



The heritage food concept and its authenticity risk factors - Validation by culinary professionals

Mohammad Almansouri^{a,b}, Ruud Verkerk^a, Vincenzo Fogliano^a, Pieternel A. Luning^{a,*}

^a Food Quality and Design Group, Department of Agrotechnology and Food Sciences, Wageningen University and Research, P.O. Box 17, 6700 AA, Wageningen, the Netherlands

^b King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Culinary heritage
Authenticity risks
Hospitality industry
Traditional food
Culinary chefs
Cultural heritage

ABSTRACT

The increasing interest in heritage food by tourists requires a deeper understanding of its concept. A previous study conceptualised heritage food into three dimensions (i.e. legacy, people and place) and developed a framework describing the main activities in heritage food production, the connection to the identified dimensions and potential authenticity risk factors. This study aims to validate the heritage food concept and the identified authenticity risk factors in the production of heritage food dishes. Semi-structured interviews with culinary professionals of foodservice establishments in Saudi Arabia and Italy were conducted to validate the concept and evaluate the risk factors based on their professional expertise. Data were analysed by thematic content analysis using MAXQDA to infer categories describing the heritage food concept. The results indicated that the previously determined heritage food dimensions were confirmed by professionals. The identified categories 'inheritance' and 'authenticity of the recipe and cooking' corresponded with legacy, whereas the category 'locality of ingredients' linked to place. The category 'knowledgeable chefs representing their culture' is related to people. Another category 'heritage food is subject to cultural and societal influences' emerged which demonstrates that authenticity is not static but evolves. Most culinary chefs from both countries confirmed the earlier identified authenticity risk factors. Moreover, three new authenticity risk factors arose from the interviews including 'adaptation to customer preference', 'costs of ingredients', and 'non-native origin of chef'. Further research is necessary to investigate how these risk factors differ among various types of foodservice establishments.

1. Introduction

In the last decades, intangible cultural heritage, including heritage food, has earned attention specifically in the tourist sector (Giovanelli, 2019). Tourists go to see tangible heritage (e.g. museums and temples) and enjoy intangible heritage (e.g. music, dance, celebrations, folklore, and heritage food) (Timothy, 2015). As part of intangible heritage, heritage foods have become a trend in several countries in the world, especially in countries that are popular because of their cuisines such as Italy, France, Mexico and Thailand (Karim and Chi, 2010). Worldwide, there is an increasing demand for heritage food in the hospitality industry (Timothy, 2015). However, the cultural globalisation in cuisine triggered the so-called process of 'authentication' undertaken by chefs and cooks who aim at re-establishing culinary traditions. Authentication entails of highlighting characteristics such as, the surrounding

environment, obsolete farming practices, and old-fashioned utensils that do not necessarily represent any traditional form of gastronomy (Warde, 1997). Producers highlight new (invented) food characteristics and sell them as 'traditional', establishing events and practices that may not always help to preserve the traditional dishes. As a result, a tainted culinary culture may spread from tourist to tourist, eventually leading to the establishment of ethnic restaurants all over the world. Furthermore, restaurateurs in foreign countries make use of stereotypical ethnic theming (i.e. décor, music, costumes and other stimuli associated with the culture of the cuisine served) in the sole attempt to create an 'authentic' environment in restaurants (Ebster and Guist, 2005). Thus, it has become increasingly difficult to determine which dishes still represent one country's authentic heritage cuisine.

The concept of authenticity is rather complex and articulated (Beer, 2008). In general, 'authentic' indicates something genuine, true and real

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: pieternel.luning@wur.nl (P.A. Luning).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgfs.2022.100523>

Received 8 June 2021; Received in revised form 22 November 2021; Accepted 29 March 2022

Available online 9 April 2022

1878-450X/© 2022 The Authors. Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

(Cambridge Oxford Cambridge English Dictionary, 2021; Ivanova et al., 2014), but also refers to the good representation or imitation of an original (Collins Dictionary, 2021; Chhabra, 2005; Cohen, 1988). Furthermore, authenticity is highly subjective as it is maintained that in terms of the authenticity of a thing such as food, any consumer eventually determines his or her one (Heidegger, 1996; Hamzah et al., 2013). Food authenticity relates to various aspects like unique/typical origin, preparation, ingredients, recipes, but also the context of the food, such as serving and presentation of the food (Assiouras et al., 2015; Robinson and Clifford, 2012). Experts and the local communities of a certain country may not agree on a general definition of food authenticity, due to the myriad of changes that can be made in the ingredients, methods, cooking styles and taste of a single dish (Hamzah et al., 2013; Ramli et al., 2016). For example, the use of alternative ingredients due to seasonal availability or inadequate knowledge of cooks about the recipes of heritage cuisine may lead to deviations from the original food (Autio et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2009; Nor et al., 2012). However, it is not yet clear what risk factors could compromise the authenticity of heritage food.

In a previous study, we conceptualised heritage food into three dimensions, i.e. legacy, people and place. A conceptual framework was proposed describing the main activities in heritage food production, their connection to the identified dimensions, and potential risk factors (Almansouri et al., 2021). The identified authenticity risk factors mostly originated from heritage, ethnic and traditional food literature and lacked empirical underpinning. Therefore, this study aims to validate the heritage food concept and the identified authenticity risk factors in the production of heritage food dishes. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with culinary chefs, experienced in preparing heritage food dishes, from Italy and Saudi Arabia. In both countries, the regional cuisine is strongly relevant. In Italy, heritage food has a long-standing history, is widely recognised through references to city-based identities and is a pillar of the hospitality industry (Clark and Zimmerman, 2000). The Mediterranean diet is common in multiple countries belonging to the Mediterranean basin, including Italy (UNESCO, 2019). Italian cuisine has a long tradition of presence overseas (Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000) and is currently the second global cuisine after the Chinese one. Therefore, Italian restaurants play the crucial role of ambassadors promoting Italian heritage food abroad (Martinelli and De Canio, 2019). Also, in Saudi Arabia, there is a growing interest in heritage food by both locals and tourists, which triggered the need for preserving heritage foods. Aliraghi and Al-Zahrani (2017) showed that locals usually go to restaurants that serve heritage dishes because it reflects their heritage values, environment, dishes, meals, and traditions of service providers. Moreover, the Saudi Ministry of Cultural Authority has developed an initiative dedicated to stimulating heritage foods in the hospitality industry (Saudi Ministry of Culture, 2019). The perspectives of the Italian and Saudi Arabian professional chefs shed light on the heritage food dimensions and relevant authenticity risk factors.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study design

The interviews with the culinary professionals were carried out in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia during April and May in 2019 and Liguria in Italy in January of 2020. Both regions were recognised for preparing specific heritage dishes and the culinary professionals have comprehensive expertise with multiple heritage food dishes. The interviews consisted of 1) an introduction, 2) general questions to characterise the respondents, 3) questions regarding the concept of heritage food (i.e. to elicit what does it encompass), 4) questions about the typical requirements on heritage food preparation, 5) question to rate these requirements, and 6) questions regarding the authenticity challenges of heritage food. The questions were mostly open-ended, except for one question concerning

the rating of the requirements of heritage food. Furthermore, the questions about authenticity challenges consisted of closed (yes or no) questions and follow-up questions to gain insight into the reason for the challenges. The interviews were face-to-face at the location of the hotel or restaurant. On average, an interview took 1 h.

