

Bucharest the capital of romania small pairs marketing essay

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There were very only few hotels and family run restaurants that served only very few local traditional foods such as “ Mititei and Ciorba”. “ Mititei is grilled meat balls (mini sausages) that are made from minced meat; beef, pork, and mutton with garlic, black pepper, savory paprika and other spices, while “ Ciorba is soup made of chicken and taste sour, served wih bread”. [1 & 4]. There were no vaieties of food options and the food and services were generally low standard.

Fig 1, Mititei and Ciorba

Under the Communist dictatorship that was overthrown in 1989, western-style fast food franchises restaurants and hotels were not allowed. In the years that followed, the country was so poor to rehabilitate the poorly maintained infrastructures. Adding to these problems was the fact that the buildings in Bucharest were developed purely for residential use and not for commercial purposes. [2 & 5]

By the mid-1990s, McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants were established in Bucharest offering varieties of western fast food at affordable prices. This was hailed as a new dawn in Romanian history [2 & 5] and families thronged the restaurants. in large numbers daily to eat, filling all available seats inside and outdoor tables with umbrellas. It was a great colourful sight to see people eating out in a more relaxed and comfortable environment different from the authoritarian restrictions imposed during the communist era.

Western style restaurants and hotels began to spring up everywhere from 1995 after the city planning department approved the use of many buildings for commercial use. Under strict guidelines and rules set by the government, restaurants and hotels were granted licences and required to maintain high food standards, hygiene, facilities, personnels and salaries in accordance with western standards. By year 2000, there was a culinary explosion and restaurant and hotels franchises from capitalist west was visible everywhere in Bucharest. [2]

For the tourists, it was a welcomed development to have varieties of restaurants, foods and hotels. For post-communist Romanians, western foods became very popular even though Romanians continued to love their traditional food. Anything from the west is seen as a better quality. The young and adults are very eager to espouse all things western; clothings, cigarettes, foods, architecture, hotels, cars etc. They flock to McDonalds, apparently happy to partake in its junk cuisine regardless of the health risks.

Fig 2, Map of Bucharest

Today, there are plenty of restaurants and cafés to choose in Bucharest, mostly located in city center which is the main tourist area. Some of the popular restaurants and cafés in Bucharest are Gara Lipscani, Cafe Royal, Capriccio Italiano, Caru' Cu Bere, Trattoria del Tatoli , Waterloo, Ma'dam Zoronn, Papparazzi, Brasseir Crown Plaza, La Mama, Cina restaurant, Bistro Atheneu, Casa Vernescu, Burebista, Bradet, Aquarium, Capsa etc. The city is also home to many international fast food chains such as McDonald's,

Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, Burger King etc. Most bars have limited food such as pastry and sandwich. [2]

Fig 3, Gara Lipscani, Bucharest

Romanian restaurant and cafés prefer to locate in the city centers where there are more tourists, transportation, security, convenience and accessibility. They are mostly secluded in spot near the Piata Romana, Piata Victoriei and Piata Unirii. There are no restaurants in the outskirts of the city even though it is generally safe everywhere in Bucharest. It is common to find people eating outdoors in restaurants in the summer on a beautiful large terrace under the trees. For an average Romanian family, dining in restaurant is reserved for special occasions as it's a national custom to cook at home and restaurant is seen as very expensive. [3]

With highly qualified chefs, Bucharest restaurants are cheap and the quality of the food are of international standard. The restaurants provide quality food at reasonable prices and most provide standing to sit-down facilities, in-outside sitting areas. Many restaurants follow a more formal template, others follow International or traditional Romanian style, while some require nicer casual clothes (with no jeans or shorts) and more pricey, than in more developed nations. Generally, Restaurants are open all day; lunch is served from 11: 00 a. m. -2: 00 p. m. and dinner from 6: 00 p. m. until 11: 00 p. m. Dinner is the main meal of the day, but many restaurants serve the same menu for both lunch and dinner. Most restaurants accept cash and/or credit cards which are posted on the front door. [2]

Fast food outlets and restaurants offer delivery services and there are many kiosks on the street selling pizza, sandwiches, hamburgers, hot dogs, ice cream, drinks, sweets and cakes. “ Fast food chains very popular due to convenience and their family oriented style”.

Fig 4, Traditional Romanian Cuisine

Food in Bucharest is not restricted to traditional Romanian delights. Cuisine from all over the world are served, including Asian, Indian, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Chinese, Mexican, French, Spanish, Italian and other international tastes. Only a few restaurants cater for vegetarians as local food is meat-based. [4]

Historically, “ Romanian cuisine is a diverse blend of different dishes from several traditions as Romanian territories were once invaded and occupied by Turks, Hungarians, Austrians, Polishes, Russians”. The culinary variant of Romanian traditional foods also have “ unique elements common with Oriental, Austrian and French flavours”. These historical influences on its traditional cuisines are slightly different in the food preparation and ingredients used in food recipes. [1 & 3]

