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Food Events for Foodies

Learning objectives

Readers are expected to learn the following from this chapter:

- The critical importance of planned events in food tourism
- Designing events for foodies; experiences sought and how to co-create them
- The appeal to foodies of festivals, trade fairs, markets, degustations and tastings

The critical importance of planned events in food tourism

Food events are so important in food tourism that they deserve a separate chapter. Our research determined that markets and food festivals have universal appeal among food lovers, and that highly-involved foodies can be singled out by the number and scope of food events they attend. The most sought-after food tourists are those who also prefer the most specialized events including degustations, trade fairs, and cooking classes.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the critical importance of planned events in food tourism, including documentation from the research literature. Data from large-scale surveys in North America is presented. The specific benefits provided by planned events are both generic, satisfying normal interest in novelty, entertainment, consumption and socializing, and benefits specific to food lovers. Segmentation based on event attendance is documented, resulting in the identification of a cluster called 'dynamic foodies'. These are the most highly involved and well travelled for food experiences, and they are the ones most interested in all the planned events and especially the more specialized, tactile ones.

Based on our research, a model has been created for guiding the design of events targeted at foodies. Hallmark and iconic events are considered as to their special place in destinations and food tourism clusters.

A case study from Australia forms an important part of this chapter. David Gration lives and works in the Sunshine Coast of Queensland and he has documented the local food events that help position this resort area as a foodie haven.

The popularity and growth of food-themed events has been well documented, including many cases in a recent book edited by Cavicchi and Santini (2014) entitled *Food and Wine Events in Europe: A Stakeholder Approach*. Cavicchi and Santini (2014:8) said "The number of food and wine festivals throughout the world has grown impressively..." and this type of event has proliferated in some European countries. Hall and Sharples (2008), in their book on food and wine festivals around the world, also provided cases and examples of events that cater to wine and food tourists.

Festivals have attracted the most attention, and according to the 2011 *Restaurant, Food & Beverage Market Research Handbook* (Richard K. Miller & Associates: 231-233) there are more than 1,000 food and wine festivals held annually across the United States. In addition, one has to include a variety of other food events including markets, fairs, shows, congresses, and competitions, although few researchers have studied them. One example is by Brown and Chappel (2008) who examined 'Tasting Australia and the World Food Media Awards' in Adelaide, South Australia.

Motivation to attend food events is the one topic in which an ample body of research evidence exists. Nicholson and Pearce (2001) studied motivations of people attending four New Zealand festivals, one featuring wine and food, and one themed on wild food. Dominant motivations were generic, related to socializing, novelty-seeking, family, entertainment and escapism, but the two non-food related events attracted higher proportions of attendees holding specific interests, i.e. guitars and airplanes. Lilleheim et al (2005), in the context of examining motives of suppliers and exhibitors at the Miami South Beach Food and Wine Festival, concluded that fun and atmosphere were important overall motivators. Park et al. (2008) identified the major factors that motivated visitors to attend the South Beach Wine and Food Festival: the desire to taste new wine and food; enjoy the event; enhance social status; escape from routine life; meet new people; spend time with family, and get to know the celebrity chefs and wine experts.

Cela et al. (2007) surveyed visitors to local food festivals in Northeast Iowa who were found to be typically middle aged; were college graduates and affluent; were predominantly repeat visitors and not part of an organized group. Festival attendees were mainly day trippers, primarily motivated to specifically attend the festivals, closely followed by the motivation to support, taste and purchase

local food. Two food events in Tasmania were profiled by Crispin and Reiser (2008), with the emphasis appearing to be on food and wine consumption plus entertainment.

Hu (2010) studied visitors to a food festival with a focus on their expenditures. Most respondents were young, with more females than males, and predominantly locals in groups, so they do not constitute a real tourism sample. Their main motivations were generic (social and family related) rather than food-specific. They were, however, judged to be somewhat more highly involved with food than general food consumers, with special interests in cooking and taste judging. A study by Kim et al. (2010) employed an on-site survey with 335 visitors attending the Gwangju Kimchi (local food) Festival in South Korea showed that food neophobia had a negative effect on satisfaction and loyalty while food involvement had a positive relationship with loyalty, and satisfaction and loyalty showed a significant positive relationship.