2.2. Participants

Culinary professionals were selected based on their expertise as chefs in the hospitality industry. These chefs were contacted based on available information of hotels and heritage restaurants and the number of contacts was expanded by asking the chefs for other contacts. Each chef was contacted through a telephone call or by e-mail and got information about the project. The choice of the chefs was based on the following criteria 1) more than five years' experience working in the hospitality industry 2) more than five years' experience with cooking various heritage food dishes, and 3) they should have adequate and enough skills and knowledge regarding cooking heritage dishes. The selection of the participants was based on regions that serve different types of heritage food dishes. They represent an important part of the population as a whole and they have the experience and knowledge about other heritage dishes from other regions. In total, 12 Saudi Arabian chefs and 12 Italian chefs followed the criteria and wanted to take part. All the chefs were working either in independent heritage restaurants or independent hotels or chain hotels where they served heritage food dishes.

2.3. Data analysis

A thematic content analysis approach was used for analysing the qualitative data of the interviews following the systematic approach as described in the literature (Bardin, 2016; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Zanin et al., 2021). The approach consisted of the following five steps. Step one included multiple readings of the transcribed interviews. In step two, meaningful words or terms in the interview answers were identified and coded, i.e. the so-called *unit of analysis*. For example, 'something inherited from generations' was coded as a unit of analysis. Thirdly, the full phrase or paragraph that assigns the meaning to the unit of analysis was extracted from the answers, i.e. the so-called *context meaning*. For instance, 'heritage food is something inherited from generations from the past to the present'. In the fourth step, similar context meanings were clustered, based on similarities and/or relevance, into a group and got a name that overall covered the meaning, i.e. the so-called *core of meaning*. To illustrate, a core of meaning was 'food relating to the past, which passed to the present and future'. Finally, cores of meaning were further grouped into *categories* if cores of meaning include multiple aspects of the same issue. The qualitative data including the units of analysis, context meanings, cores of meaning, and categories were transferred into the software program MaxQDA (version 18.2). This program was used to organize, code and assist in analysing the qualitative data.

The qualitative analysis was performed in three phases following the steps of thematic content analysis (Bardin, 2016). In the first phase, the first author analysed the data manually by using Microsoft Excel to organize the data. The second phase encompassed a new round of manual analysis to verify the first analyses. Finally, in the third phase, the first author analysed the data again in the software MAXQDA using visual tools to confirm the previous code system. The three-phase approach is aimed at enhancing the intra reliability of the findings (O'Connor and Joffe, 2020).

3. Results and discussions

3.1. The heritage food concept

In earlier research, three dimensions were inferred from the literature on heritage food including legacy, place and people (Almansouri

et al., 2021). The current study aimed at validating these dimensions through interviews with culinary chefs from Saudi Arabia (SA) and Italy (IT). The MAXQDA map (Fig. 1) shows the five categories, which emerged from the interviews, with the underlying cores of meaning explaining the characteristics of the category. The categories 'inheritance' and 'authenticity of the recipe and cooking' are comparable to the legacy dimension, whereas the category 'locality of ingredients' corresponds well with the place dimension. The category 'knowledgeable chefs representing their culture' obviously relates to the people dimension. The category 'heritage food is subject to cultural and societal influences' demonstrates that heritage food can be dynamic as it can change over a longer time. This implies that changes in original recipes do not necessarily compromise the authenticity of the heritage food dish. Weichselbaum et al. (2009) concluded that traditional foods have experienced continuous modifications, which reflect the history of a country or a region. The historical changes that were incorporated into heritage food take hundreds of years to change habits while globalization could jeopardize the authenticity of heritage food at a much faster pace. Fig. 1 shows that the same categories emerged from the interviews with the Saudi Arabian (SA) and Italian (IT) culinary chefs, except for the category 'cultural and social influences' (only for the Saudi Arabian chefs) and some differences in cores of meaning were observed.

The category 'locality of ingredients' showed similar cores of meaning. Most of the chefs from both countries indicated that the ingredients of heritage dishes must be locally produced, and local climate plays a crucial role in the production of the ingredients. A survey study by Ramli et al. (2020) about the public perception of heritage food determinants among 676 respondents in Malaysia, revealed that most of the respondents agreed that food heritage is linked with the distinctive local ingredients of a region or state. In contrast, in another study, they found that the value of 'origin of raw materials' and 'dependent on the season' are relatively low for the definition of traditional food (Ivanova et al., 2014). This is contradictory to our heritage food concept, which stresses the importance of the origin of the raw materials.

The category 'authenticity of recipes and cooking' (Fig. 1) showed some similarities and differences in cores of meaning. Most Italian and Saudi Arabian chefs mentioned that the traditional authentic recipe and cooking are crucial for the heritage dishes and various Saudi chefs also stressed the importance of regional authenticity of recipes. This is in line

with a study by Vanhonacker et al. (2010) about the European consumers' definition and perception of traditional food, the results showed that 79% of the consumers agreed that authentic recipe is one of the elements of the concept of traditional food. Similarly, studies concluded that both preparing the heritage food dishes according to authentic recipes and the way of cooking are important for dining restaurants, which provide heritage dishes related to their regional traditions (Association, 2015; Jang and Ha, 2015; Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007). Furthermore, some Saudi chefs stated that the authentic recipe and cooking of heritage dishes have a function in providing nourishing and healthy properties to the dish. This is in line with the increasing demand for traditional foods because of public interest in healthy eating (Al Faris, 2017; Trichopoulou et al., 2007).

