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Türkiye-Moldova
Shared Culinary Culture

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Introduciton

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 2003 and to which Türkiye became a party in 2006, treats culinary culture as a social and cultural practice. This culture is not merely about aesthetics, presentation, and flavors that satisfy nutritional needs; it is also an expression of conversation, sharing, and cultural transmission that comes together around a table. Since ancient times, the act of "offering food to the deceased," as reflected in the Orhon Inscriptions where the khan "feeds the hungry," and in the words of Dede Korkut, "serving kımız like a lake and piling meat like a mountain to host a feast," has been a symbol of gathering around the same table, unity, and solidarity. This culture, spanning from the concept of the "divine guest" to "wedding feasts," "iftar gatherings," and "celebratory meals," also connects communities living in different regions yet sharing the same heritage. Launched with the aim of researching, safeguarding, and bringing this heritage and culture together at UNESCO in whatever forms possible, the Türkiye – Moldova Shared Culinary Culture Project seeks to make the historical and cultural bond carried by common tables visible.

In line with folklore fieldwork and research techniques, as well as the fundamental principles of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO has implemented projects focusing on shared culinary culture with Hungary, North Macedonia, and Romania; mutual interaction in the field of music with Bulgaria and Kazakhstan; and shared handicrafts with Azerbaijan. These initiatives aim to enhance the visibility of shared heritage, foster cultural rapprochement, and strengthen safeguarding approaches. The Commission collects elements of intangible cultural heritage from the field, evaluates them through comparative analysis, and documents them using a community - based approach.

Türkiye and Moldova, as two friendly nations sharing common cultural values, have long been carrying out joint projects and cooperation activities. Since 2010, under the leadership of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, representatives and experts from Gagauzia (Moldova) have regularly participated in the "Meetings of National Commissions for UNESCO of TÜRKSOY Member States" organized to strengthen cooperation among the UNESCO National Commissions of TÜRKSOY member states. This participation contributes to the sharing of best practices in the field of cultural heritage and to the implementation of cultural cooperation on a more institutionalized basis through joint projects. Furthermore, regional cooperation platforms encompassing Southeast European countries, including the Republic of Moldova, contribute to the research of common cultural heritage between the two countries and to the achievement of the objectives of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. With these and similar opportunities for cooperation, the Türkiye – Moldova partnership, which is growing day by day, will facilitate the implementation of joint research, documentation, and safeguarding projects in other areas of intangible cultural heritage as well.

Indeed, as part of the Türkiye – Moldova Shared Culinary Culture Project -which emerged as a result of such intentions and objectives -the culinary culture, a component of intangible cultural heritage, has revealed shared bonds between the two countries that extend back to the depths of history, through traditions centered on preparation, cooking, safeguarding, consumption, and sharing. Furthermore, this project has served as a source of inspiration for potential collaborations in numerous UNESCO programs -including those related to cities, education, the Memory of the World, and commemoration and celebration, particularly regarding efforts to submit a joint nomination to the UNESCO ICH Lists by the two countries, which share a similar culinary culture. Ensuring that shared culinary elements between Türkiye and Moldova are more prominently featured, made visible, and safeguarded in collaboration with the international community is among the aspirations and goals of both countries. With this background, field studies conducted in Türkiye and Moldova have demonstrated strong commonalities not only in culinary traditions but also in social practices, rituals, and feasts.

Prepared as a result of fieldwork conducted by experts in intangible cultural heritage from Türkiye and Moldova in collaboration with the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, and the National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO, this book is the product of a long-term preparatory process based on extensive field research carried out in both countries.

The authorities in Türkiye and Moldova, who made this valuable collaboration possible, have opened a strong door toward strengthening cultural and academic

ties between the two countries, presenting shared heritage elements to UNESCO on a multinational basis, and developing joint projects. I would like to express my gratitude to the expert and management team of this important project, which I believe will pave the way for new collaborations in different fields in the future, as well as to our informants in Türkiye and Moldova who have shared with our research team the intangible cultural heritage they have kept alive by transmitting it from generation to generation.

Prof. Dr. M. Öcal Oğuz
President of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO

Preface

Culinary culture is not merely a field limited to the preparation, presentation, and consumption of food; it is a living heritage that embodies a community's memory, sense of belonging, relationship with nature, knowledge of daily life, rituals, beliefs, and forms of intergenerational transmission. Every relationship formed around the table serves a purpose beyond mere sustenance. Beyond this, it also serves to share, remember, live together, and reproduce cultural continuity. In this regard, traditional culinary culture is one of the fundamental areas that directly aligns with the spirit of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, making visible the identity, creativity, and cultural diversity of communities.

The Türkiye – Moldova Shared Culinary Culture Project was carried out by the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO's Experts Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage in collaboration with the National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO. It is a multifaceted initiative focused on research, documentation, and safeguard. The project examined the culinary cultures of both countries within the scope of social practices of intangible cultural heritage, focusing on the symbolic, ritualistic, and functional dimensions of culinary culture. Within this framework, food was assessed as a living practice that regulates social relations, carries memory, strengthens solidarity, and lays the groundwork for intercultural dialogue.

The Turkish delegation for the project included Prof. Dr. M. Öcal Oğuz, the President of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO; and members of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO's Experts Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage: Prof. Dr. Evrim Ölçer Özünel, Prof. Dr. Selcan Gürçayır Teke, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tuna Yıldız; Faculty members from Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dilek Türkyılmaz, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gözde Tekin, Assist. Prof.

Dr. Zeynep Safiye Baki Nalcıoğlu, a faculty member from Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University: Assist. Prof. Dr. Kadirhan Özdemir; Prof. Dr. Adem Koç, a faculty member from Eskişehir Osmangazi University and Moldova State University, and Sector Specialist Assistant Dr. Bilge Tüzel Ergin from the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO. The Moldovan delegation included Prof. Dr. Constantin Rusnac, Secretary - General of the National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO; Project Coordinator Luminita Cojocarı and Eugenia Spataru; and Gagauz cuisine expert Assoc. Prof. Dr. Evdokiya Soroçanu, Bulgarian cuisine expert, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Stepanova Bankova, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ecaterina Cojuhar, Dr. Natalia Grădinaru, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Viktor Cojuhar, and journalist Ludmika Barba.

During the first phase of the project, the expert team conducted field research in Türkiye from September 19 to 29, 2021. The study and field visits in Türkiye were limited to cities included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy as well as those where the Gagauz people reside. This approach allowed for the evaluation of culinary culture not only in terms of traditional knowledge and practices but also within the contexts of sustainable local development, cultural visibility, and the creative economy. Accordingly, the research, which began in Ankara on September 19, 2021, continued in Afyonkarahisar, Antalya, Gaziantep, and Hatay, and was completed in Istanbul on September 29, 2021.

In the second phase of the project, the expert team began field research in Moldova on May 22, 2022, conducting observations in the villages of Comrat, Cădâr-Lunga, Beşalma, Kongaz, Avdarma, and Palance. The research concluded on May 28, 2022, in Taraclia. Throughout the process, a total of 88 informants were interviewed, including 48 from Türkiye and 40 from Moldova. These interviews enabled the project to be carried out not only as an expert-centered documentation effort but also through a participatory approach grounded in the knowledge, experiences, and testimonies of the communities that carry the heritage.

At the start of the project, an introductory meeting was held at the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO on September 19, 2021. Following this meeting, traditional dishes from Moldova and Türkiye were demonstrated hands-on at the Ankara Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum, and interviews were conducted with key informants. On September 21, 2021, a visit was made to the Şehr-i Frig Restaurant, which reinterprets Afyonkarahisar's traditional dishes using new methods and techniques. At the Gastronomy Mansion, which opened following Afyonkarahisar's inclusion in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, the traditional production sites of the dishes, their production methods, and the traditions surrounding these practices were examined. After visiting Afyonkarahisar's historical and cultural sites, the next stop of the field research was Antalya.

On September 22, 2021, interviews were conducted with Moldovan citizens of Gagauz origin living in Antalya regarding culinary culture. In order to compare and evaluate rural and urban culinary cultures in Antalya, both the city center and rural areas were included in the research scope. Following the interviews in the city center, information was gathered from informants in Sarılar Village regarding cooking techniques, kitchen utensils used in the region, food preparation habits, consumed foods and beverages, food production and consumption spaces, dishes prepared for special occasions and rites of passage, as well as narratives and beliefs related to food. Thus, it was once again demonstrated that culinary knowledge is not merely a matter of recipes; rather, it constitutes a holistic cultural system that exists in conjunction with space, tools, the body, memory, narrative, and belief.

On September 24, 2021, the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Culinary Arts Center was visited. Through interviews with chefs, kitchen assistants, and consumers at the center, the methods of transmitting traditional professional knowledge from one generation to the next and consumers' awareness of traditional dishes were identified. At Gaziantep's traditional agricultural school and greenhouse, the formation, production, and distribution processes of raw materials were observed. Following this, the Turkish and Moldovan delegations participated in the pomegranate harvest. The visit to MUSEM Academy, which provides culinary training and organizes workshops, offered an opportunity to observe the processes of safeguarding and transmitting intangible cultural heritage through widespread education within the scope of culinary culture. Additionally, the delegation participated in a halva-making workshop, directly experiencing the preparation of traditional dishes.

Museums, which are key stakeholders in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, were also visited as part of the research. During visits to the Baths Museum, the Zeugma Museum, the Pistachio Museum, and the Emine Göğüş Kitchen Museum, various aspects of traditional food and drink culture were examined. The production processes of Gaziantep's famous Tahmis coffee and baklava were observed at the Tahmis factory. These visits demonstrated the importance of museums not merely as institutions that display objects, but also as cultural gathering spaces that contribute to the narration, experience, and intergenerational transmission of living heritage.

On September 26, 2021, interviews were conducted with local informants in the villages of Hıdır Bey and Vakıflı, as well as the Musa Ağacı area in Hatay, regarding culinary cultures. After examining markets where local culinary products are sold, the Gastronomy House was visited. Research was conducted with faculty members and students at the Vocational School of Hatay Mustafa Kemal University.

On September 28, 2021, the delegation in Istanbul met with Gagauz informants in the Karaköy area. Thus, the field research phase of the project in Türkiye was completed.

The second phase of the project consisted of field research in Moldova. The research began with a traditional Moldovan cuisine workshop held on May 22, 2022, at Eco Resort Butuceni. Key informants were interviewed regarding Moldova's culinary culture at a historic inn and at the Calarası establishment in the village of Palance, and their responses were recorded. During the visit to the Family House Museum, discussions were held regarding the lifestyles and culinary culture of the Moldovan people. On May 26, 2022, the delegation documented, both in writing and visually, the production sites of the local community and the processes of transmitting cultural heritage in Gagauz-specific kitchens and food establishments in Comrat, as well as in the villages of Beşalma, Kongaz, and Avdarma. The production methods of Komrat wines, a part of Moldova's beverage culture, were noted through a visit to a winery. In the research conducted in the Çadır-Lunga region, the traditional stages of bread-making in Moldova were examined. At the establishment named "Gagauz Sofrası," discussions were held regarding the reasons local and international visitors choose the establishment and its traditional dishes. The Çadır-Lunga Culture–Education Center was visited as an institution serving as a model for strengthening intangible cultural heritage through education. On the final day of the program, Bulgarian cuisine and the traditions surrounding it were examined in Taraclia; interviews were conducted with key informants at relevant establishments.

