

The Toruń Gingerbread Culinary Trail Development Strategy

Short English summary





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Food tourism, defined as the exploration of countries and regions through their culinary heritage, has experienced significant growth in recent years. While this form of tourism has a tradition in some countries, its global appeal has notably increased in the 21st century. Food tourism effectively integrates travel with gastronomic experiences, education, and immersion in local cultures.

According to reports from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Food Travel Association (WFTA), food tourists typically spend more than average travelers. The food tourism market is expanding rapidly. *The Culinary Tourism*

Global Market Report 2025 forecasts an increase in its value from USD 924.8 billion in 2024 to an estimated USD 1,067.98 billion in 2025, with projections suggesting it may reach USD 1,902.27 billion by 2029* .

The expansion of this sector has a significant impact on the economy, benefiting industries such as food service, hospitality, transportation, events, agritourism, museums, and culinary

* *Culinary Tourism Global Market Report 2025 - By Activity (Culinary Trails, Cooking Classes, Restaurants, Food Festivals, Other Activities), By Tourist Type (Recreational, Diversionary, Existential, Experimental), By Age Group (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z), By Geographic Focus (Local Guidance, National Tours, International Tours), By Booking Mode (Online Travel Agencies (OTA), Tour Operators, Direct Travel) - Market Size, Trends, And Global Forecast 2025-2034, 10.08.2025.*



educational institutions. Furthermore, food tourism enhances national and regional brand, fosters cultural awareness, and preserves culinary traditions. Its year-round availability also positions it as a strategic instrument to mitigate overtourism, facilitating a more balanced flow of tourist traffic during off-peak seasons.

Food tourism is characterized by a pursuit of authenticity and a connection to local culture. This trend plays a significant role in preserving heritage and supporting regional customs. However, it is essential to recognize that excessive commercialization can diminish the value of these offers. Consequently, the development of food tourism offers should involve not only entrepreneurs but also specialists in food culture and history.

Research indicates that a substantial proportion of travelers - approximately 81%, as reported in *AMERICAN EXPRESS TRAVEL'S 2023 Global Travel Trends Report* - consider the experience of tasting local cuisine to be the most vital aspect of their journey. Furthermore, nearly half of these travelers express a desire to engage in cooking classes. Food tourism is integral to the experience economy, as it provides emotional engagement, lasting memories, and multisensory experiences that can be effectively showcased on social media platforms.

Additionally, food tourism encompasses a social and intergenerational dimension, involving participants across various age groups, including children, adults, and seniors, thereby aligning with the emerging silver economy. For seniors, this form of tourism offers a means of social activation, helps combat loneliness, and facilitates the transmission of culinary knowledge to younger generations.

The concept of culinary diplomacy supports the development of food tourism. This approach involves activities designed to promote a nation through its culinary culture, primarily targeting politicians, media representatives, and cultural institutions, with a distinct educational orientation. The integration of food with a nation's history, traditions, and identity is fundamental. Culinary diplomacy should be implemented at both central and regional levels, requiring cohesive collaboration among state institutions. Effectively executed culinary diplomacy not only supports food tourism but also increases exports and bolsters the national brand, thereby attracting visitors to explore the country's cuisine.

In food tourism, travel gifts are often food products that embody local culture and identity. Authentic, high-quality, unique, flavorful, and attractively packaged souvenirs are deemed the most desirable. According to the *AMERICAN*

EXPRESS TRAVEL'S 2025 Global Travel Trends Report, 82% of young travelers, specifically those in Generations Y and Z, actively seek unique local products, while more than half choose to travel explicitly for this purpose.

Culinary heritage is a fundamental component in the development of both local and national brands and of food tourism. It encompasses both tangible elements, such as products, dishes, and tools, and intangible aspects, including traditions, symbolism, and cultural significance. The authenticity of culinary heritage not only draws tourists but also fosters collaborations with cultural institutions and museums, thereby enhancing the region's tourism offers.

A primary instrument for promoting this heritage is the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, which has recognized culinary practices since 2010. This potential can be maximized through various initiatives, including commemorative events, educational programs, and applications for UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) designation in the field of gastronomy. Such recognition would facilitate increased visibility and funding opportunities for cultural and tourism projects. Furthermore, Rural and Urban Housewives' Associations, which nurture culinary and handicraft traditions, play a crucial role in preserving culinary heritage. These organizations offer

significant opportunities for partnership in educational and promotional endeavors related to food tourism initiatives.

Education and access to information are pivotal to the advancement of food tourism, as tourists often choose destinations based on the available knowledge about local cuisine and cultural practices. The development of culinary routes necessitates collaboration with cultural and educational institutions, including museums, open-air museums, and local producers. Workshops, exhibitions, and thematic events promote culinary culture and actively engage tourists in exploring regional traditions.

Institutions and initiatives that support culinary culture flourish through partnerships with local governments and municipal programs. Participation in international networks, competitions, and rankings enhances prestige and supports the growth of culinary tourism. Among significant initiatives is the European Region of Gastronomy program, organized by the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts, and Tourism (IGCAT), which advocates for the sustainable development of culinary tourism rooted in local products.

Culinary guides such as *Michelin Guide* and *Gault & Millau* significantly promote gastronomy. Inclusion in these rankings enhances the reputations of





various regions and attracts tourists, particularly when establishments specializing in local cuisine receive recognition.

Additionally, international competitions, including the European Destinations of Excellence Award (EDEN) and the Global Culinary Travel Awards organized by the World Food Travel Association, provide further avenues for promotion. These competitions support the growth of food tourism and elevate the visibility of regions worldwide.

The development strategy for the Toruń Gingerbread Culinary Trail was formulated at the request of the Local Tourist Organization in Toruń as part of the public project titled *Knowledge Transfer for the Development of the Toruń Gingerbread Culinary Trail*. This initiative is co-financed by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism Republic of Poland under the *Tourism Support Program - 2025 Edition*. Additionally, the Municipality of Toruń provided financial support for the project.

This comprehensive strategy encompasses detailed information regarding food tourism and culinary diplomacy, emphasizing their significance for regional and national development. A thorough analysis of the **Toruń Gingerbread Culinary Trail** has been conducted, including a SWOT analysis, an assessment of its social media presence,

and a comparative analysis of competing destinations and initiatives within the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship.

A roadmap for the period 2026 to 2030 has been formulated, accompanied by actionable recommendations for managing culinary trail and establishing collaborations with media representatives and influencers.

This strategic initiative was further enhanced by the implementation of a two-day food tourism workshop for stakeholders involved in operating the trail. The training program encompassed various essential topics, including the significance of food tourism, the development of food tourism products, and the provision of practical solutions for participants involved in the trail. The project concluded with a conference in Toruń, where the final report was presented. The event featured expert presentations and a panel discussion, fostering the exchange of experiences and facilitating a thorough discourse on the future development of the trail.

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Her research focuses on the history and anthropology of food, as well as food tourism and culinary diplomacy. She has actively promoted Polish cuisine internationally through workshops, meetings, and lectures.

She is the author of numerous publications on Japanese, Korean, Nordic, and Polish food cultures. Her work has been recognized with prestigious awards, including the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, the Prix de la Littérature Gastronomique, the Chinese Diamond Cuisine Award, and the Polish Magellan Awards.

Magdalena Tomaszewska-Bolątek collaborates with institutions, government bodies, tourism organizations, and companies in areas such as culinary diplomacy, food tourism, promotion, national branding, and the promotion of local products.

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Photos from the conference