The category of 'knowledgeable chefs representing their culture' shows differences in the cores of meaning (Fig. 1). Most Saudi Arabian chefs emphasised the importance of knowledge and training for the chefs to prepare and cook heritage food dishes according to their culture. This is consistent with Nor et al. (2012) who did a qualitative study among mothers and daughters in Malay's culture to investigate the transmission of traditional food knowledge within the generation. They concluded that the transfer of traditional food knowledge includes knowledge regarding ingredients, preparation, methods of cooking, equipment and cooking skills. Moreover, oral communication, observation and hands-on practices were the ways of transferring the Malays food knowledge and skills, and this process must happen continually.

For Italy, most chefs highlighted that heritage food must link to the local population or specific territory. According to Sims (2009), heritage dishes are perceived as traditional products with a long history of production in a specific location, hence production and location cannot be separated. The Italian chefs also mentioned that heritage food is a socially recognised concept (i.e. the heritage food concept is socially popular among Italian people) emphasising the long history of heritage food in Italy. According to Sert (2017), Italian cuisine is one of the oldest cuisines in Europe, has its roots in ancient cultures, and locals try to carefully protect it. Turmo (2010) stressed the importance of continuous protection of heritage food since it is a cultural expression that conveys the history of one generation to another in the form of special ingredients, preparations, and dining etiquettes. Interestingly, in our study, several culinary chefs from both countries explicitly mentioned

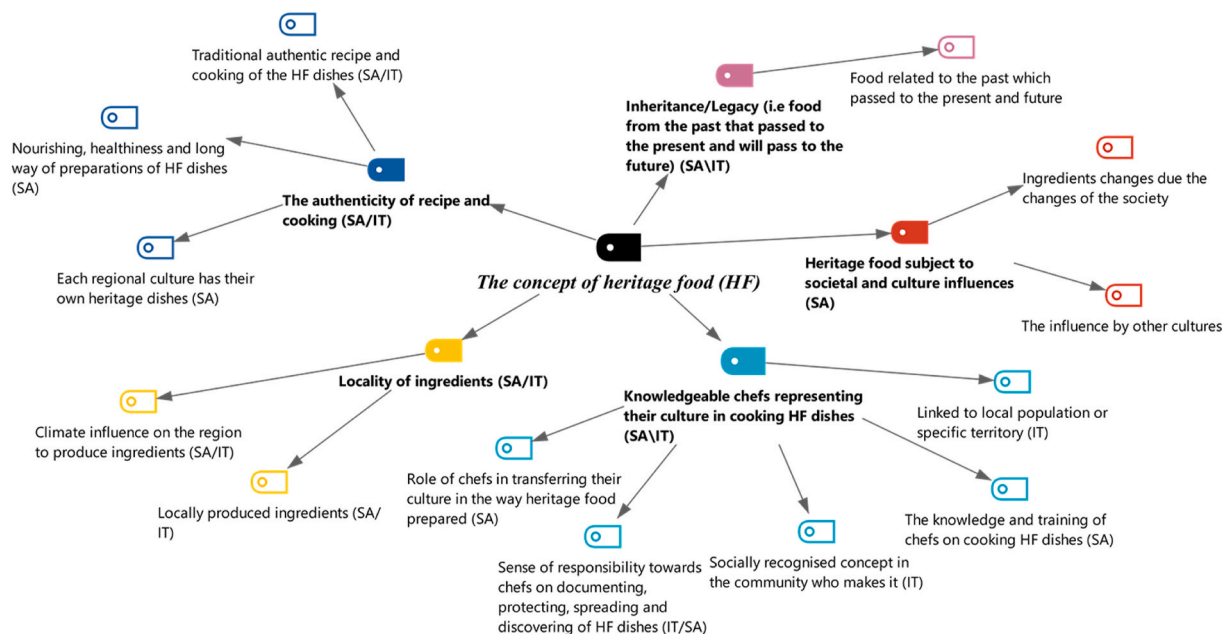


Fig. 1. Categories (in bold) with their cores of meaning describing the heritage food concept (HF) as emerged from the interviews with the Saudi Arabian (SA) and Italian (IT) culinary professionals.

that chefs are responsible for documenting, protecting, and spreading the HF dishes.

The category of 'heritage food is subject to cultural and societal influences' only emerged from the data from the interviews with Saudi chefs. This category consists of two cores meaning. The first shows the influence of other cultures on heritage food dishes. A report of the cultural status of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pointed out that the Saudi kitchen acquired new food elements that became a major part of its daily dishes (like rice) because of the commercial trade between the western and eastern caravans of the Kingdom across the sea or through the land with convoys coming from e.g., Iraq (Saudi Ministry of Culture, 2019). For 1400 years, over 2 million pilgrims visited Makkah and Al-Madina and these pilgrims brought with them their own culture and food habits which influenced the local food culture. New food items and methods of cooking were introduced to the Kingdom and adopted by the people (Alothaimen, 1991). Furthermore, the various regions along the land border of the Kingdom have been influenced by the traditional culinary practices of the neighbouring countries that share the same

cultural roots and geographical climate (Saudi Ministry of Culture, 2019). Today, these effects are still visible in the similarity of heritage foods between the border regions. For example, in the southern region of the Kingdom, some of the dishes are like Yemeni food. Interestingly, according to Capatti and Montanari (2003), Italy has been influenced by other cultures at the borders like French cuisine in Piedmont by unifying practices of food preparations and presentation. This influence by other cultures is also happening in Italy for a long, but the Italian chefs did not mention that. The authenticity of heritage food recipe can also evolve because of societal changes. To illustrate, the discovery of the New World (i.e. the North and South of America) and the development of international trade influenced traditional food in Europe. Because of the limited availability of ingredients, the new ingredients introduced from the north and south of America replaced local ingredients affecting the original dishes in Europe (Timothy, 2015; Weichselbaum et al., 2009).