On May 5, 2023, delegations from Türkiye and Moldova gathered in Chisinau, the capital of Moldova, to present data collected during field research. On the same day, at the International Conference: Turkish-Moldovan Traditional Culinary Culture, Uygar Mustafa Sertel, Turkish Ambassador; Dr. Ion Ursu, Director of the Moldovan Institute of Cultural Heritage; Prof. Dr. Constantin Rusnac, Secretary-General of the National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO, and Prof. Dr. M. Öcal Oğuz, the President of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO delivered opening speeches.

The research process has revealed the common symbolic meanings carried by the culinary cultures of Türkiye and Moldova in terms of identity, belonging, and social relations. These meanings become particularly evident during transitional periods, holidays, and rituals. Bread and baked goods stand out in both cultures as symbols of sacredness, abundance, and sharing; traditional storage methods and spaces such as "maaza" support both economic and cultural continuity. The use of food for healing purposes, meanwhile, highlights the strong connection between culinary culture and folk medicine. In this context, the shared culinary

heritage can be regarded as a significant area that enhances cultural interaction between the two countries, strengthens mutual understanding, and holds potential for economic cooperation within the frameworks of culinary tourism and the Creative Cities Network. Traditional culinary practices thus contribute not only to the safeguarding of knowledge and skills passed down from the past but also to sustainable cultural development, local development, the visibility of cultural diversity, and the strengthening of dialogue among communities.

The project clearly demonstrated the similarities, interactions, and continuity of the shared culinary culture between the two cultures. It was observed that skills such as rolling stuffed grape leaves, making gözleme, cooking zama soup, preparing mamaliga, making kavurma, and preparing dishes like biberli and aşur are important to both cultures. In both cultures, it was observed that products such as hot kavurma, pita/pide, gözleme, kıvırma, and bazlama are prepared during seasonal celebrations. It has also been understood that food preservation methods such as cooking, drying, pickling, and canning are employed. These and similar examples demonstrate that culinary culture between Türkiye and Moldova is kept alive, safeguarded, and passed down from generation to generation through common practices. This study is particularly valuable in demonstrating that culinary culture constitutes a common memory space that transcends borders, and that the knowledge, skills, rituals, narratives, and sharing practices centered around food can forge strong bonds between cultures. The common culinary heritage of Türkiye and Moldova not only bears the traces of the two countries' historical and cultural interactions but also provides a fertile ground for future collaborations. In this regard, the project demonstrates that the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is not merely a retrospective documentation activity; rather, it is a dynamic process that strengthens communities' present-day lives, supports cultural diversity, and contributes to envisioning a sustainable future.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the cities and local officials that hosted the project team during the implementation of this project, as well as to all the informants in Türkiye and Moldova who opened their doors, shared their meals, and contributed with their knowledge and memories. We extend our gratitude to the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, particularly its President, Prof. Dr. M. Öcal Oğuz, who conceived the idea for this project and contributed to the publication of this book, as well as to the Commission's Executive Board and Secretariat. We also sincerely thank the project team for their dedicated efforts, meticulous approach, and strong collaboration throughout the process, which made the successful completion of this work possible.

On behalf of the Research Team
Prof. Dr. Evrim Ölçer Özünel

What Did We Eat, and What Did We Understand? The Symbolic Meanings of Food in Turkish and Moldovan Culinary Cultures

Evrim Ölçer Özünel*
Kadirhan Özdemir**

What we eat today did not exist in the past,
and new dishes have replaced the foods of the poor.
Tatiana POPA[1]

Food is one of the essential elements that people need to survive. Eating is not just a basic need; it is also a cultural practice. It comes with rules about what is edible, how to eat, who to eat with, and how to behave while eating (Oğuz and Gürçayır, 2014: 219). The fact that food is an integral part of culture offers significant trajectory in terms of its relationship with human history. According to Felipe Fernàndez-Armesto, culture began with the cooking of raw foods (2007: 17). Food culture changes in different societies for many reasons. These include shifts in living conditions, global influences, natural settings, and environmental factors. From now on, food does more than meet basic needs. It reflects a society's history, values, beliefs, and identity. Food is likewise an expression of cultural exchange in contexts where different cultures interact with one another, migrate, and engage in trade. For this reason, examining food culture helps us understand humanity's past, the evolution of societies, and how cultural diversity in this domain has emerged. Food can also be considered a phenomenon that may carry social, cultural, symbolic, and metaphorical meanings.

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1 Tatiana Popa is the owner of the Casa Părintească Museum and is one of the informants interviewed during the field research.

Food and culture often show similar traits. As Jack Goody says, "the definition of cuisine at one level entails the way people position themselves in relation to others" (2013: 10). Cuisines are sites of memory responsible not only for everyday food preparation but also for celebrating, commemorating, and sharing significant moments of daily life. Foods prepared in homes symbolize not only a physical need but also emotional bonds, solidarity, and togetherness. These key spaces also contribute to the formation of a shared cultural identity (Güleç and Durlu Özkaya, 2022: 468). Thus, the kitchen, and naturally food culture, also provides a sense of belonging. The historical background of this cultural heritage is associated in many cultures with a sacred event, particularly Prometheus's fire, or with a cultural hero. For example, in Ancient Greece, fire was a secret discovered on Olympus by an unknown figure. According to ancient Iranian belief, fire came into the light of day from the heart of a rock struck by the arrow of a hunter who missed his target. The Dakota Indians believe that fire was drawn from the earth by the claws of the Jaguar God. According to the Aztecs, the first fire was the sun illuminated by the gods in primordial darkness (Armesto, 2007: 20-21). These mythological explanations are symbolic references that emphasize the act of cooking as a source of cultural expression and meaning.

Foods can carry specific symbolic meanings through elements such as the composition of their ingredients, methods of preparation, and forms of presentation. For example, in Turkish culture, pilaf (cooked rice) is regarded as a symbol of values such as wealth, abundance, and prosperity, whereas in Italian cuisine, spaghetti represents family unity and sharing. These examples demonstrate that foods function as cultural symbols. However, the symbolism of food is not limited to tangible meanings; it also conveys metaphorical significance. Symbols play an important role in highlighting the metaphorical meanings of foods and are frequently employed for this purpose. Through symbols, foods are able to express deeper meanings beyond their literal significance. For this reason, food plays an important role not only in terms of nourishment but also as a form of cultural expression.

This study uses a small part of data from field research done between September 19 - 29, 2021, and May 22 - 28, 2022. It looks at how food relates to its symbolic meanings as discussed earlier. In the first phase of the project on Turkish and Moldovan culinary culture, the expert committee did field research. They worked in Türkiye from September 19 to 29, 2021. The Turkish part of the fieldwork was limited to cities included in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy. The expert committee started its research in Ankara on 19 September 2021. Then, it visited Afyonkarahisar, Antalya, Gaziantep, and Hatay. The research ended in Istanbul on 29 September 2021. In the second phase of

the project, field research was conducted in Moldova, beginning on 22 May 2022. The expert committee observed the villages of Comrat, Ceadîr-Lunga, Beşalma, Congaz, Avdarma, and Palanca. They finished their research in Taraclia on 28 May 2022. Throughout the research process, a total of 88 informants were interviewed, 48 from Türkiye and 40 from Moldova. In the field research, we found many aspects of food culture. These include ceremonial foods, festive foods, and foods linked to rites of passage. We also looked at cooking methods, storage practices, and stages of food preparation and presentation. However, this study focuses only on the symbolic meanings of food. Notable symbolic meanings found in the field research include kolac, koliva, mamaliga, adım pidesi, gelin pidesi/ bal pitesi, zama, chicken, sarma, and more. Many informants noted the symbolic meanings of food in the compilations. The ongoing presence of this cultural knowledge in our memory shows how food connects to culture.

The symbolic meanings of food may vary depending on culture, belief, history, and personal experience. A single dish can carry very different symbolic meanings for an individual or a community. In the field research, *kolac*, described by informants as "a type of ritual and ceremonial bread," stands out as an important symbolic food. Many people believe that you can't feel full at a table without bread. This idea is a key part of Turkish cuisine and its food culture. Moreover, the expression "let us eat bread" used instead of "let us eat" in villages (Alabacak, 2018: 60) emphasizes the significance of bread. Bread symbolizes abundance. It's found in many oaths, proverbs, and idioms. Examples include "tuz ekmek hakkı," "ekmek, Kur'an çarpsın," "ekmek parası," and "ekmeğini yemek" (Sevinç, 2023: 144). This shows how important bread is in our culture. The statement by one of our informants, Natalia Gradinaru (I8); "At birth, there is a type of bread called *kolac*, that is, birth *kolac*. It is said to bring health to the child and abundance to the household. This reflects the shared belief that kolac symbolizes both health and prosperity.

Food is an important means of establishing bonds among people. When people eat together, they talk, laugh, share, and enjoy being together. Food can provide clues about a culture's past, geography, traditions, and beliefs. Similarly, symbols can offer insight into the details of a culture. These symbols may reflect how people perceive the world, how they communicate with one another, and how they interact socially. Rebora (2003: 14) summarizes the link between food and symbols. He says, "Both the kitchen and banquet tables are forms of communication and symbolic meaning." Our informant, Anatoliy F. Orlioglo (I1), adds, "The dough of kolac is yellow and is called 'twin.' Kolac is given at weddings to symbolize the union of two families." This highlights the various symbolic meanings of kolac in the culture. In this context, the kolac in the wedding ritual shows a change. Victor Turner's (2020) concept of "liminal" helps explain this. A wedding is a threshold ritual where people

shift from their family roles into marriage. Sharing kolac symbolizes new social bonds and a shared hope for their lasting nature.

Food and the symbolic meanings it carries help us understand how people communicate with one another and with the world. Both food and symbols play an important role in human life and are closely interconnected. Our informants, Natalia Gradinaru (I8) and Evdokia Soroceanu (I5), said; "After burying the deceased in the cemetery, they make a large amount of bread called *kolac*. These are distributed in the cemetery for the dead." refer to the fact that *kolac* is not only present in rites of passage such as birth and marriage, but is also used as a symbolic food believed to influence the deceased's afterlife.

Food can sometimes be a ceremonial offering given in memory of the deceased, and at other times a symbol of rebirth. One of our informants, Anna Statova (I2), expresses this by stating, "They place chicken and eggs on top of the *kolac*. It is for rebirth and long life," indicating that *kolac* symbolizes rebirth. Another informant, Elizayada Papova (I4), notes, "When the bride arrives at the house, they place a chair outside and put the *kolac* there; the bride sits on a cushion. The *kolac* is decorated; they place sweets and flowers on it. After breaking the *kolac*, everyone takes a piece so that the newly married couple's fortune will be open." These statements emphasize that guests are expected to take a piece of *kolac* to bring good fortune to the bride's new home. This practice is also noteworthy in that it refers to the community's shared mode of perception and collective sensibility.

The meanings carried by food make references to various domains of the culture in which it is embedded. In Turkish culture, the belief that the soul will reach *uçmak* (heaven) is symbolized by the idea that the soul takes flight toward the sky like a bird. Anatoliy F. Orlioglo (I1) said about the kolac: "There was a dove symbol on top. This shows the dove flying to the heavens, or the soul's ascent to the sky." His statement suggests that the symbols in food decoration come from both conscious choices and cultural traditions passed down through generations.