Smith et al. (2010) concluded that food, event novelty, and socialization were push motivations for attending a culinary event, while food product, support services, and essential services were pull motivations. Chang and Yuan (2011) reviewed food-festival attendee studies, beginning with Uysal et al. (1993). Their conclusion was that festival motivations in general study confirm the Getz and Cheyne (2002) framework of combinations of intrinsic, generic, and extrinsic motives.

Conscious efforts to appeal to food lovers are noteworthy. Melbourne's Food and Wine Festival incorporates ticketed master classes and meetings (Hede, 2008), while the Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival features (beyond providing 'something for everyone') demonstrations and talks, and chefs who judge competitions. Sharples and Lyons (2008: 101) suggested it is "arguably the longest running and most popular food festival of its type in the UK", and the educational components "add value to the event in providing both entertainment and education and differentiate the festival from a regular farmer's market" (p. 110). And two unique food events were discussed by Hall and Sharples (2008: 331-348), with the international Salone del Gusto being a slow-food exhibition in Turin that showcases artisan products, plus demonstrations and workshops; the Terre Madre event was added as a closed meeting for producers and other 'food communities'.

Clearly there are generic reasons for attending any festival, particularly escapism, novelty-seeking, socializing, and being entertained, with food and beverage events offering a universally popular consumption element. But research has also demonstrated the importance of learning to attract more highly-involved food lovers. Kim et al. (2009) used factor analysis to identify factors behind food-event participation and suggested 'knowledge and learning' as a strong factor together

with 'enjoyment'. Smith, Costello and Muenchen (2010) came to similar conclusions with the dominant factor related to both 'enjoyment' and 'learning'. Park et al. (2008) identified 'enjoyment' as an important motive for visitors to a wine and food festival in Florida together with 'social status' describing the importance of how friends and other people recognized the value of attending the food event.

Smith and Costello (2009b) used cluster analysis to dichotomize a sample of visitors to a food event into 'food focusers' and 'event seekers' and found that food focusers are more interested in enjoyment and food tasting but less interested in event novelty and travel with friends and family compared to event seekers. Horng et al. (2012) studied visitors to the Macau Food Festival and Taiwan Culinary Exhibition. Structural equation modelling demonstrated that visitors with different lifestyles exhibited different behavioural patterns.

■ Data from America

The TAMS research (*Travel Attitudes and Motivations Study; A Profile Report*, July 4, 2007) generated data on "Visiting Fairs and Festivals While on Trips of One or More Nights". These are relevant highlights:

- Over the previous two years (i.e., before 2006), 31.7% (69,847,152) of adult Americans visited fairs and festivals while on an out-of-town, overnight trip of one or more nights. A farmers' market or country fair (14.4%) was the most popular, followed by a fireworks display (12.3%), a free outdoor performance such as a play or concert (10.8%), an exhibition or fair (8.3%), a food or drink festival (7.7%), a carnival (6.9%), an ethnic festival (4.2%) and a circus (3.1%).
- Those who visited fairs and festivals on trips exhibit particular interest in food-related activities. They were more likely than the average U.S. Pleasure Traveller to go fine dining and to visit spas, to have stayed at a country inn or resort with a gourmet restaurant or a cooking or wine tasting school and to have taken a winery tour. They seek vacation destinations that offer novelty, intellectual stimulation and opportunities to learn (e.g. gain knowledge of history and other cultures or places).
- The majority in this segment have used the Internet to plan (75.6%) and book travel (54.8%) in the past two years. They are avid consumers of travel-related media (including websites, newspapers, magazines, television). Home and garden-related programming is also an effective method to reach this segment (e.g. house & home websites, home & garden and cooking TV shows, craft, antique & collectible magazines).

A related report from TAMS called *U.S. Festival Tourism Enthusiasts* (2004) (Prepared by Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. for The Canadian Tourism Commission) concluded that Festival Tourism Enthusiasts are equally as likely to