



2.9 Hungry for Finland

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Finland benefits from the Scandinavian image, the Nordic cooking philosophy and the rise of the healthy Nordic diet. The Nordic countries have shared values regarding pure, natural and simple food. This does not mean, however, that Finland cannot distinguish itself and stand out from the common Nordic identity – particularly when food is currently one of the most interesting trends in the global tourism sector.

Finland's First Food Tourism Strategy 2015–2020

The strategy work was launched and financed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry together with Visit Finland in 2015. The work on the Food Tourism Strategy was coordinated by Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

Clearly distinguishable foods and beverages give a certain profile to a destination. The best experiences are those in which the customer takes an active role in the story: for example by finding the ingredients (fishing, mushroom and berry picking, digging potatoes), participating in the preparation and having opportunities to test and tweak recipes. Many consumers value and desire local and self-made food, as well as authenticity. In terms of purity, Finnish food is among the top in Europe, and Finnish natural attractions are a main motivation for foreign tourists. In rural

tourism and especially for Finland, nature, food and culture are inexorably interconnected.

One of the main goals of the strategy was to define a common objective and roles for different actors for the future. Naturally, the goal needed to be that all of the variables in place were of equally high quality. The measures listed in the strategy are aimed at promoting appealing, high-quality Finnish products to international and domestic tourists. Finnish tourism operators were involved in the strategy discussions.

Food and eating are essential elements of the tourism product that involve powerful experiences. The key issues in developing food tourism are:

1. Taste of place: Associating a flavour to Finnish origins and the Finnish way of life.
2. Pure pleasure: Pure Finnish food is good for the body and soul. Europe's purest ingredients, clean water and air, aromas and flavonoids created by Arctic light conditions, organic and local food and very high standards in food processing all contribute to healthy food, including special dietary needs.
3. Cool and creative Finland: An internationally renowned culinary phenomenon.



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Strategic Actions

The primary action in promoting Finnish food tourism is the development of spearhead products, strategic partnerships and communication, as well as measures and designated actors for each of these.

The Finnish food tourism product is easy to purchase, internationally known and tasty, bringing powerful experiences to tourists everywhere.

Food itself can be constructed into a tourism product; it can form part of wellbeing, culture or winter tourism services or nature-based activities in the summer. Food tourism is something very original. Finnish food plays a key role in arousing people's curiosity.

Vision 2020: Hungry for Finland!

Food is an integral element and powerful experience in Finnish tourism!

Mission: The more the merrier – and better food!

Broad involvement of actors in food and tourism sectors!

Finnish Food Tourism Competition

The first major step in the Food Tourism Strategy was the

Food Tourism Competition held in spring 2015. The aim was to highlight the potential of food tourism and engage the sector in its development. The competition proved popular, where the number of participants was double the target.

The competition was organized by Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and financed by several governmental bodies.

The evaluation criteria were: customer orientation, local colour, stories, local food, experiences, co-operation, entrepreneurship, cost-effectiveness, and versatility in the use of sales and marketing channels.

The winners were "From Guesthouse to Guesthouse" tours arranged in the form of four undertakings in the small eastern counties of Nurmes and Valtimo. The product has a strong local and environmentally friendly quality. The food is delicious, clean and authentic. Guests learn how to use herbs from the "Herbal Tour" for cooking, wellness and beauty care. For example, travellers learn how to make traditional Karelian pasties. In the guesthouses, the traveller is able to feel at home and experience the day-to-day life of a local, some of which continue at home through souvenirs.



Distribution channels are well thought out. The jury praised the excellent co-operation between the four entrepreneurs.

From Guesthouse to Guesthouse, Valtimo and Nurmes Finland:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhNsNRBRN1A&feature=youtu.be>

In addition, three other notable food tourism acts received an award:

Inari Menu/Tradition Hotel Kultahovi:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOKHuwhsZCM>

Malmgård Manor, Loviisa Finland:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpSFmQgkFRY>

Chamberlain's feast at Svartå Manor, Mustio Finland:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JircZsrIKM>

The Roll-out of Finland's Food Tourism Strategy

Finland's first Food Tourism Strategy is currently being implemented through regional Hungry for Finland workshops, which are designed to help local operators, especially entrepreneurs, develop skills and prerequisites for delivering the strategy.

The themes identified in the strategy for Finnish food tourism products are presented in Figure 2.2 on the next page. They are

the cornerstones of a successful food tourism business around which additional and topical elements can be constructed.

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<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYjNcJ1jQZyZ3t-UlBzDgrgTBKSTpvrDI>

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Figure 2.2 Cornerstones of a successful food tourism business