Food, while being an object of pleasure, can at times also carry tragic meanings, similar to a lament performed after the death of a person. *Koliva*, encountered during the field research, is generally a dish prepared for funerals and ceremonies commemorating the dead (Petrovici, 2009: 140). Among the Turks, there is a belief that the deceased personally participates in the *yuğ* ceremonies held after death. For this reason, dishes referred to as "ölü aşı/yuğ aşı" were prepared in order to satiate the soul of the deceased and to please them. Today, the tradition of *ölü aşı* continues as a widespread practice in Anatolia (Ermeçli, 2022: 95-96). There is a parallel between the *ölü helvası* made for the deceased in Türkiye and the *koliva* found in our field research.

Cultural diversity related to food also contributes to understanding different cultures and ways of life through metaphors. For example, expressions such as "Chinese cuisine" or "Italian cuisine" provide insight into the foods of particular countries and the cultural significance attributed to them. Similarly, metaphors can be used to understand the emotions and thoughts of different cultures. The statement of our informant Anatoliy F. Orlioglo (I1); "*Koliva* has a distinct symbol. It was placed on the table while still hot, and the steam rising from the food was likened to the soul of the deceased". The words "as if the soul of the deceased were ascending to the sky" demonstrate that *koliva*, known as a funerary dish, continues to sustain its symbolic meaning within oral memory. The statement of our informant Elizayada Papova (I4); "There is *koliva*, like your *helva*. We take it to the priest to be blessed and then distribute it. Its steam must still be rising. We give food on the 9th, 20th, and 40th days, as well as after 3, 6, and 9 months, and *koliva* is prepared on all of these occasions." points both to a shared culinary culture and to the tradition, present in Turkish and Moldovan cultures, of offering food at specific intervals after death. The words of our informant Anna Statova (I2); "We wash the wheat for *koliva* nine times. First, you take the wheat for *koliva* and say a prayer. You change its water nine times so that the soul of the deceased may rise nine levels and travel comfortably through all nine layers." refer to the belief in the nine layers of the sky. In Turkish mythology, the sky is believed to consist of nine layers. These layers are governed by different deities or spirits, and each layer has its own distinct characteristics. According to this belief system, when people die, their souls go to one of these layers. The fact that *koliva* likewise carries a ninefold symbolism reflects traces of this same line of thought.

Food is not only an indicator of the cultural diversity of societies but also a field for demonstrating skill. In earlier periods, *mamaliga*, one of the staple foods of the Gagauz, is a dish made from cornmeal and is also known in Türkiye as *kaçamak* or *mamalika* (Sevinç, 2023: 129). Beyond its place in food culture, *mamaliga* is also regarded as a criterion in evaluating the skillfulness of housewives (Sevinç, 2023: 132). Similarly, preparing *sarma* is an important means of demonstrating culinary skill. Today, the tradition of making *sarma* continues in Comrat and is generally practiced during festive occasions. *Sarma* is usually prepared using vine leaves and cabbage (Petrovici, 2009: 140). One of the most well-known and traditional dishes of Turkish cuisine, *sarma* is made using various leaves such as vine leaves, white cabbage, black cabbage, cherry leaves, and mulberry leaves. The statement of our informant Victor Cojuhari (I13) ; "The size and shape of *sarma* show the skill of a housewife in Moldova; a true housewife makes the smallest ones. The level of skill is measured accordingly." represents the relationship between food and skill in Moldovan cuisine.

Food, as a component of various rites of passage, also carries ritualistic meanings. In Comrat, a child's first step is celebrated through a special custom. As the child stands up and attempts to take their first step, the mother performs a cutting gesture behind the child with scissors while saying, "I cut the tether of … (the child's name)" (Petrovici, 2009: 205-206). This tradition continues to be practiced in Türkiye today and is popularly known as "adım çöreği," "tay çöreği," or "köstek çözme" (Ermeçli, 2022: 66). Among the Gagauz, when a child begins to take their first steps, a ceremony called "cutting the tether" (*kösteeni kesmek*) is performed. When the child first starts to stand on their feet, a chicken feather is cut with scissors between the child's legs, and the following words are spoken: "Walk, walk, golden feet, be strong like iron." On that day, unleavened bread is prepared in the household. This bread is called *adım çörââ*. Honey is spread on the bread, and it is distributed by running to relatives and neighbors (Perçemli, 2011: 60; Sevinç, 2023: 125). The statements of our informants Patronka Doyikava (I10); "There is a round flatbread made at festivals; they roll it quickly under the children so that they will walk fast. They call it *adım pidesi*." and Kira Dragni (I7); "When a child starts to walk, we make a round flatbread, pass it between the baby's legs, and roll it." demonstrate that this tradition continues as a living heritage in Moldova.

Food, as an essential component of social practices, carries significant meanings within wedding traditions. Among the Gagauz, the "Dough Ceremony" (*Hamur Töreni*), practiced until the 1950s, signified the beginning of the wedding and was usually held on Thursdays (Iusiumbeli, 2008: 110; Petrovici, 2009: 215). The candles lit during the ceremony were believed to have a magical function. According to Gagauz belief, the burning candles drove away evil spirits and prevented them from mixing with the dough. Once the dough was prepared and the breads were baked in the oven, honey was spread on one loaf, which was then cut and offered to those present on a tray. According to a belief formerly widespread among the Gagauz, whoever ate this honeyed bread would have their fortune opened (Iusiumbeli, 2008: 100-111). A similar mode of thought can also be found in Türkiye's province of Kütahya, where there is a tradition of offering *gelin çöreği* to the bride when she arrives at the groom's household (Tiryaki, 2011: 11). The statements of our informants Olga Georgiva (I9), Elena Ratkava (I3), and Yelena Bargan (I14); "Before the wedding, young people would gather on Saturday. The wedding would take place on Sunday. On Saturday, before the marriage, in addition to *kolac*, they made *pidka* for the wedding. It was like flatbread and not very large because honey was spread on it. The groom's friends would take this *pidka* and dance with it, and while they danced, everyone tried to take a piece of it. Whoever took the most pieces would become the head of the household and have authority. The bride's side and the groom's side were together; whichever side took the most pieces would have the one whose word prevailed." demonstrate that the tradition

of the Dough Ceremony continues to exist among the people, albeit with certain transformations. Considering the dynamic nature of culture, such changes can be regarded as inevitable.

Within the traditional food culture of the Gagauz Turks, the distribution of meat portions among family members is particularly noteworthy. This practice generally applies to dishes prepared from poultry. The distribution of the meat pieces from poultry dishes is most often carried out by one of the elder family members who serves the meal (such as the mother, grandmother, or maternal grandmother). The allocation of meat portions is made by taking into account the number of family members. Since men are regarded as the providers of the household, the thigh portion is given to senior male family members; the drumstick to male children; the part containing the reproductive organs to the mother or mother-in-law; the wings to daughters, with the belief that they will one day "fly away" from the household; the shoulder blade and rib portions to the bride; and the liver, heart, and gizzard to the youngest members of the family. Additionally, among the Gagauz Turks, there is a belief that a person who eats the leg of a chicken, hen, or rooster will become a liar. In the distribution of meat from small livestock during meals, the brain and eyes of a lamb are given to children so that they will be intelligent and have good eyesight (Petrovici, 2019: 471). The statement of our informant Galina Voda (I6); "There is a special case related to *zama*: the wings were given to girls and the legs to boys, so that girls would fly off and settle in a good home, and boys would remain strong on their feet." demonstrates that, among the Gagauz Turks, the sharing of specific animal parts during meals continues to carry particular symbolic meanings today and that cultural sustainability persists in this respect.

Another tradition present in Gagauz culture is the custom of "dancing the chicken" at weddings, which is also found in Anatolia. As a henna night custom, the practice known as "tavuk alma" is widely observed in Bursa and, although its details vary across different regions of Anatolia, it is performed in a largely similar manner. For example, in Bartın, in weddings that extend over three days or a week, the weekly version includes a day known as "tavukçu olma," held on Wednesday. On this day, guests invited to the bride's house for the "tavukçu olma" proceed to the groom's house with musical instruments and festivities. In this celebration, where the groom welcomes the *tavukçu* group together with musicians, the women known as *tavukçu* are hosted by the groom's family and are offered food until the evening (Akgün, 2020: 161). The statements of Natalia Gradinaru (I8); "As a symbol, a chicken is danced at weddings. A cooked chicken is made to dance. In the past, it was specially dyed and marked so that there would be more children. In this case, the best man must purchase the chicken." and Tatiana Casian (I11); "There is chicken dancing; for abundance, the best man would definitely buy the chicken." represent

the belief that the *tavuk oynatma/tavuk alma* ritual ensures both the continuation of lineage and abundance.

Foods and symbols occupy an important place in human life as forms of cultural expression. Over time, changing global dynamics have led to various transformations in culture. Especially in recent periods, it can be argued that "liquid lives" in a globalizing world (Bauman, 2020) place cultural diversity at risk. While globalization increases cultural interaction, it can also lead to the homogenization of traditional cultural identities and the erosion of local cultures. Tatiana Popa's (I12) statement, "What we eat today did not exist in the past; new dishes have replaced the foods of the poor," and Natalia Gradinaru's remark, "Until the 1920s, white bread was regarded as a food of the wealthy, and during that period it was baked only on special occasions," are just a few examples illustrating how cultural change makes itself felt through the symbolic meanings of food. Food carries various meanings in relation to cultural status and identity, and cultural transformations can, in this respect, lead to shifts in the symbolic meanings attributed to food.

In conclusion, food is more than just a way to satisfy hunger. It shows our sense of belonging, shapes social connections, and reflects our identity. While culinary culture embodies the history, values, and beliefs of societies, it also conveys deeper meanings through symbols. For this reason, the ways in which foods are prepared, presented, and consumed carry cultural meanings and reveal social codes. The symbolism of food helps us understand how societies and cultures function, how they communicate, and how they construct their identities. This study demonstrates that food culture is not limited to nourishment alone, but is also a significant component of social bonds, traditions, and rituals. Moreover, as illustrated through the examples discussed, Turkish and Moldovan culinary cultures are shown to share a shared memory in many respects with regard to the symbolic meanings attributed to food.

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I7: Kira Dragni, 1975, Kongaz.

I8: Natalia Gradinaru, 1979, Kişinev.

I9: Olga Georgiva, 1973, Taraclia.

I10: Patronka Doyikava, 1955, Kongaz.

