through the territorial quality and identity of the former Republic of Dubrovnik. Step by step traditional components are being differentiated so as which ones should be preserved, and the available technology is thoughtfully being implemented without any negative effects on the quality or distinctiveness. Sometimes we are also talking about very high quality advancements like for an example in the case of olive oil production. Some of our interlocutors turned back to the tradition because of personal and family reasons, some have commercialised it through a tourist offer, some have taken only the traditional core, meaning the value of natural processes and cycles placing it in a completely new product. They are all characterised by one detail: nobody allowed technology to harm the natural rhythm or the benefits the nature provides.

Conclusion

Tradition has been created as an unavoidable sequence of climate, social and technological conditions in a certain area. In our case we are talking about gastronomy, agriculture, farming and fishing. The tipping point was the invention of electrical power and discovery of oil. The availability of energy completely transformed gastronomy, agriculture, farming and fishing but also generally the way people live, work and have fun. The energy revolution has already transformed and is going to completely transform in a very short period the customs and traditions having been created throughout the centuries. Therefore, we may conclude that what we call tradition is actually a dictation of nature and its rhythms, and the technology enabled man to introduce numerous interventions that have not always been wise or useful. Namely, man came into existence from nature, and as long as they followed, without many options to chose from, its cycles new ways of production and consumption were being created out of which most of them have even today remained a model to be imitated.

Presence of the impressive cultural heritage that follows the terrain morphology is an expression of a life philosophy that respects the landscape specific characteristics. The people who designed such structures, built and preserved them until today based their diet on local resources developing a gastronomic tradition deeply rooted in the local environment. The emphasis needs to be put on a strong link between the cultural heritage (tangible heritage) and gastro-cultural heritage (intangible heritage).

For a number of years tourist trends have suggested that a large number of tourists want to experience a pulsating life of the areas they visit. There is a large interest in tasting traditional food and drinks, visiting places that represent a symbol of identity, listening to stories that make their tourist choice unique. For the full experience it is desirable to encourage all of the senses where tastes, sounds, aromas, images and emotions are combined. Together they create a unique environment where it is not necessary to compete on the tourist market by one-euro discounts for an offered bed but by the uniqueness and richness of an overall experience.

In the last few decades food has been observed and understood in a completely new way. Namely, food is one of the corner stones of every community and topic often discussed. The way how food is procured, prepared and consumed reveals interesting details important for the understanding of the community itself. Moreover, the tourists' interest in our gastro-oenological customs can also be observed as one cohesion moment. Comparing food, drinks and customs brings about socialising as well as exchange of experience, meaning that through such familiarisation, as it was once in the past, the subjects of the comparison become again the agents of getting a family together, but this time a much wider, European family.

Choice of Literature

The choice of literature was at the same time easy and hard. Easy because almost every text about the Republic contains at least a couple of interesting quotes, and hard because it is quite challenging to bring all those fragments into a well-functioning unit. It seems there has been no scientific papers dealing with and defining the identity of Dubrovnik through culture, heritage and food. Let this modest beginning be a foundation stone for the future documenting of this fascinating topic that is becoming more and more current everyday.

Literature

1. Lukša Lucijanović: Iz povijesti dubrovačkog ugostiteljstva
2. Jadranka Ničetić: Dubrovački komini
3. Vesna Miović - Perić: Na razmeđu
4. Stefano d'Atri: Il sistema annonario di Ragusa (Dubrovnik) in età moderna
5. Gordan Ravančić: Život u krčmama srednjovjekovnog Dubrovnika
6. Paula Kaulić: Širenje Dubrovačke Republike na prostor Konavala
7. Tihana Petrović Leš: Danica Brössler u Dubrovniku, prilozi za povijest dokolice i turizma
8. Šime Peričić: Ulomci iz gospodarstva Konavala u 19. stoljeću
9. A. Kobašić: Ekonomske prilike u Dubrovniku
10. S. Piplović: Prilike na otoku Lastovu u XIX. Stoljeću
11. Josip Lučić: Prošlost dubrovačke Astoreje
12. Stanka Veraja: Pregled turističkog razvitka elafitskih otoka
13. Petra Korbus: Hrana kao baština na primjeru mediteranske prehrane hrvatskog dijela Jadrana
14. Damir Magaš, Josip Faričić, Maša Surić: Elafitsko otočje, fizičko-geografska obilježja u funkciji društveno-gospodarskog razvitka
15. Veljko Barbieri: Gastronomija Marina Držića Vidre
16. Marija Gjurašić: Gospodarska slika Mljeta u prvoj polovici 19. stoljeća prema podacima iz katastra Franje I. Uspostavljenoga na otoku 1836. godine
17. <http://www.peljesac.org/pages/povijest.html>
18. <http://peljesacnews.com/o-peljescu/>
19. Jasenka Maslek: Zemlja i ljudi: Vinogradstvo na poluotoku Pelješcu u 19. i 20. stoljeću
20. Pavle Bakarić: Zbornici Župe dubrovačke
21. <http://www.tzdubrovnik.hr>
22. prof. dr. sc. Ljudevit Pranić, Karla Pejšković: Aktualno stanje i razvojni učinci turizma u Dubrovniku
23. <https://dubrovacki.slobodnadalmacija.hr/zupaniya/dubrovnik/clanak/id/528789/kronicar-dubrovacke-povijesti-turizma-hotel-hilton-imperial-slavi-121-roendan>
24. <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=16446>