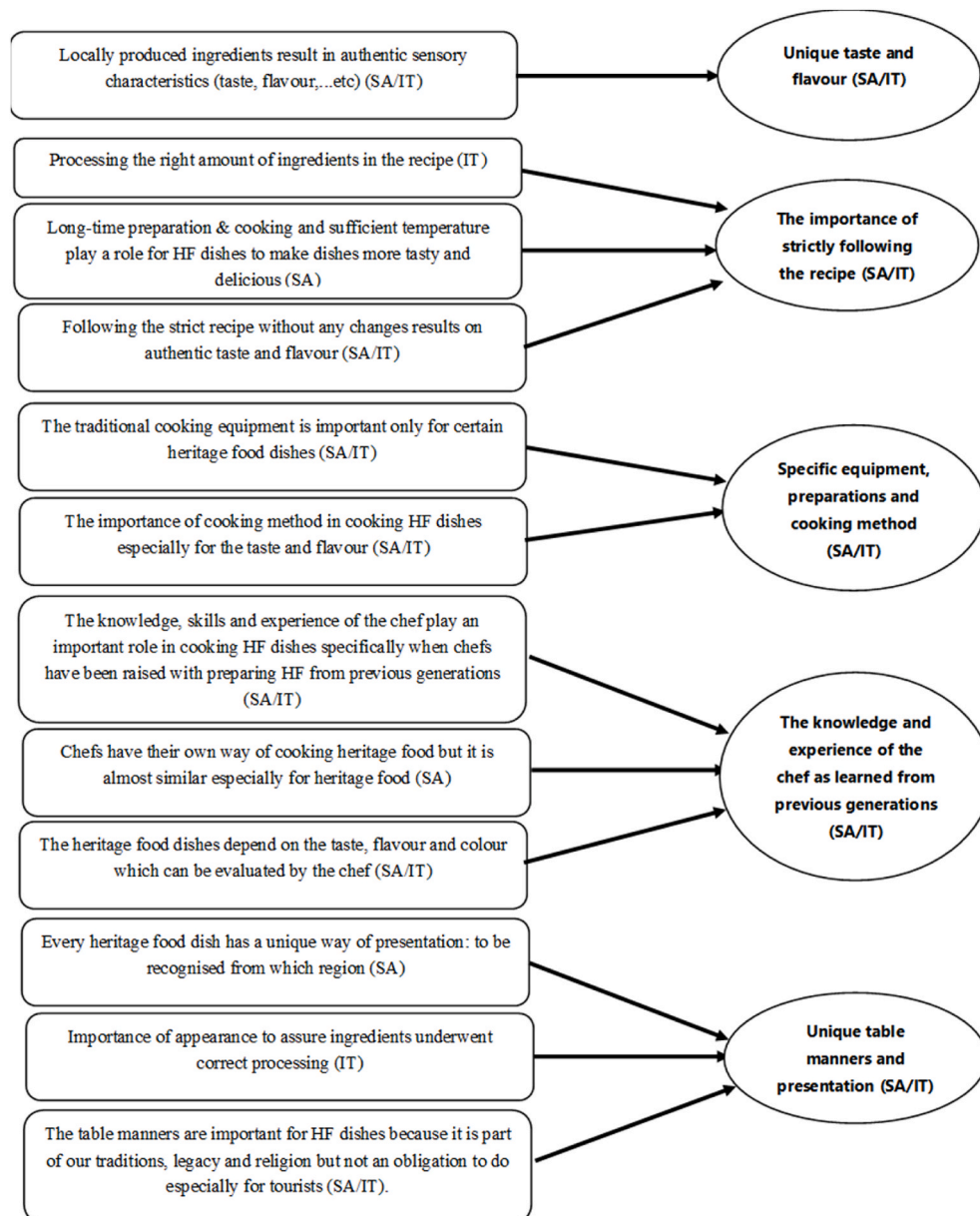


Fig. 2. Categories (in bold) with their cores of meaning describing the requirements of heritage food (HF) as emerged from the interviews with the Saudi Arabian (SA) and Italian (IT) culinary.

3.2. Requirements on heritage food production

To get a deeper understanding of what is required to make heritage food dishes, the culinary chefs also gave their opinions about requirements, which served as the basis for identifying the authenticity risk factors. Fig. 2 shows the five categories with their cores of meaning that emerged from the interviews about the requirements on heritage food production. Fig. 3 shows the importance rating regarding these requirements assessed by the Saudi Arabian [A] and Italian chefs [B]. The Saudi Arabian chefs [A] mentioned ‘knowledge’ as the most important requirement and to a lesser extent ‘authentic ingredients’ and ‘cooking methods’, whereas ‘table manners’ seem to be the least important. The results are consistent with other studies, which confirmed the importance of the knowledge for heritage cuisine (Bessière, 1998; Clark and Zimmerman, 2000; Humphrey, 1989; Oum, 2005; Sharif et al., 2014; Taylor, 1999; Trichopoulou et al., 2007). The Italian culinary chefs considered the ‘ingredients’ as the most important and to a lesser extent ‘knowledge’ and ‘recipe’ (Fig. 3 [B]). Lee, Pung & Chiappa (2021) did a qualitative study among 35 restaurants owners in Italy to explore how they define traditional and modern restaurants. They concluded that for traditional restaurant owners it is important to focus on typical recipes, dishes, and cuisine that prioritises local ingredients, as these are considered central to a traditional image. These authors also stressed the central role of local ingredients in traditional Italian dishes.

The category (Fig. 2) of ‘specific equipment, preparations and cooking method’ shows similarities in the cores of meaning from both countries. Saudi Arabian and Italian chefs pointed out that cooking equipment and method are important for certain heritage food dishes as illustrated below.

“It is necessary to use the traditional equipment because the nutrients contained in each ingredient are preserved, and above all, enhanced. The aromas are different depending on the type of equipment and cooking methods” (Chef 1/IT).

It is clear from this quote that chefs’ opinions are not scientific truth because there are many ways to preserve or improve the nutritional quality of heritage food using modern equipment. However, some heritage food dishes still need cooking equipment to get sensory

characteristics. According to Raji et al. (2017), some heritage food dishes need cooking equipment to cook the dish which provides unique taste and flavour. For example, lesung batu (stone mortar and pestle) and batu giling (stone hand grinder) are specific kitchen utensils used in Malaysian heritage cuisine (Tan and Shekar, 2004). Nevertheless, Raji et al. (2017) pointed out that some traditional equipment is hard to be found in the urban area and may only be used in the villages, especially during occasions.

Furthermore, the category ‘the importance of strictly following the recipe’ (Fig. 2) shows differences between Italian and Saudi Arabian chefs. The Italian chefs pointed out the importance of processing the right amount of ingredients in the authentic recipe whereas the Saudi chefs stressed that the long-time of preparation and correct temperature were the most important. These different views suggest that each culture has its unique preparation characteristics of heritage dishes as illustrated by the quote below.

“The recipe is very important for cooking heritage food because there are phases for cooking heritage food which needs to be followed; we cannot change anything in the recipe, or it will not be heritage food” (Chef 2/SA).

Other important differences in the cores of meaning belong to the category (Fig. 2) ‘unique table manners and presentation’. The Saudi Arabian and Italian culinary chefs have different views on the presentation of heritage food. The Saudi Arabian chefs stressed that the unique presentation is important for the dish for regional recognition as illustrated by the quote below.