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Bread and Flour Products in the Traditional Culture of the Gagauz People

Evdokia Sorochyanu*

Bread occupies a special place in the life of the Gagauz people. It is one of the key symbols of traditional culture. Its great importance is reflected in a saying that has been preserved among the people: *Ekmektän taa büü var mı?!* (literally, What could be more essential than bread?!). For the Gagauz people, bread is the beginning of beginnings, which is why it has become sacred. Thus, before cutting bread, it was customary to bless it with the sign of the cross, and it was customary to kiss a piece of bread that had fallen on the floor. It was forbidden to quarrel or use foul language at the table while bread was present. People swore by bread: *ekmecıı öperim* (literally, I kiss the bread); *Allah ekmeemi alsın!* (literally, May God take my bread away!) and cursed: *Ekmek ursun!* (literally, May bread punish you!)*/ Ekmek çarpsın!* (literally, May bread petrify you!). Various beliefs and superstitions were associated with bread (bread should not be kept upside down, as it could "turn upside down" your whole life; a piece of bread that fell on the floor foreshadowed the arrival of a guest, etc.). People compose proverbs, songs and ballads about bread, and poets write poems. Bread or bread cakes are always present in fairy tales. Traditionally, Gagauz people welcome guests with bread and salt, *tuz-ekmek*. (Photo 1). Bread symbolizes fertility and prosperity, while salt protects against evil forces and serves as a contract ("right of salt").

Over many centuries, the Gagauz people have accumulated vast experience in growing grain crops, processing grain, making dough and baking various bread products. The Gagauz people baked unleavened and sour bread from wheat, rye and corn flour or mixtures thereof. Until the mid-20th century, the most common method of baking bread was to bake unleavened flatbreads (*çörek*, *pita, turta*) in the hot ashes of the hearth, on the hot, ash-cleaned base of an open hearth

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(Photo 2) or on a hot dry frying pan (*pazlama*). The flatbreads were used to make *kabartma*: a prepared flatbread made from bread yeast dough was sprinkled with brynza cheese, a second flatbread was placed on top, the edges of the flatbreads were pinched and wrapped, and then baked like ordinary flatbreads on the oven floor.

In the last century, bread (*somun ekmek*) was baked from sour dough in a round shape on a baking tray and in frying pans: it was mainly rye (*çavdar ekmää*), less often wheat (*booday ekmää* or *pak ekmek*). Bread was often made from a mixture of wheat and rye flour (esmer *ekmek*) or wheat and corn (*malaylı ekmek*), sometimes from a mixture of all three grains, and bread with bran was also baked. Bread was often replaced by corn flatbread (*malay*). The Gagauz people's favourite dish was Moldovan mamaliga, made from corn flour (Photo 3). It should be noted that the Gagauz and Moldovans have many types of bread products in common. This is due to the availability of common grain products, identical cooking technologies and similar traditions of eating ritual breads.

Nowadays, bread is bought in shops in cities, but in villages most housewives still bake their own bread. In most cases, it is made from wheat flour.

Until the mid - 20th century, the daily food of the poor consisted of various types of flour soups. Nowadays, few housewives prepare *bulamaç, uuma çorba, çullama*, *tarana* or *candra*, but the older generation still remembers them well.

The oldest soup is *bulamaç*.[1] To prepare it, flour is first fried in oil, then water is added to make a thick flour porridge (GRMS, 1973: 95; GRRS, 2002: 106; ESTYA, vol. 2: 259).[2] In addition, dialects have another meaning for the word *bulamaç*, namely: a flour slurry (a small amount of flour mixed with water) added to sauces (*manca*) to thicken them. Hence, all types of dishes containing fried flour or added flour slurry are called *manca*: *suvannı manca*, *kartofi mancası*, *patlıcan mancası.* In the Gagauz culinary tradition, *manca* is a dish whose basic ingredients are meat/fish/potatoes/onions/tomatoes, and flour is used only for thickening. M. V. Marunevich mentions in his monograph that the Gagauz people prepared *manca* from eggs mixed with brynza cheese and corn flour (*meshmer mancası*) (Marunevich, 1988: 163). This type of dish is known to many Balkan peoples.

1 *Bulamaq/bulamaç* is an ancient type of soup known to many Turkic peoples. The name comes from the Old Turkic verb root *bula-*, meaning 'to stir, mix, blend' (ESTYA, vol. 2, 258-260).

2 Soup made from roasted flour is found in Türkiye ('kavrulmuş un çorbası' (*Senirkent, Yukarıdinek* Şarkikaraağaç-Isparta) (ZTS, https://turuz.com/search/default?content=book&q=bulamaç) and in Bulgaria (BRR, 1975: 49).

The thick flour soup *çullama,*[3] known in some villages, is essentially analogous to the dish *bulamaç*. This soup is prepared very quickly, which has led to the semantic field of the verb *çullama* being expanded to include a new meaning "to prepare food quickly" (*çullamaa bir manca*). The dish *çullama* is also known as meat cooked in sauce. A similar dish is known to Moldovans, and it is also common in Romania and some regions of Bulgaria.

The Gagauz people know the word *çullama* in the following meanings: 1) "a dish made of something", 2) "baked in dough; meat roll" (GRMS, 1973: 553; GRRS, 2002: 171) "thick flour soup"; "meat in flour sauce" (Sorochianu, 2020: 49-50). In Turkish cuisine, the name *çullama* refers to various dishes: 1, thick flour soup; 2) a flour dish with fried rabbit/lamb meat (TTS, II, 1991: 226; THADS, III, 1968: 3; stewed leg; 4) meat baked in dough (TPC, 1977: 201). Nowadays, the dish *çullama* (meat in white sauce) is being revived by the Gagauz people, and it is served in restaurants as a Gagauz national dish. (Photo 4).

In the past, according to informants' recollections, poor families prepared a soup from corn grits or flour – *candra/jandra* (Nikoglo, 2004: 85). Corn flour or grits are gradually added to salted boiling water and cooked until ready, resulting in a liquid porridge. In Vulcanesti, this porridge is used to make *sızlı mamaliga*. Brynza cheese is sprinkled on the bottom of a frying pan, covered with the prepared porridge, then another layer of brynza cheese is added, and hot oil is poured over the top. The sizzling sound of the hot oil (sız) gave the dish its name (Photo 5).

Tarana and *uuma çorba* (*umaç çorbası*) soups are similar in terms of preparation. Water was sprinkled into a bowl of flour, forming lumps, which were then rubbed with the hands, sifted through a sieve and thrown into boiling water, resulting in a floury broth with pieces of dough. A later variation of this soup is soup with dumplings (*găluşti*), borrowed by the Gagauz from the Moldavians, who in turn borrowed it from the Ukrainians. The dough (not too thick) is kneaded with water and eggs, small pieces (balls) are separated from it and thrown into the soup (vegetable broth). Soups with pieces of dough (*uuma çorba*, *tarana, galuşka çorbası, kesmä çorbası*), which appeared in different historical periods, were known in all Gagauz villages. Some of them (*galuşka çorbası, kesmä çorbası*) are still eaten today.

Pampuşki, borrowed from Ukrainian cuisine, were usually prepared together with bread. Small buns were baked from bread dough, which were then poured over with garlic sauce, made from crushed garlic and salt with the addition of water and hot sunflower oil.

3 See the 4-volume Explanatory Dictionary of the Turkish Language: *çullama* 2. Thick flour soup (TTS, II, 1991: 226).

The Gagauz bake pancakes (*lalangı*, *lalangıta*) and fritters (*akıtma*) from liquid dough. Wheat flour is used to make these products, to which eggs, a little sugar, salt and sunflower oil are added.

Archaic cooking techniques include flour products fried in vegetable oil or animal fat. These include *gevrek*, *gözlemä*, *katlama*, which are common among the Gagauz, as well as doughnuts and donuts made from unleavened and yeast dough, with or without filling (*kabartma, lokum/kirde/dizman*, *sulu gözleme, gogoloş/gogoş/gogoneli*)[4].

Gözlemä is a widely popular dish among the Gagauz people. This term refers to round, thin flatbreads made from unleavened dough and fried in vegetable oil, either without filling (in Vulcanesti they are called *boş gözleme* (*boş* – "empty, without filling") (Photo 6 and Photo 6a) or with filling (Photo 7 and Photo 7a).

To make *gözlemä*, a medium-thickness dough is kneaded. Small portions of dough are rolled into balls, each ball is rolled into a thin flatbread with a diameter of 20 - 25 cm. The filling is placed on one half of the flatbread and covered with the other half. The edges are pinched with your fingers or a fork and fried in vegetable oil. (Photo 7 and Photo 7a).

There are other ways to make *gözlemä*. Roll out large thin sheets of dough with a diameter of 50-60 cm. Brynza cheese is placed on half of the rolled-out sheet, and the other half is used to cover the first. The edge of the saucer is cut into separate pieces, which are then fried in oil (Photo 8, Photo 8a, Photo 8b and Photo 8c).

In Moldovan villages in southern Moldova, these fried flatbreads stuffed with brynza cheese are called *ghizlomeli, ghezlemele, ghizolomele, or gizlomele* (Nicoală, 2013: 183). It is highly likely that Moldovans borrowed this dish from their neighbours, the Gagauz people.

Layered unleavened flatbreads filled with brynza or cottage cheese (possibly with the addition of green onions or herbs) are called *katlama by* the Gagauz people.[5] The name of the dish is based on the method of its preparation, namely, "folded in half".

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4 Pieces of dough fried in mutton fat or oil (*baursaki*, *lokum)* are a "purely pastoral" dish and are shared in the cuisine of a number of Turkic peoples – Kazakhs, Bashkirs, Nogais (Shitova, 1979: 118; Gadzhieva, 1976: 201). The technology of preparing the dish (frying in oil or animal fat) dates back to nomadic life (Studenetskaia, 1974: 158).

5 There are many variations of *katlama* among the Turkic peoples. *Katlama* (a dish of the Nogai, Bashkir, Crimean Tatar, Tatar and Uzbek national cuisines (Nog. *katlama*, Bashk. *катлама*, Crimean Tatar *qatlama, къатлама*, Tat. *katlama*) is a steamed dough roll with meat filling (Gadzhieva, 1976: 201; https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Катлама). Uzbek *katlama* is a layered yeast/non-yeast flatbread (with or without filling) fried in sunflower oil http://www.edimdoma.ru/retsepty/25463-uzbekskaya-katlama).

Gagauz pyushki differ locally in the details of their preparation and are called by different names in different villages: *lokum/gogoloş,*[6]*kabartma*, *sulu gözleme*. In Comrat, pieces of unleavened or yeast dough fried in fat or oil are called *lokum*. A similar flour product is known as a sweet treat in Persian, Arabic, Greek and Turkish cuisines. When served, they are usually drizzled with honey or dipped in sugar syrup and sprinkled with cinnamon. In Turkish dialects, these sweets are known as *lokma and lokum* (TRS, 1977, p. 590). Both of these Turkish lexemes were borrowed by the Gagauz and became established in dialects with the following meanings: *lokum* 1) pieces of yeast dough fried in fat; 2) a pie with cottage cheese or brynza, laid out in small pieces on a baking tray and covered with sour cream and egg; *lokma* is a piece of meat (GRRS, 2002: 448).

There are different ways to prepare *lokum cake* and different names for it. *Lokum*, *dizman*[7] (*gıţımani*) are prepared as follows: using your thumb, make indentations in small pieces of unleavened or yeast dough, place brynza or cottage cheese in them, place them on a greased baking tray, pour over a mixture of eggs and sour cream, and bake in the oven. (Photo 9 and Photo 9a).

Another option: roll out a sheet of yeast dough into strips 8 - 10 cm wide, spread brynza or cottage cheese on them and pinch them along the edge. The strips with filling are cut into egg-sized pieces, laid in rows on a baking tray with the cut side up, each piece is pressed down in the middle with your fingers, poured over with sour cream or sour milk mixed with egg, and baked. (Photo 10).