Along the years, the Romanian cuisine has had influences from the western cuisine from France, Italy, Spain, India, Middle East, China and also from its neighbours; Hungarian, Austrian, Moldavia and Wallachia cuisine” which makes Romanian food diverse, rich flavoured, coloured, fragranced. Dishes served in restaurants are “ 100% natural and ecological” as foodstuff, meat, fruits and vegetables are freshly obtained from local farms and gardens

where the “ local growers don’t use herbicides/pesticides to grow their crops”. [1]

For traditional dishes, a “ formal dinner begins with soup and continues with a main course of meat, potato, vegetables, and salad. Common salads include lettuce salad, tomato and cucumber salad, or cabbage salad. Dessert is usually a sweet cake or ice cream”. [3 & 4] The main course options includes; “ sarmale – stuffed cabbage rolls with meat and rice, or mici – fried minced meat served with mustard, or mamaliga – a polenta side dish covered in sour cream, and a variety of ciorba, or sour soups, (the most popular is ciorba de burta made from cow intestines)”. or mititei – grilled sausages with bread. [1 & 3] At the beginning of a meal, everyone says “ Pofta buna” (enjoy your meal).

Since Romania joined the European Union in 2007, there has been a renaissance of Romanian dishes and Bucharest restaurants are now offering a wide range of traditional food and cuisine to champion tourism and preserving national identity. While foreign food still remain popular among the youth, local food in restaurants takes center stage in lower prices, advertisements and attraction for tourists and adults.

A typical Romanian food specialties will look like this:

National Food

National Drinks

Ciorba de perisoare: Soup with meatballs.

Mamaliga: A staple of mashed cornmeal.

Pasca: Sweet cheesecake.

Sarmale: minced pork mixed with rice and spices then rolled up in marinated cabbage leaves.

Mici: A kind of skinless sausages on the grill made out of pork and beef meat.

Nisetru la gratar: Grilled Black Sea sturgeon.

Tuica: a type of brandy made of plums

Palinca: a very strong brandy

Wines: Feteasca and Grasa de Cotnari; Pinot Noir, Riesling, Chardonnay from Murfatlar vineyards.

Local beers: Ursu, Silva, Kaiser

Table 1: Romanian food specialties [6]

From an obscure city without any modern recreational infrastructure to a vibrant city with sophisticated restaurants, the culinary effects of these social and political changes in Bucharest in the past 15 years has contributed to the exponential growth in availability of varieties of restaurants, standards and quality of food, varieties of food recipes, dishes, prices, modernization of cooking and eating facilities and services and the catering for vegetarians, children, disabled, self-catering.

“ There has also been an extraordinary growth of the fast food market due to rising consumerism”. All these growths are as a result the training and experience of personnel and restaurants, well equipped with Western management concepts and techniques and their ability to combine “ modern methods of preparation and hygiene with traditional Romanian cuisine”. [4]

Romanian Food Industry continues to have a huge potential and rapid growth in its capacity in the provision of diverse agro-biodiversity of food products. The industry represents 27% from total value of agricultural production. Food industry currently employs 240. 000 jobs, representing about 5% from active population. [9] There has been a steady improvement of the performance and supply of products of the Romanian food industry stimulated by the explosion of modern retail structures (restaurants, cafés, bars, supermarkets and hypermarkets) after the year 2000, which significantly increased the demand of higher quality products, at lower prices.[10]

Looking back at the post-communism era, one will observe that it wasn't all good for the food industry due to lack of funds. “ The structural reforms of the transition and EU accession preparations induced paramount changes in Romania's agri-food trade pattern, i. e. evolution of the agri-food in correlation with the variations in the agricultural supply, the performance deficiencies of the agri-food sector that provoked disequilibria on the food market with low level of competitiveness”. [10] .

With these growth in the young food industry comes the realisation of the impact on health, concerns and the need for some control Romania recently

indicated that it will introduce taxes on fast foods. “ The Romania’s Health Ministry has been analyzing the nutritional content of some 40, 000 fast foods and drinks over the past weeks to decide what exactly should be taxed before submitting the legislation to Parliament next month”. [5]

Not everyone is impressed with such radical control methods. “ Experts warned against labeling all fast food as bad or home-cooked food as healthy. They argue that a typical Romanian lunch of sarmale, stuffed cabbage rolls smothered in sour cream, with walnut-studded yeast cake as dessert may likely not be on the health Ministry’s recommended diet list”. Other experts say “ Romanians spend 40-50 percent of their income on food, of which 19-percent value-added tax is already applied. Many say its “ dangerous to use generic terms, as different ingredients and cooking style can transform a takeout meal from healthy to horrible”. [5]

Many parliamentarians have voiced their concerns as they claim that taxes were already raised for other products. The European Union supports Romania decision while the “ World Health Organization nutrition expert Tim Armstrong said that, the agency recommends countries consider such taxes to improve eating habits, but concerned that the poor could be hurt financially. [5]

While on a short, the proposed drastic changes are required to improve the standards in Romanians food industry which may financially hurt businesses and the poor, on a long term, such changes are beneficial to the health of its citizens as it ensures proper preparation of food and decent eating habits.

While, Romanian food industry is compelled to react and innovate to meet the future challenges posed by globalisation, I think that the future looks very bright for Romanian restaurants with regards to sourcing of food, competition and resources as Romania is strategically placed in a good position to become one of the most popular dining locations in the world.