“Every heritage food has its presentation as it shows the food in its special way typical for the region” (Chef 4/SA).

On the other hand, the Italian chefs mentioned the importance of the appearance to ensure the ingredients underwent correct processing as illustrated by the quote below.

“Appearance is important and depends on the ingredients you use and the way you cook them. If you use the right methods, you obtain the right colour and smell” (Chef 10/IT).

Similarly, the study of Molnár et al. (2011) revealed that traditional foods are typified by the presentation, which contributes to the traditional character of their culture. Alibabić et al. (2012) found in a study of the Bosnian cuisine that poor style of presentation of the Bosnian cuisine

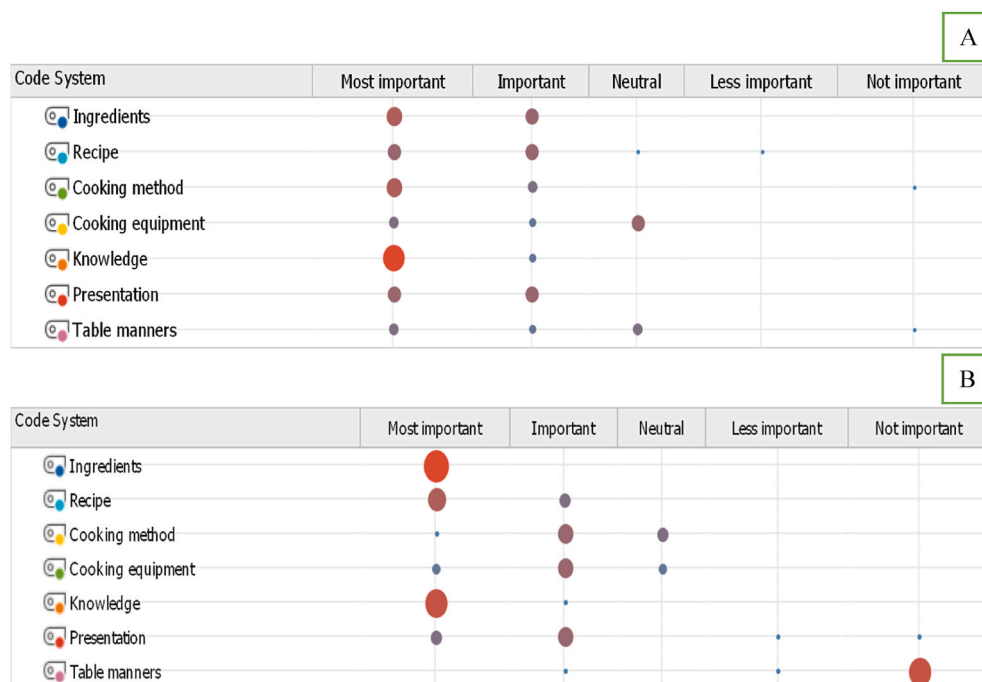


Fig. 3. Rating of the requirements for heritage food concept by the Saudi Arabian [A] and Italian culinary professionals [B].

was noticed in many restaurants. This could influence the perception of tourists about the heritage presentation of a dish (Vujko et al., 2017). It shows the importance of the right style of presentation of certain heritage dishes to be known by the consumers.

For table manners, only a few chefs from both countries agreed that it could be important.

“The table manners are important for HF dishes because it is part of our traditions, legacy, and religion” (Chef 12/SA).

In a study by Bessière (2013) about the French tourists' experience with heritage food, they mentioned that in consuming gastronomic specialties, adopting table manners is a step towards understanding the cultures, tastes and all the good things the region has to offer. Tourists learn about table manners, new ingredients, and various methods of cooking when they travel abroad (Kim et al., 2009).

3.3. Authenticity risk factors of heritage food

The authenticity of heritage food is crucial as it refers to originality and uniqueness, and it is an important quality attribute for the value of cultural heritage (Chhabra, 2005). In a previous study, six authenticity risk factors for heritage food were inferred from the literature (Almansouri et al., 2021). The identified authenticity risk factors mostly originated from ethnic and traditional food literature. They are related to the ingredients, recipes, utensils and equipment, knowledge of chefs, presentation and table manners. For instance, related to the ingredients, most of the ingredients are seasonal and they are only accessible at specific periods of the year (Ivanova et al., 2014). Heritage food ingredients can be found in areas with unique climates, terrain, and soil composition (Brulotte and Di Giovine, 2016; Trubek, 2008). Therefore, any changes in the ingredients, whether alternatives sourced may thus compromise the authenticity of heritage food (Nor et al., 2012).

In the current study, these risk factors were validated through interviews with chefs from Saudi Arabia (SA) and Italy (IT). Table 1 presents the opinions of chefs (IT & SA) on the previously identified authenticity risk factors of heritage food. All the chefs from both countries confirmed that ‘lack of adequate knowledge of the chef’ is the most important risk factor in the preparation and cooking of heritage food. Most chefs agreed about other authenticity risk factors such as ‘scarcity of ingredients’, ‘not following strictly the recipe’, ‘modernisation of cooking method and equipment’ and ‘unfamiliarity with the presentation’ whereas for the other risk factors there was less consensus among the chefs (e.g. for ‘strict food safety regulations’ and ‘unfamiliarity with table manners’). Furthermore, the chefs confirmed that the availability of local ingredients can be challenging because seasonality can lead to scarcity of ingredients and is thus a risk factor (Table 1). A study by Miele and Murdoch (2002) maintains that the use of ingredients that are from different areas could compromise the authenticity of heritage food because of the lack of sensory characteristics that are unique given the terroir, the weather and the environment.

Table 2 shows three new risk factors that emerged from the qualitative data analysis of the interviews when discussing the potential challenges of the authenticity of heritage food. These risk factors include ‘adaptation to consumer preference’, ‘costs of ingredients’, and ‘non-native origin of the chef’. For ‘adaptation to consumer preference’, most chefs agreed that it could harm the authenticity of heritage food. The chefs noticed that dietary preferences and food choices have changed enormously in the last couple of years, and increasingly consumers present food allergies and intolerances, which requires them to adjust recipes. Recipes are also adjusted to meet tourists and consumers taste expectations; cooks make them milder than the original ones (Chhabra, 2005; Lu and Fine, 1995). Furthermore, the need for a more quick serving of a broad variety of dishes to tourists may force cooks to use alternative equipment or methods to speed up the preparation. It is a challenge for local chefs to safeguard the authenticity of the dishes on one hand and satisfy tourists demands on the other hand. The price of local ingredients could also be a risk factor for heritage food. Both the

Table 1

Validation of the authenticity risk factors of heritage food.