This dish is prepared in a similar way in Vulcanesti, where it is called *kirde*[8], while the Gagauz people of the Azov region call a similar dish *kedi basılmaa*. In Chadyr-Lunga, *kirdä* is made in the form of a roll, with a filling of brynza cheese mixed with cottage cheese (Photo 11). A similar product is called *pesmet* by the Gagauz people of the Azov region (Gagauzy., 2016: 179), and cumaci by the Moldovans (http:// www.moldovenii.md/ru/section/43/content/242).

In Etulia, the term *kirde* refers to a flour-based product filled with quinoa (*kirde otu* – literally, grass for the dish *kirde*, Latin: Atriplex) and fried onions. If the pie contains only onions, the name is specified as *suvannı kirde*.

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6 In Comrat, along with the name *lokum,* the Moldovan terms *gogoloş*, *gogoş, gogoneli* are also used (Marunevich, 1988: 156).

7 *Dizman* is known to Turks in Bulgaria in the variants *dizman* and *dizmana* (Razgrad) (http://. org. tr// dizman/ dizman. html), in Türkiye (Eskişehir) – *dizmana* and *dızmana* (*göçmenböreği*) (https://www. kolaylezzet.com/kolay-cay-saati-tarifleri/corekler/900-dizmana-gocmen-boregi-rumeli-bulgaristan).

8 Turkish *kirde* is similar to a yeast dough product with brynza cheese, topped with sour cream or sour milk mixed with egg (http://www.nefisyemektarifleri.com/tatar-boregi-kirde/ ; www.eksitarif.com/ yemek?tarifi=kirde+tarifi , etc.).

In Vulcanesti, this herb is used to make a pie from unleavened dough, called *otlu pide* (literally, pie with herb). (Photo 12 and Photo 12a).

Among the pastries fried in large quantities of vegetable oil, we should also mention "khrustiki", which are known by various names in different dialects – *kauk*, *gevrek*, *şişik*, *domuz kulaa*, *pirúşka*. This type of pastry was used as a ritual or festive treat. For example, *gevrek* was brought to women in the first days after childbirth, as well as to sick and elderly people. *Gevrek* is a mandatory dish at wedding feasts and various festive tables. (Photo 13).

According to V. A. Moshkov's description, the Gagauz people prepared a dish of pancakes sprinkled with cottage cheese and called it döşemä (Moshkov, 1902, No. 4, p. 31). A similar dish (layered pancakes or thin sheets of dough, also sprinkled with cottage cheese or brynza) is still prepared today. The first sheet of dough is rolled out to a thickness of 1 cm and coated with vegetable oil; one half is sprinkled with a small amount of grated brynza and covered with the other half. The folded sheet is rolled out again as thinly as possible, greased with vegetable oil again and sprinkled with brynza. Then it is folded in half, rolled out again and repeated several times until puff pastry is obtained. The product is greased with oil, placed on a baking tray and baked in an oven or stove.

The national dish of Gagauz cuisine is puff pastry pies with various fillings (*kıırma/ kıvırma*, *döşemä*, *pidä/ pide*): with brynza cheese (*piinirli kıırma/ kıvırma/ pide*), with cottage cheese, which are poured with sour cream whipped with egg (*kaymaklı*) before baking, with quinoa leaves (*otlu pide*), with pumpkin (*kabaklı*), with fried onions (*su*(*v*)*annı*), and less often with cabbage or potatoes (*pazı kartofiylan / laanaylan*). The basis of the technology for all types of pies is thinly rolled unleavened dough, sprinkled with filling and placed in a corrugated (or rolled into a tube) form in moulds (Photo 14 and Photo 14a).

To prepare *katlı pide*/*püsür pide*, roll out a large sheet of unleavened dough thinly, grease it with fat or oil, sprinkle it with brynza cheese (this type of pie is only prepared with brynza cheese filling), roll it up on both sides, with one end turned to the right and and the other to the left. The resulting rolls are placed on top of each other and rolled out into a flatbread the size of a baking tin. Several such flatbreads are prepared for one baking tin, with brynza cheese sprinkled between them. The prepared puff pastry is wrapped in a separate rolled-out sheet and placed in the baking tin, then coated with egg yolk on top. It is baked in the oven. Some housewives pour sweetened water over the pastry before serving. There is also a simplified version of this type of pie: thin flatbreads the size of the baking tin are rolled out, placed in the tin in layers, each layer is greased with animal fat or vegetable oil and sprinkled with brynza or cottage cheese (cottage cheese mixed

with *kirde otu*). The Gagauz people of the Azov region call this type of puff pastry pie (up to 20 layers) *piinirli* or *kuru kıırma* (Gagauz..., 2016: 179).

In the village of Etulia, there is another type of puff pastry called *saç pidesi* (literally, "pan pie"). Thinly rolled sheets of dough are placed in a small pan and topped with cottage cheese or brynza. The edges of the dough are folded inwards, giving the pastry the shape of an envelope. Each envelope is lightly rolled out, fried in a pan with vegetable oil or fat, several envelopes are stacked together and topped with sour cream before serving.

Makarina (boiled pieces of dough in the shape of triangles, rhombuses or "bows") is made from unleavened dough. A large sheet is rolled out (as for *kyirma*), cut first into strips, and then the strips are cut into rectangular pieces, which are pinched in the middle. This gives them a bow shape. *Makarina* is cooked like pasta. After cooking, sprinkle brynza cheese on the bottom of the dish, drain *the makarina* from the colander onto it and pour hot oil or fat on top.

The dough for homemade noodles (*kesmä*) is kneaded with eggs (rarely with water). Roll out the dough sheet and dry it slightly. Roll it into a roll (on a rolling pin), cut it into two pieces, divide each piece into 2 - 3 more pieces, then cut into strips. (Photo 15). The noodles are added to soup (*kesmä çorbası*) or cooked as a separate dish with or without meat (*kesmä*). In Chadyr - Lunga and some other villages, noodles are called *çorba* (the whole is used to mean a part). Soup with homemade noodles is called *borç çorbêylan* here, and noodles with meat are called *çorba lokmêylan* (literally 'soup/borscht with meat'). In the vast majority of other dialects, the term *çorba* refers to soup/borscht.

Bread is one of the most important components of traditional Gagauz culture. In ritual use, bread acts as a "text" in which socially significant cultural information is stored in coded form and transmitted to future generations. Its semantics and symbolism reveal the worldview characteristics of the Gagauz people at various stages of their ethnic history.

Bread accompanies a person from birth to death. Every important event in the life of a Gagauz is accompanied by rituals involving bread. For example, immediately after the birth of a child, the midwife would rub a piece of bread on the newborn's navel, saying, "May he love bread" (a metaphor *for bread as life*), and when a person passes away, they bake *can pitası* (here, bread is a symbol of the soul, destiny, and the continuation of the family line).

Bread (bread products), flour and grain are essential components of all family (birth, wedding and funeral-memorial), calendar (Christmas, New Year, Maslenitsa, Easter, etc.) holidays, customs and rituals, and they play their own role and have their own purpose in the structure of each ritual.

In the rituals of birth (celebrations in honour of the birth of a baby) and the first year of a child's life, bread is present in the form of grain, flour, flatbread and festive loaves. The main place in the rituals is occupied by a honey flatbread made from unleavened dough – *ballı çörek* or *ballı pita*, which gives the name to the ritual itself – "*pita*", "*küçük pita*", "*büük pita*". The honey flatbread, baked immediately after birth, serves as a symbolic object indicating the beginning of a new life and the receipt of *the* newborn's *share*. According to popular belief, from birth, a child is endowed with *a* personal *share*, *a destiny*, which is predicted by mythical female creatures *(lufusnița*, *dizçä babusu and betkarısı)*. To appease them, ritual flatbreads are baked, smeared with honey and distributed. The Gagauz believe that a child's destiny is "written" by God (Hepsi Allahtan – "Everything comes from God") or the Mother of God, for whom the sacrificial flatbread *Panaya pitası* is baked.

In all significant rituals of the first year of a child's life, the baking of ritual bread, its breaking and distribution are mandatory ritual acts. The unleavened flatbread (Photo 16) was baked by the mother-in-law, who spread honey on it and, raising it high above her head, broke it into pieces, which she immediately distributed to all those present. The custom of breaking bread, which was performed at all family celebrations to mark the birth of a baby, and its distribution was a ritual of redistribution *of shares* (all women present were given *a new share*). The baptism of a child (the fact of its acceptance into Christianity) is one of the initial rites, where ritual bread is also present, but unlike previous celebrations, the unleavened flatbread is replaced by a kalach. The flatbread is replaced by a kalach on the anniversary of the child's birth (*yaş kolacı*). The central event of the holiday is the first ritual haircut of the child – *saçından almak*.

The celebration of a child's first steps (*kösteeni kesmek*) is marked by special rituals. When the child stood up and took its first step, an egg was rolled in front of it, and as it followed the egg, a chicken feather was cut between its legs with scissors, saying: "Git, git, altın ayak –demir Dayak" (Go, go, golden foot – iron support) (Kuroglo, 1980: 33). In honour of this event, special flatbread made from unleavened dough (*adım çörää*)[9] was baked at home, smeared with honey and quickly distributed to relatives and neighbours or broken into pieces and given to the household. In Comrat, it is customary to roll the flatbread between a child's legs; if it rolls far, the child will achieve great heights in life and will have a long and successful life (*uzun ömürlü hem kısmetli*). In some villages, instead of flatbread, they bake kalach (*adım kolacı – literally*, "first step kalach"), which is also smeared

9 A similar set of rituals can be found among other Balkan peoples. In Türkiye, for example, bread in honour of the first step is called *adım çörää* ('first step flatbread') and *tay simidi* (bagel "stood on its feet").

with honey, rolled on the ground ( ) and then distributed to neighbours. At the celebration, guests congratulate the parents, give gifts to the child, and say: "Kut, kut, kendi ekmeenä kendin git! (meaning: 'Have a good journey, earn your own bread through hard work')"! The feast ends with the ritual division of kalach among all the guests.

Gagauz families celebrated the weaning of a child with unique rituals. The mother's breast is smeared with soot, salt or ash. On this day, unleavened bread and eggs (always in ash) are baked. They roll them on the floor, make the child pick them up and say that "he is going to earn his bread" (Moschkov, 1900: 22). Here, the rolling ritual is a symbol of the path of life, and the egg and bread programme a positive process in the child's future independent life.

When the first milk tooth fell out, it was thrown onto the roof of the house, saying: "Garga, garga, na sana kemik dish, ver bana demir dish" (literally: Crow, crow, here's a bone tooth for you, give me an iron one). To appease the bird, the tooth was rolled into bread crumbs and thrown over the head back onto the roof of the house.[10]

Wheat grains and flour in family rituals symbolise fertility, abundance and healthy offspring. Wheat grains in the ritual of the first bathing of a newborn symbolise the birth of new life, and their abundance symbolises many children in the future. In the ritual of gift exchange between the woman in labour and the midwife, flour symbolises the continuation of the process of childbearing (productive magic). Kutya (*koliva*), used in the ritual of "purification" of the new mother on the 40th day after giving birth, is a kind of communion (initiation rite) that allows a woman to enter life in her new role as a mother. In addition, the grains here have a purifying function.