Previously identified risk factors	The opinions of chefs (IT & SA) on the authenticity risk factors for heritage food dishes
Lack of adequate knowledge, skills and experience of the cook (Nor et al., 2012).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the chefs confirmed that the knowledge and experience are the priority for each heritage dish to be considered a real dish (IT/SA). • The knowledge and experience are fundamental because it includes several important elements recipe, ingredients and the way of cooking, and how to use the cooking equipment, how to present it authentically, therefore, these elements must be well-known to be authentic (IT/SA). • No knowledge and experience may cause alterations to the characteristics of the dish (IT/SA). • The identity of the dish will be lost if there is no knowledge and skills for the heritage dish (SA).
Scarcity of ingredients (Brulotte and Di Giovine, 2016; Ivanova et al., 2014; Nor et al., 2012; Trubek, 2008).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the chefs (IT/SA) agreed that it is very important for the essential local ingredients to be presented in the dish. • Replacing the ingredients will influence the sensory characteristics (taste, flavour,etc) of the meal at the end (IT/SA). • Sourcing the right ingredient is what makes the heritage dish correct, therefore, people will recognise the taste of it (IT/SA). • The local ingredients that have been used through generations must not be changed (SA) • Seasonality is important, there is a difference in taste between ingredients produced in the greenhouse and the season (IT).
Not following strictly the recipe (Association, 2015; Jang and Ha, 2015; Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the chefs agreed that the following recipe is important for the authenticity of the heritage dish (IT/SA). • Not following the recipe of the heritage dish can influence the legacy of the heritage dish (IT/SA). • It will influence the final taste and flavour (IT/SA). • Any steps that are not followed could cause change the identity of the dish (SA). • Chefs should be experienced in cooking heritage food dishes to follow exact steps (SA).
Modernisation of cooking equipment and method (Hashimoto and Telfer, 2015; Raji et al., 2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the chefs agreed that the cooking method and equipment are important for authenticity in certain heritage dishes (IT/SA). • The modernisation of the cooking equipment and method would cause alteration on the original taste and aroma of the dish (IT/SA). • It recalls the traditions and old customs of a community, so using modern machines and new technique will affect the authenticity of the dish (IT/SA). • No using the right equipment would cause losing the identity of the heritage dish (SA).
Unfamiliarity with presentation and table manners (Bessière, 2013; Long, 2004; Nield et al., 2000).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the chefs agreed that the presentation of the dish is important for authenticity because it is reflected in the culture of the country (IT/SA). • Each region of a country has its presentation of the heritage dishes and

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Previously identified risk factors	The opinions of chefs (IT & SA) on the authenticity risk factors for heritage food dishes
	<p>it has specific ingredients or traditions in presenting the heritage dish. Therefore, authentically presenting the dish makes locals recognise the dish from which region (IT/SA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few chefs agreed that table manners can be a challenge because it has some traditions and customs that belong to a specific region of a country which needs a traditional way of serving (IT/SA). • Most of the chefs agreed that table manners cannot be a challenge because it is very subjective, and it is related to the consumption of the heritage food dishes not to food preparations (IT/SA). • Following the religious rules are an important point in the table manners in Saudi Arabia because it has been used for a long time (SA). • Few chefs agreed that food safety regulations could be a challenge because in some foodservice establishment rules does not allow to use traditional equipment and cooking method (IT/SA). • It can influence on general food safety regulations because some heritage dishes need to use hands without gloves (SA). • HACCP cannot be used with wood equipment (IT).
Strict food safety regulations (Uggioni et al., 2010).	

Italian and Saudi Arabian culinary professionals stressed that when restaurants cannot afford the purchase of certain ingredients some tend to buy lower quality ingredients, whereas others raise the price of their dishes. Lu and Fine (1995) also noticed in their study that restaurants with economic constraints tended to minimize their ingredient costs to make a profit, compromising the original recipe. The culinary experts attributed the risk of cooking heritage dishes by non-native origin chefs to the lack of knowing the original taste of the dishes which hamper adequate preparation. Studies concluded that any foreign food handler or chef will be influenced by their cultural background (Avieli, 2013; Özdemir and Seyitoğlu, 2017). Native chefs can play an important role in training and educating local people to learn about the authentic preparations of the heritage dishes.

4. Conclusion

Previous research conceptualised heritage food and this study aimed to validate the identified heritage food dimensions and its authenticity risk factors. The study was conducted with culinary professionals with comprehensive experience with heritage food dishes from Italy and Saudi Arabia as heritage food is well-established in Italy whereas in Saudi Arabia it is a new trend in the hospitality industry to serve heritage food to tourists. The categories 'inheritance' and 'authenticity of the recipe and cooking', 'locality of ingredients', and 'knowledgeable chefs representing their culture' that emerged from the qualitative data analysis corresponded with three previously defined dimensions legacy, place, and people respectively. An additional category appeared 'heritage food is subject to cultural and societal influences' suggesting that heritage food is not static but can change over time, which may compromise the authenticity.

Both the Saudi Arabians and Italians culinary professionals confirmed the knowledge of the cook and the authenticity of ingredients as the most important requirements in preparing heritage food. Most

Table 2

New authenticity risk factors of heritage food inferred from the culinary professionals.

New authenticity risk factors	The opinions of chefs (IT & SA) on the authenticity risk factors for heritage food dishes
Adaptation for customer preference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the chefs agreed that heritage dishes must not be changed to be authentic (IT/SA) • It affects the way the heritage dish is cooked (IT/SA). • The heritage dishes are reflected in the specific culture including its traditions for making these dishes (SA). • Changing, removing or adding ingredient influence the authenticity of the dish and the heritage dish might not be recognisable (SA). • The customers' preference affects authenticity because of all the diet trends (IT).
Costs of ingredient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the chefs agreed that it would influence the characteristics (IT/SA). • Costs are a pretty important factor when it comes to authenticity because buying cheaper ingredients and make more money, it would result in differences in quality and taste (IT/SA). • Costs play a role as it may have a long shelf life, but the taste will differ and less intense (IT). • Costs are relevant in the authenticity of HF because often when the prices are high some people decide not to buy a certain ingredient, therefore they modify the recipe to spend less money (IT). • It depends on chefs because with skills and experience in making the heritage dishes may result in an authentic dish and nobody can distinguish the differences (SA).
Non-Native origin of the chef	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half of the chefs agreed that non-native origin of the chef could be a challenge for the authenticity of the heritage dish because it is part of the culture and customs (IT/SA). • The native chefs will have the bone history of these dishes (IT/SA). • The non-native chefs may not know everything about the dish and their cultural background could influence the authenticity of the chefs (SA). • It is part of the legacy which is inherited from parents and grandparents (SA).

culinary chefs confirmed the previously identified authenticity risk factors but there was full consensus on the risk factor 'lack of adequate knowledge'. Furthermore, three new authenticity risk factors arose from the interviews including 'adaptation to customer preference', 'costs of ingredients', and 'non-native origin of the chef'. Further research is necessary to investigate if and how these risk factors differ among various types of foodservice establishments in the hospitality industry. Moreover, the study was performed in regions of Italy and Saudi Arabia. It would be interesting to extend the study to investigate possible regional differences for both countries and the underlying reasons.

5. Implication for gastronomy

In 2010, UNESCO recognised food as an intangible cultural heritage; the Mediterranean diet, Mexican cuisine and French gastronomy were the first added to the list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". The increasing interest of tourists who seek extraordinary food experiences and different food cultures, however, can become a threat for the preservation of heritage food. The current study contributes to a better understanding of heritage food, which is a crucial part of the contemporary gastronomy. Understanding the concept of heritage food is important for gastronomy to protect unique food preparations of specific cultures. In our previous study, we conceptualised heritage food into three dimensions, i.e. legacy, people and place and identified risks which can compromise the authenticity of heritage food. In the current, these dimensions and authenticity risks were validated by culinary professionals from two different cultures, i.e. Italy and Saudi Arabia. Chefs are the main key-player in the gastronomy industry because their

role is to cook professionally for other people and is referred to as a highly-skilled professional cook who is proficient in all aspects of food preparation. The chef is responsible to maintain the quality of food especially in taste and texture, preserve the cooking method and recipes, but also initiate the innovation of food. The chefs confirmed the identified heritage dimensions and authenticity risks and added new risks including adaptation to customer preference, 'costs of ingredients', and 'non-native origin of chef'. The insights serve as an input for managing authenticity risks and protect heritage dishes.

Author statement

Mohammad Almansouri: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Writing- Original draft preparation, Writing – Review & Editing, Visualization. Ruud Verkerk: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision. Vincenzo Fogliano: Writing – Review & Editing. Pieter Luning: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Monica Santagata who participated in the data collection in Italy. Also, thanks to the Saudi and Italian chefs for the interviews. The authors gratefully acknowledge King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for financial support.