Bread is present at all stages of the wedding ceremony, and its life-giving power is transferred to the bride and groom, who are called upon to bear children and continue the family line. The symbolism of bread is linked to the general semantics of the wedding ceremony and its main meanings, such as fertility, fate, *the transition* of the young couple to a new status, the union of families, health, purity, honesty, the virginity of the bride, etc. A large number of loaves of bread were baked for the wedding celebration. They differed in shape (*örülü kolaç*, *sinidä*

10 The custom of throwing away milk teeth using certain methods (turning them over the head three times, wrapping them in bread crumbs, throwing them into the fire, on the stove, behind the stove, in the corner of the room) and reciting special formulas is known to various peoples who are distant from each other (Slavs, Germans, Norwegians, French, Georgians). A similar formula to the Gagauz one was found among Bulgarians, Serbs, and Turks. Moldovans, when throwing away a milk tooth, addressed a mouse (Chobanu-Curkan, 2010: 388).

örülü kolaç, *pesmet*), size (*büük kolaç*, *küçük kolaç*), decorations (*alma kolaç*, *arpacıklı kolaç*, *kúkla-kolaç*) or quality (*ballı çörek*, *ballı pita*, *ballı kolaç*, *tatlı kolaç*). Wedding loaves (*düün kolacı*) had different functional purposes, meanings and symbolism (*söz kolacı*, *goda kolacı*, *aarlık kolacı*, *boşçalık kolacı*, *tuz-ekmek kolacı, proşka*, *kaniska*, etc.), marked different stages of the wedding (*prost olmaa kolacı*, *steunoz kolacı*, *kapudan çekmää kolaç*, *söletmää kolacı*, etc.) and were intended for different wedding characters (*gelin kolacı*, *güvää kolacı*, *naşa kolacı / kresniţa kolacı*, *kayınna kolacı*). *Kaniska* (a kalach topped with boiled chicken and hot red pepper) occupies a special place among wedding karavai.[11] (Photo 18). Bread with chicken (originally with a rooster) symbolises the union of two principles: bread is feminine, and the rooster is masculine. In some cases, the chicken duplicated the symbolism of bread (originally with a rooster) associated with female fertility. The distribution *of kaniska* at the end of the wedding signified the strengthening of the marriage union *(the transition* of the newlyweds to the status of spouses) and thus symbolised fertility and the continuation of the family line.

Grain and flour, symbols of fertility, health and wealth, performed productive and protective functions, thus symbolising the constant rebirth of life: young people were showered with grain, the birth of a family was blessed with grain or flour, the mother-in-law's face was smeared with flour and soot, etc. Sifting flour, kneading dough, and baking bread in the *hamur* ritual symbolised the creation of a new family, the union of clans, and the birth of offspring. All members of the clan contributed to the well-being of the new family: relatives brought grain and flour for the preparation of wedding bread.

Along with birth and marriage, burial is a rite of passage that ritually confirms the change in status of a person who has passed into the afterlife. And in this "transition," as in birth or marriage, bread occupies a special place. Bread in the funeral rite symbolically connects the two worlds – the world of the living and the world of the dead. To this day, the Gagauz people have a custom whereby on the day of a person's death, their loved ones must pour a little water at the root of a tree and give the first passer-by a piece of bread, symbolising the connection between earthly life and the world of the dead (the offering was given on the road, i.e. on the way to the other world).

Grain, flour and bread products are used in various acts with different functions and symbolism in the Gagauz funeral rite. Thus, the grain at the head of the

11 The name of the compound wedding loaf *kaniska* reflects its original function – to invite people to a wedding. The term is borrowed from Greek: Greek *κανιçκι* means 'food and drink brought to invite people to a wedding', 'a gift brought to a wedding or christening'. The intermediary language is Bulgarian, in which *kaniska* corresponds to the verb *kanya* 'to invite'.

deceased buries death and at the same time gives birth to new life after death (here, grain is a symbol *of* "life-death"). Bread is a symbol *of fate*. During the funeral, a symbolic redistribution *of the* deceased's *share* takes place. On the one hand, *the* deceased's *share* is distributed among those who remain, and on the other hand, the deceased is given *the share* that is due to him (*can pitası*). Here, bread acts as *a ransom* for the living, returning the dead their *share* in order to protect the living from their presence. Bread also *protects* the living from death by increasing their life force, which resists death (undertakers should not dig graves on an empty stomach; it is customary to feed everyone who is in the deceased's house after dark). In acts of appeasement, bread acts as *a sacrifice*, which should be followed by the well-being of the family and the fertility of the land, which depends on the world of the dead. This function can be seen in the distribution of memorial bread, in bread offerings at the grave, and in sacrifices to the poor and the elderly.

A large number of ritual breads are baked for funerals. Their shapes, sizes, quantities and names vary from place to place, but in terms of structure, semantics and function, they form a unified system. The first ritual bread is offered to the soul of the deceased, and is called *can pitası* (literally, "bread for the soul of the deceased"). It is a round unleavened flatbread (or three unleavened flatbreads) that was baked immediately after the person's death in the ashes of the oven, sprinkled with wine and distributed among all the funeral participants. (Photo 19). The flatbread was distributed while still hot, "so that the hot steam would make it easier *for the soul* to leave." A piece of this bread was also placed in the coffin of the deceased or in the sleeve of their clothing as a sign that the deceased's *share* in the house was no longer there. The "bread of the soul" was offered to a person who entered the room where the body of the deceased was being washed, "thus fulfilling the duty of hospitality for the deceased for the last time" (Moschkov, 1902: 4). The act of hospitality towards the living signified the continuation of established traditions *of life* after the death of one of the family members.

In many Gagauz villages, on the day of death, triangular-shaped *kapite* (*kapiti*) breads are also baked. This is sacrificial bread, whose anthropomorphic shape represents the deceased. Perhaps the triangular shape of the product symbolised the completion of the life cycle: birth – marriage – death. In some villages, kalachi called *kapite* were baked in the shape of a cross, which, in our opinion, is a later phenomenon that appeared under the influence of the Christian church. According to tradition, they are hung on a memorial tree (*ölünün dalı*). These breads were intended for higher powers. They are distributed whole and given to the priest, through whom a symbolic connection with God is established. Whole bread symbolises unity, health, prosperity and wealth for the entire family, and its distribution symbolises the continuation of life after death and eternal

renewal. Cross-shaped funeral breads *called kaşti* were also intended for the priest (Marunevich, 1988: 157). They were also sacrificial bread for the higher powers (God and the saints).

Special kalachi were baked – *arangil kolacı* (*literally,* archangel kalachi), intended for Archangel Michael (the guide of souls to the afterlife), which were also given to the priest (Photo 19b). According to Gagauz beliefs, the soul of the deceased ascends to heaven via a ladder, which is reflected in the ritual bread baked in the shape of a ladder (*merdiven kolacı* – literally ladder kalach), which was tied to a ritual tree set up at the head of the deceased[12] .

In the event of the death of a young man or woman in Gagauz villages, a wedding kalach *called kaniska* was baked and carried at the front of the funeral procession. At the cemetery, it was broken into pieces and distributed to all participants in the funeral. When performing ritual actions with wedding bread at a funeral, a wedding is symbolically reenacted as a necessary stage of earthly life. It was believed that without completing the full cycle of life, it would be impossible to continue life in the afterlife. According to popular belief, a person would not be able to marry if ritual bread was not baked for them immediately after birth, and would not be able to die if wedding bread was not prepared for them.

A special place in the funeral rite is occupied by the so-called "road kalachi" (*yol kolacı*), which symbolise the life journey of the deceased (the metaphor "bread-path").

The "road kalachi" are wrapped together with a candle in a piece of cloth (*ölümnük bez* 'funeral cloth', *yol bezi* 'road cloth'), symbolising the last stage of human life, and distributed along the road to the cemetery. A small coin is stuck into each "road kalach". (Photo 19g). According to popular belief, the path to the afterlife lies across a bridge over a river, so bridges are laid out along the entire route to the cemetery – *köprü bezi* (literally, bridge cloth), on which *köprü kolacı* (literally, bridge kalach) are left. The number of road kalach varies from 9 to 24. According to popular belief, 24 kalach are distributed to help the soul overcome the 24 trials it encounters along the way. These kalach are a kind of tribute (as indicated by their name – *vama kolacı* (literally, customs kalach)), helping the soul to overcome all kinds of obstacles and ascend to the kingdom of heaven.

Grain, like bread, is present in the funeral ritual from the first day of a person's death. Following the ritual flatbread *can pitası*, the relatives of the deceased begin to prepare kutia (*kóliva / kóleva*) – a dish made from boiled wheat sweetened with

12 The image of a ladder as a bridge between the world of the living and the world of the dead, between earth and heaven, is shared to many peoples whose rituals involve bread ladders.

sugar, which is consecrated in the church (a cross made of raisins or sweets is placed on top of the kóliva) (Photo 19a). Kóliva is an integral part of the funeral ritual meal, symbolising the end of a person's life. These ideas are expressed in the idiom: *bir kimseyın kolivasını imää* – "to outlive someone".[13] In addition, in funeral and memorial rituals, kolivo is associated with grain, the symbolism of which is linked to the cycle of rebirth: grain buries death and at the same time gives birth to new life after death. It should be noted that *kolivo* as a symbol of "life and death" is present in the rituals of all peoples inhabiting Moldova (among the Gagauz – *kóliva*, among the Bulgarians – *kolivo, zito*; among the Moldovans – *colivă*, among the Ukrainians – *kolivo, pshenitsa*, among the Russians – *kolivo*, kutya).

After the burial, a memorial meal is held. Here, among the memorial ritual dishes[14] , the main role belongs to bread (*üleştirmä kolaç*) and kutia (*koliva*).

In the Gagauz tradition, memorial kalachi are marked with "speaking" definitions: *üleştirmä kolaç* (literally, distributed kalach), *acı kolacı* (literally, kalach of pain), *pomana kolacı* (literally, memorial kalach). Thus, the definition *üleştirmä* (*eleştirmä/ ileştirmä*) reflects the main function of kalach – the distribution of a share (in Gagauz *üleştirmää* – "to distribute treats *for someone's health or* remembrance") (GRRS, 2002: 691). In the Old Turkic language, the root *ülä-* means "to divide, to distribute", *ülüş* – "part, share" (DrTS, 1969: 624-625), in Turkish – üleş "part, share", *üleştirmek "*to distribute, to share out" (TRS, 1977: 887). In the Gagauz name for bread (*üleştirmä / eleştirmä / ileştirmä kolaç*), as in the designation of the action itself (*üleştirмää / eleştirмää / ileştirмää*), reflects the deep symbolism of the ritual – the distribution of the deceased's share between the dead and the living (those present at the funeral[15]), the prepared memorial feast is divided into portions and distributed to relatives, friends and neighbours.

Throughout the year, ritual bread – kalachi, various dough products, flour and grain – is present in calendar customs and rituals with different meanings, symbolism and functional purposes. Ritual bread products are most intensively used during Christmas, New Year and spring holidays. Ritual bread includes flatbreads spread with honey (*ballı çörek, ballı pita*), various types of kalachi, pretzels, bagels (*kolaç*, *kolaççık*, *kolada kolacı*, *krêçun kolacı*, *paska/ kozonak*, *kukla*, *guguşçuk*), homemade cookies (*gevrek/şişik, kovrik, pitiçka*), puff pastries (*kıırma/pida*, *döşemä*), etc. (Photo 20 and Photo 20a).

13 Cf.: The Turks have a similar expression: *kim kimin helvasını yiyecek* (literally, who will eat whose halva), meaning who will outlive whom.

14 The main ritual dishes are lamb (sacrificial animal), beans, wheat porridge (*bulgur*), stewed potatoes, cabbage soup, and stuffed cabbage rolls.

15 After the burial, a glass of wine and a piece of the bread that was just served to the living are left on the grave for the soul of the deceased.

Bread (grain, flour and dough products) is ritualised during *transitional* moments, which are the most sacred times when the interaction between the world of the living and the world of the dead is most active. Thus, during Maslenitsa, *the transition* from the old time to the new, from winter to spring, took place, and future life was ritually "programmed" by eating fatty and dairy foods. This explains the abundance and variety of flour products (*kıırma*, *pidä*, *plaçinta*, *gözlemä*, *döşemä*, *tutmanik*, *lokum*, *kirdä*, *akıtma, lalangıta*) during Shrovetide week, which, being non-ritual food, acquired ritual significance in the "text" of the *Masleniţayı* yapmaa ritual (Soroçanu, 2006). The grain, flour and eggs used to prepare the dishes are symbols of new life, and partaking in them gave the participants in the ritual new strength. In addition, the joint consumption of dishes prepared by each of the participants in the ritual ensured the unity and cohesion of the community. There are many such communal ritual meals in the Gagauz calendar year. They are held on holidays such as *Hederlez*, *Küçük Paskellä*, *Babin günü*, *Rusali*, *Pipiruda*, etc. The song-prayer for rain, performed by the participants of the Pipiruda ritual, is a hymn to the "birth" of bread (from sowing to harvest). In praying to God for rain, the future prosperity of the family was modelled, which is achieved by a rich harvest of bread, a large number of poultry and livestock.

Bread - kalach for carollers during Christmas and New Year's visits to homes (*kolada kolacı*, *plugumoşi kolacı*, *pupalilaysa kolacı*, *eni yıl kolacı, hêy-hêy kolacı*, *trili kolacı*, *kukla*, etc.) served as a ritual exchange of gifts, sealing a pact between people and representatives of the otherworld with the aim of obtaining the goods necessary for humans. (Photo 21, Photo 21a and Photo 21b).

A comprehensive study of bread in the traditional culture of the Gagauz people has shown that a characteristic feature of the consumption of bread and flour products in the folk culture of the Gagauz people is its diversity, the presence of archaic types of flour products, whose origins date back to the nomadic lifestyle of the Gagauz ancestors, and those that were acquired in the Balkans and Bessarabia.

Every important event in the life of a Gagauz is accompanied by rituals involving bread. Bread (dough products), flour and grain are indispensable attributes of all family and calendar customs and rituals, and are endowed with various properties: productive, protective, healing, connecting with ancestors, etc. The diversity of ritual bread products and ritual actions with them are markers of the cultural specificity of Gagauz traditions, reflecting the worldview of the Gagauz people at various stages of their ethnic history.

A comparative analysis of bread consumption in the traditional culture of the Gagauz, Turks and neighbouring peoples showed that there are a large number of identical ritual breads in the culture of these peoples. The greatest similarity in the use of ritual bread (çörek) in the traditions of the Gagauz and Turks is observed

in birth rituals, while in wedding rituals, the variety of bread loaves is designated mainly by Turkic names. In memorial rituals, there are fewer common similarities, but they reveal the deeper meaning of bread and its components. The existence of a large number of direct analogies between the ritual use of bread products in Gagauz ceremonial practices and the family traditions of Bulgarians, Moldovans and other Balkan peoples is the result of interethnic interaction between these peoples over many centuries. The results of the study indicate that the traditions and customs of the Gagauz are part of the shared Balkan culture and fit into the Balkan worldview. They reflect the pagan-Christian syncretism inherent in this ethno-cultural area.

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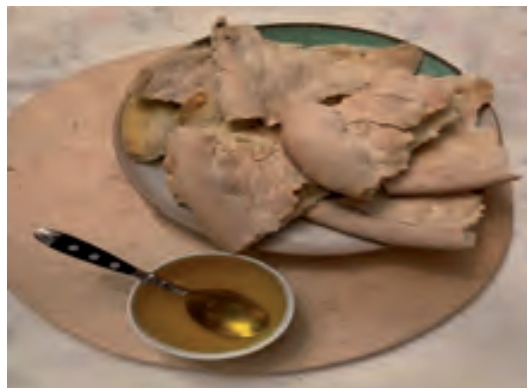

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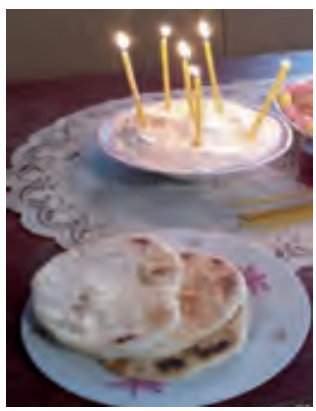


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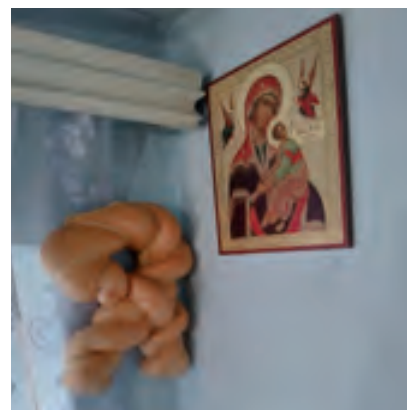

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New Practitioners of Tradition and Gastronomic Tourism: The Case of Moldova and Türkiye

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Dilek Türkyılmaz**

This project, which aims to examine the traditions and rituals shaped around the culinary cultures of Moldova and Türkiye, is an important outcome of the unifying power of the table and its potential for cross-cultural rapprochement. This study is based on data from fieldwork conducted in Türkiye between September 20 - 27, 2021, and in Moldova between May 22 - 29, 2022. The Moldova part of the fieldwork was conducted through interviews with Moldovans, Ukrainians and Bulgarians living in Moldova, and Turkish-origin Orthodox Christians living in the Gagauz Autonomous Region, with the aim of demonstrating culinary diversity and multiculturalism. Given that different regions of Türkiye have different culinary cultures, the fieldwork was conducted in Ankara, Antalya, İstanbul, and the provinces of Afyon, Hatay, and Gaziantep, which are included in the Creative Cities Network, in order to observe Turkish-Moldovan culinary interactions.

Women: The Unchanging Actors of the Kitchen

Looking at the culinary culture in Moldova and Türkiye, it is evident that daily meals prepared at home and winter preparations are predominantly carried out by women. Women are primarily responsible for meeting the food needs of their households. This is understandable when considering that in patriarchal cultures, household tasks and responsibilities are carried out by women. Among the Gagauz, a Turkish-origin Orthodox Christian group, women's roles in the kitchen are much more rigid and indisputable. The informants interviewed in the fieldwork mentioned that in the past, women's roles in the home and kitchen were defined

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by much stricter rules. Women have accepted their responsibilities in the kitchen as a matter of course. *"They (men) have other jobs, we don't let them in the kitchen. In our village, only women cook in the kitchen. Men work outside, tilling the land and looking after the shop. Wine production belongs to men, the kitchen and childcare belong to women."* (I1, Marina Gutsov, Moldova, Gagauz Autonomous Region) These words reveal the place and importance of women in kitchen culture.

It is understood that knowledge about the kitchen is passed down from mother/grandmother/great-grandmother to daughter in both cultures. Although there is a decline in kitchen knowledge in both cultures' metropolitan areas, in rural areas of both cultures, knowledge is passed down among women and emerges when needed.

The question of whether young girls in Moldova know how to cook is answered by the statement, *"It's very shameful not to know here. For example, in our culture, girls are taught everything: handicrafts, housework, cooking. It's very shameful for a girl not to know the kitchen"* (I1, Marina Gutsov, Moldova, Gagauz Autonomous Region). It can be said that the transmission of kitchen culture is related to social life and cultural expectations in both cultures. Bulgarians living in the Taraklia region of Moldova also emphasize the importance of transmitting knowledge about the use of spices, which are important for their cuisine, among women: *"There is a very important difference between us and the Gagauz and Moldovans. We attach great importance to spices, using different spices in each dish. Every woman knows which spice to put in which dish. Not every spice goes into every dish. For example, when a bride comes to her husband's family, if her mother-in-law sees that she is not using the right spices, she understands that her mother did not teach her properly."* (I2, Emilia Bancova, Moldova).

The prevalence and accessibility of digital technologies inevitably bring about a change in the ways information is transmitted. However, it is understood that the internet is used more for trying recipes from different cultures or new recipes rather than traditional dishes.

In the past, knowledge about cooking was passed down at a relatively early age. However, with the spread of women's education and women's participation in the workforce, there has been a shift in the transmission of cooking knowledge and habits, and in how new generations view this knowledge as something worth learning. Nevertheless, in both cultures, cooking knowledge is taught through observation. In both cultures, there are certain dishes that stand out with their regional or national characteristics that women are sure to learn. These include making stuffed grape leaves, making gözleme, cooking zama soup, making mamaliga, and making kavurma, biberli, aşur, etc.

In some regions, the kitchen has become the center of culture and this has been reflected throughout the city. For example, in Hatay, it is understood that young girls are introduced to kitchen training at a very early age. *"Here, girls start at the age of 5, whether at home or outside. They are taught what goes into this and what goes into that. So every 10-year-old child knows what goes into which dish*." (I3, Ayşe Baykuş, Hatay/Samandağ).

However, due to the intensity of women's working lives in cities, some traditional flavors have been forgotten. The replacement of breads made at home in the past with lavash and ready-made yufka is expressed in the words, *"Modern women either buy lavash bread or buy ready-made yufka and don't bother making it themselves."* (I4, Natalia Gradinaru, Chişinău).

Kitchen knowledge passed down among women within the family, as observed from their elders, is considered to be primarily related to satisfying a biological need/relieving hunger with the ingredients that are cultivated. A cuisine that makes use of locally abundant ingredients is shared to both cultures. Since the dishes in this cuisine are presented to the household's taste, it is seen that tradition has not been turned into a discourse.

The Actors of Communal Meals: Special Occasion/Wedding Cooks

The culture of cooking together is seen as a fundamental example of solidarity among women in both cultures. When it comes to preparing meals for large groups on special occasions/celebrations/religious holidays, women are seen coming together to work collectively. This also applies to winter preparations. In both cultures, chefs emerge as another actor in weddings within the traditional culture. In both Moldova and Türkiye, it is seen that food prepared by traditional chefs appears at weddings referred to as village weddings.