References

- Al Faris, N.A., 2017. Nutritional evaluation of selected traditional foods commonly consumed in Saudi Arabia. *J Food Nutr Res* 5 (3), 168–175.
- Alibabić, V., Mujić, I., Rudić, D., Bajramović, M., Jokić, S., Šertović, E., 2012. Traditional diets of Bosnia and the representation of the traditional food in the cuisine field. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46, 1673–1678.
- Aliraqi, A., Al-Zahrani, A.N., 2017. Economization of heritage values: empirical evidence from heritage restaurants in Riyadh. *Journal of Tourism and Archaeology* 29, 261–274. King Saud University.
- Almansouri, M., Verkerk, R., Fogliano, V., Luning, P.A., 2021. Exploration of heritage food concept. *Trends Food Sci. Technol.* 111, 790–797.
- Althaimene, A., 1991. Food habits, nutritional status and disease patterns in Saudi Arabia. University of Surrey (United Kingdom).
- Assiouras, I., Liapati, G., Kouletsis, G., Koniordos, M., 2015. The impact of brand authenticity on brand attachment in the food industry. *Br. Food J.* 117, 538–552.
- Association, N.R., 2015. Nov 2015. *Restaurant Industry Pocket Factbook*.
- Autio, M., Collins, R., Wahlen, S., Anttila, M., 2013. Consuming nostalgia? The appreciation of authenticity in local food production. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* 37 (5), 564–568.
- Avieli, N., 2013. What is 'local food'? Dynamic culinary heritage in the world heritage site of hoi an, vietnam. *J. Herit. Tourism* 8 (2–3), 120–132.
- Bardin, L., 2016. *Análise de conteúdo*, vol. 70. Edições, São Paulo.
- Beer, S., 2008. Authenticity and food experience - commercial and academic perspectives. *J. Foodserv.* 19 (3), 153–163.
- Bessière, J., 1998. Local development and heritage: traditional food and cuisine as tourist attractions in rural areas. *Sociol. Rural.* 38 (1), 21–34.
- Bessière, J., 2013. 'Heritagisation', a challenge for tourism promotion and regional development: an example of food heritage. *J. Herit. Tourism* 8 (4), 275–291.
- Brulotte, R.L., Di Giovine, M.A., 2016. *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*. Routledge.
- Cambridge English Dictionary, 2021. Authentic. Reterived by. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/authentic>.
- Capatti, A., Montanari, M., 2003. Italian cuisine. In *Italian Cuisine*. Columbia University Press.
- Chhabra, D., 2005. Defining authenticity and its determinants: toward an authenticity flow model. *J. Trav. Res.* 44 (1), 64–73.
- Clark, G., Zimmerman, E., 2000. Greater understanding of the local community. *Art Educ.* 53 (2), 32.
- Cohen, E., 1988. Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Ann. Tourism Res.* 15, 371–386.
- Collins Dictionary, 2021. Authentic. Reterived by. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/authentic>.
- Ebster, C., Guist, L., 2005. The role of authenticity in ethnic theme restaurants. *J. Foodserv. Bus. Res.* 7 (2), 41–52.
- Giovanelli, S.E., 2019. Online representation of culinary heritage in Turkey in the context of cultural policies. In: *Handbook of Research on Examining Cultural Policies through Digital Communication*. IGI Global, pp. 31–54.
- Hamzah, H., Ab Karim, M.S., Othman, M., Hamzah, A., 2013. Dimensions of authenticity in Malay cuisine from experts' perspectives. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2 (3), 369–377.
- Hashimoto, A., Telfer, D.J., 2015. Culinary trails. In: *Heritage Cuisines*. Routledge, pp. 144–159.
- Heidegger, M., 1996. *Being and time: A translation of Sein und Zeit*. SUNY press.
- Hjalager, A.M., Corigliano, M.A., 2000. Food for tourists—determinants of an image. *Int. J. Tourism Res.* 2 (4), 281–293.
- Humphrey, L.T., 1989. Traditional foods? Traditional values? *West. Folklore* 48 (2), 162–169.
- Ivanova, L., Terziyska, I., Trifonova, J., 2014. Characteristics of traditional food-the viewpoint of the tourism business. *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego. Scientific Journal. Service Management* 14, 123–130.
- Jang, S., Ha, J., 2015. The influence of cultural experience: emotions in relation to authenticity at ethnic restaurants. *J. Foodserv. Bus. Res.* 18 (3), 287–306.
- Karim, S., Chi, C.G.-Q., 2010. Culinary tourism as a destination attraction: an empirical examination of destinations' food image. *J. Hospit. Market. Manag.* 19 (6), 531–555.
- Kim, Y.G., Eves, A., Scarles, C., 2009. Building a model of local food consumption on trips and holidays: a grounded theory approach. *Int. J. Hospit. Manag.* 28 (3), 423–431.
- Lee, C., Pung, J.M., Del Chiappa, G., 2021. Exploring the nexus of tradition, modernity, and innovation in restaurant SMEs. *Int. J. Hospit. Manag.* 100, 103091.
- Long, L.M., 2004. *Culinary Tourism*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Lu, S., Fine, G.A., 1995. The presentation of ethnic authenticity: Chinese food as a social accomplishment. *Socio. Q.* 36 (3), 535–553.
- Martinelli, E., De Canio, F., 2019. Eating in an Italian restaurant. The role of Country Image in driving Spanish customers attitude and intention to patronize an ethnic restaurant. *Mercati & competitività-Open Access* 2.
- Miele, M., Murdoch, J., 2002. The practical aesthetics of traditional cuisines: slow food in Tuscany. *Sociol. Rural.* 42 (4), 312–328.
- Ministry of Culture, Saudi, 2019a. The Cultural Status of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. from King Fahad Library for publishing.
- Ministry of Culture, Saudi, 2019b. Our Cultural Vision for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. from Ministry of Culture.
- Molnár, A., Gellynck, X., Vanhonacker, F., Gagalyuk, T., Verbeke, W., 2011. Do chain goals match consumer perceptions? The case of the traditional food sector in selected European Union countries. *Agribusiness* 27 (2), 221–243.
- Nield, K., Kozak, M., LeGrys, G., 2000. The role of food service in tourist satisfaction. *Int. J. Hospit. Manag.* 19 (4), 375–384.
- Nor, N.M., Sharif, M.S.M., Zahari, M.S.M., Salleh, H.M., Isha, N., Muhammad, R., 2012. The transmission modes of Malay traditional food knowledge within generations. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 50, 79–88.
- Oum, Y.R., 2005. Authenticity and representation: cuisines and identities in Korean-American diaspora. *Postcolonial Stud.* 8 (1), 109–125.
- Özdemir, B., Seyitoğlu, F., 2017. A conceptual study of gastronomic quests of tourists: authenticity or safety and comfort? *Tourism Manag. Perspect.* 23, 1–7.
- O'Connor, C., Joffe, H., 2020. Intercode reliability in qualitative research: debates and practical guidelines. *Int. J. Qual. Methods* 19, 1609406919899220.
- Raji, M.N.A., Ab Karim, S., Ishak, F.A.C., Arshad, M.M., 2017. Past and present practices of the Malay food heritage and culture in Malaysia. *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 4 (4), 221–231.
- Ramli, A., Zahari, M.S.M., Halim, N.A., Aris, M.H.M., 2016. The knowledge of food heritage identity in Klang Valley, Malaysia. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 222, 518–527.
- Ramli, A., Sapawi, D.K.A., Zahari, M., 2020. The Determinants of Food Heritage Based on Age in Klang Valley, Malaysia/Adilah M.D Ramli.. [et al.].
- Robinson, R.N., Clifford, C., 2012. Authenticity and festival foodservice experiences. *Ann. Tourism Res.* 39 (2), 571–600.
- Sert, A.N., 2017. Italian cuisine: characteristics and effects. *Econ. Res.* 1 (1), 49y–57.
- Sharif, M.M., et al., 2014. The adaptations of Malay food knowledge among Malay generations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. *Hospitality and Tourism: Synergizing Creativity and Innovation in Research*. CRC.
- Sims, R., 2009. Food, place and authenticity: local food and the sustainable tourism experience. *J. Sustain. Tourism* 17 (3), 321–336.
- Sukalakamala, P., Boyce, J.B., 2007. Customer perceptions for expectations and acceptance of an authentic dining experience in Thai restaurants. *J. Foodserv.* 18 (2), 69–75.
- Tan, D., Shekar, S.C., 2004. *Food From the Heart: Malaysia's Culinary Heritage*. Cross Time Matrix Sdn Bhd.
- Taylor, M.A., 1999. *Through the Eyes of Your Ancestors*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Timothy, D.J., 2015. *Heritage Cuisines: Traditions, Identities and Tourism*. Routledge.
- Trichopoulou, A., Soukara, S., Vasilopoulou, E., 2007. Traditional foods: a science and society perspective. *Trends Food Sci. Technol.* 18 (8), 420–427.
- Trubek, A.B., 2008. *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir*, vol. 20. Univ of California Press.
- Turmo, I.G., 2010. The mediterranean diet as a heritage object. *Quaderns de La Mediterrània* 13, 45–49.
- Uggioni, P.L., Proença, R.P.d.C., Zeni, L.A.Z.R., 2010. Assessment of gastronomic heritage quality in traditional restaurants. *Rev. Nutr.* 23 (1), 7–16.

- UNESCO, 2019. Intangible cultural heritage. Retrieved from. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>.
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., Bondas, T., 2013. Content analysis and thematic analysis: implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nurs. Health Sci.* 15 (3), 398–405.
- Vanhonacker, F., Verbeke, W., Guerrero, L., Claret, A., Contel, M., Scalvedi, L., Raude, J., 2010. How European consumers define the concept of traditional food: evidence from a survey in six countries. *Agribusiness* 26 (4), 453–476.
- Vujko, A., Petrović, M.D., Dragosavac, M., Čurčić, N., Gajić, T., 2017. The linkage between traditional food and loyalty of tourists to the rural destinations. *Temenos* 41 (2), 475–487.
- Warde, A., 1997. Consumption, Food and Taste. Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture. SAGE Publications, London.
- Weichselbaum, E., Benelam, B., Soares Costa, H., 2009. Traditional Foods in Europe. EuroFIR Project, Norwich.
- Zanin, L.M., Luning, P.A., da Cunha, D.T., Stedefeldt, E., 2021. Influence of educational actions on transitioning of food safety culture in a food service context: Part 1–Triangulation and data interpretation of food safety culture elements. *Food Control* 119, 107447.