With village weddings now being held in wedding halls or restaurants, perhaps in the not-too-distant future, wedding chefs will be referred to as actors from the dusty pages of the past. During fieldwork, our informants mentioned the wedding meals prepared by village chefs at their own weddings. It was stated that the wedding host and other women helped these individuals, who were known for their ability to cook large meals and prepare good food. Anna Statova from Gagauz Yeri said, *"There were 2-3 people in the village who were good cooks. They would call them, give them a tip so they would cook the meals, and they were highly respected. They had helpers, neighbors, sisters, who would be assigned tasks like peeling the melon, chopping the onions, and so on. First, they would fry the meat, cut up the chicken, and make chicken soup with goose, turkey, and chicken." (*I5, Anna Statova, Gagauz Sofrası).

It is understood that chefs can be called upon not only for weddings but also for funeral meals. Our informants have indicated that small ceremonial meals held within the family household are prepared by family members, but if the number of people increases, help is sought from relatives. Some of our sources in Moldova have stated that only birthday cakes have been added to the traditional wedding menu, while the rest has remained similar. *"Here, only new things have been added, like fresh cakes, etc. The others are still the same old standard ones. Weddings here take place in tents in the gardens of houses. Now they go to wedding halls more often. If it's under a tent, the family prepares the meals. If it's very large, relatives help out."* (I6, Galina Mitsiva, Taraclia).

However, with some exceptions, traditional village weddings now feature meals prepared according to modern menus created by professional chefs in restaurants. At village weddings, chefs mainly prepare traditional dishes. Naturally, chefs have certain commercial expectations in return for their labor. However, it is evident that these expectations are not overly reflected in the content of the meals. Traditional dishes are prepared not because they are traditional or authentic, but because they are flavors that the local people are accustomed to and are associated with meals eaten collectively at weddings and other events. The ability of chefs to prepare traditional wedding dishes and their culinary skills are the reasons why they are preferred. In some weddings in Türkiye, the ability of chefs to prepare traditional "must-have" wedding dishes causes the dates of weddings to be arranged according to the chefs' calendars.

New Actors in Gastrotourism: Professional Chefs and Restaurant Owners

As consumer culture increases its influence on daily life, a serious industry related to kitchens and food has emerged. This is certainly not a new phenomenon; it has existed in the past, but it has now become part of tourism and has given rise to an area we call gastrotourism. People may even travel to different countries just to taste new flavors. While seeing natural and cultural beauty may be among the top priorities for tourist activities, it can be said that food and drink have become a complementary aspect, even taking precedence in some places. Türkiye and Moldova are two countries with high tourism potential, both in terms of natural/cultural beauty and food and drink culture. Although Moldova has taken rapid steps to promote tourism in recent years, it has not been able to achieve the desired level of progress, particularly due to the pandemic, and is still considered a country in its early stages.

Gastronomic tourism holds a highly valuable and strategic position for both countries. Although the tourism sector experienced significant declines due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Moldovan government's tourism strategy implemented

between 2016 and 2018 has elevated Moldova from being one of Europe's least visited tourist destinations to a "must-visit" country. According to Bloomberg data, Moldova is one of the 10 fastest-growing tourist destinations in Europe (Ghenova, 2022: 11).

Gastronomy is seen as one of the leading areas that will strengthen both domestic and international tourism for both countries. With gastrotourism, traditional cuisine has become more appealing and important than ever for tourists who want to go beyond the globalized flavors found everywhere and seek out local flavors. In Moldova and Türkiye, dishes traditionally prepared by women in homes are now being presented to visitors from different cultures. Consequently, the actors, the setting, and the purpose of preparation are changing. These changes inevitably affect the content and presentation of the dishes. Of course, the ways in which Moldova and Türkiye achieve this vary depending on their experience in tourism and the variety of products they aim to offer visitors in their culinary cultures. However, it is evident that the emphasis on "the flavor, naturalness, and simplicity of tradition" is at the forefront of gastronomic tourism in both countries. In both countries, new traditional cuisine actors have emerged who know the traditional cuisine, use it as part of tourism, and use language that highlights the uniqueness of local flavors in terms of ingredients, preparation techniques, and presentation. The new actors in the kitchen, ranging from women who cook for their families at home to chefs who prepare food for large gatherings, seek ways to transform the act of eating into a unique experience that goes beyond the biological need to satisfy hunger. These new traditional actors sometimes use a similar language. In Moldova and Türkiye, different culinary experiences are offered to visitors based on tourism potential.

Natural Flavors, Natural Living, and Masterclass Training: Moldovan Cuisine

While enjoying traditional flavors in Moldova, one of the most prominent areas related to food and drink is wine culture. There is a strong wine-making culture in the region, and tourists visiting the country are taken on tours of vineyards and wine cellars, where they are offered wine tastings using traditional ingredients.

Regarding food culture, small businesses, which can be described as starting at a beginner level or in their early stages, are attempting to highlight traditional dishes. In Moldova, there is an emphasis on natural living, especially for those coming from more industrialized cities. In a country where village life is still vibrant, the naturalness of the accommodation and the atmosphere that allows tourists to experience natural village life are emphasized. Therefore, the flavor of traditional dishes is associated with the naturalness of the ingredients used in their preparation, offering a taste that cannot be found in many other parts of the world.

Traditional dishes are served to tourists in traditional houses, which are sometimes converted into museums. The authenticity of the venue is emphasized, creating the impression that the person guiding the tour is one of the last representatives of a culture that no longer exists. Both the space and the food are introduced to visitors alongside traditional clothing. Tatiana Popa, who is of Ukrainian origin, and Anna Statova, who is Gagauz, demonstrate that they are representatives of authentic life today through the spaces they own and the food they serve in these spaces. Tatiana Popa, who preserves and turns her mother's house into a museum with its 19th-century decor and usage, aims to introduce the culture and cuisine of Ukrainians living in Moldova. Even the way she welcomes her guests is like the Ukrainian holiday of Ayo Siliye, celebrated on August 2. She welcomes her guests with honey and raki spread on cucumbers. She mentions that she has collected recipes for dishes passed down from her ancestors over the years and tries to offer visitors *"recipes they will no longer see in kitchens"* (I7, Tatiana Popa, Palanca). The soup served to visitors, called Sırbuşka, is a shepherd's soup found in Ukrainian, Romanian, and Serbian cuisine. Vareniki is a dumpling-like pastry made from flour and water, filled with cow's cheese and sweet cherry, found in Russian and Ukrainian cuisine. *"After the famine, I am in favor of preserving and keeping alive the cuisine our grandparents knew. Under those difficult conditions, people living in villages created a culinary culture using the plants around them. Because these dishes contained more plants, they were very healthy, and people were able to survive that way. Sometimes I get tired of putting these dishes on the table, but know that they taste very good."* (I7, Tatiana Popa, Palanca).

Anna Statova also welcomes her guests with bread and salt in a similar manner. Gagauz Sofrası , where Gagauz cuisine takes center stage, features a museum, a wedding hall, a traditional Gagauz house, and modern hotel rooms. She describes the emergence of her business, which has become an important symbol of Gagauz culture and cuisine, as follows:

"I opened our own wedding hall so that our children would have weddings according to our own culture and not according to the customs of foreigners. I said, 'Let them eat the food in one place. I will make the roast, honey, and dessert myself at our wedding.' They said to me, 'Who will make your dessert, roast, and pastries? The current generation eats sushi, pizza, burgers, I don't know what else. We started doing it, and slowly we began to attract people to ourselves." (I5, Anna Statova, Gagauz Sofrası).

The traditional nature of the dishes on the menus is emphasized by the employees of the establishments. In Moldova, too, establishments talk about their own special preparation techniques and highlight regional flavors:

"They are called placenta, but they have their own unique recipe. The yeast used here is generally the bread yeast used in this region. Before the wine boils, they crush

the grapes, extract the grape juice, and ferment it. During this process, the foam is collected and used to make the yeast. And they use corn flour and a very small amount of wheat flour." (I8, Emilya Hanganus, Lalova Village).

Our informants consider the issue of tourism having any negative impact on traditional flavors to be an area where they cannot give up traditional foods because it paves the way for them to be authentic:

"This now depends on more people, on the business. Here, it's the opposite; they try to continue doing things the way they used to be done. By here, I mean eco-tourism, because the more natural it is, the more unique it becomes. They have started giving master classes; for example, in Lalova, people make cherry-shaped rolls. That is also unique to that region." (I8, Emilya Hanganus, Lalova Village).

Masterclass training courses are generally preferred by foreign tourists. These businesses, established through individual initiatives, are still at a beginner level, and often the business owners also serve alongside their employees. They play a role in preparing and serving the products to be offered to visitors. Lalova Village and Hangano Han can be cited as examples of small businesses. The people they employ are predominantly women living in the region. Most of the women have learned their culinary skills through traditional methods, while some have been trained at culinary schools. Some are even women who are called in occasionally, depending on the number of visitors. For sure, businesses in Moldova offer different traditional flavors. However, the most prominent is sarmale, a dish named after a Turkish word and one of the foods made throughout Türkiye. Made from grape leaves and cabbage stuffed with rice, meat, mint, carrots, etc., this delicacy is also among the culinary practices known as masterclasses in the region. Sarma masterclasses are organized as an activity for tourists who want to learn how to make this delicacy and enjoy spending time together. Depending on the number of tourists, tables are set up side by side, and boiled leaves and fillings are brought ready to use. A woman at the head of each table often gives brief information about her work through an interpreter and shows visitors how it is done. Visitors constantly watch the woman's hands, trying to imitate her and do the same. The woman also follows the visitors, helping them as they work. While not an interesting activity for those from a similar cultural background, sarma can be an incredibly different and perhaps challenging but enjoyable activity for an American or a Japanese person. Therefore, masterclasses, which are often seen in Moldova, offer visitors not just a passive opportunity to sit and experience traditional flavors, but an experience to the table, and visitors eat it, thinking of themselves as part of the traditional flavors they have made. The same applies to the making of pastries called placinta. Visitors try to roll out the dough brought ready-made, put the fillings (cheese and potatoes) inside, and put them in the wood-fired oven together. The baked

pastries are brought to the table. In Moldova, cooks are women who have grown up within the traditional culture. They make some of these dishes at home in their daily lives, and often make these delicacies, which they make individually or with their neighbors, in this type of establishment together with people who have never made these dishes before. This action, which is routine for them, is an action for visitors to experience other cultures and feel like they are part of traditional flavors. The question of whether there is a tradition transfer may be considered at this point, but in most cases, it can be said that rather than a tradition transfer, the tradition is turned into a show in a situation where it is timed, paid, limited in number of people, and only some parts of the meal is attempted to be taught. The purpose is also to ensure tourists have a better time and to make their time unique so that they will come back again and, at the very least, recommend it to others. Masterclass lessons are given on making sarma, plaçinte, cookies, bread, and, in the Gagauzia Autonomous Region, gözleme, sarma, and kavurma. It is understood that tourists and Gagauz people living abroad generally show interest in the masterclass lessons (I5, Anna Statova, Gagauz Sofrası).

Mamaliga is one of the foods cooked over a campfire. In the past, mamaliga was a food that accompanied meals when bread was not readily available, but today it has become one of the iconic dishes of Moldovan cuisine. Therefore, it is considered one of the foods that tourists visiting the region will not encounter anywhere else. Although it is comparable to Italian polenta, Moldovans believe that its taste is very different. Mamaliga also exists in Romanian cuisine, but in Moldova, its serving and the dishes eaten with it are different. Even in regions where its preparation is not taught in masterclasses, tourists are given information about how to eat mamaliga during its serving. It is understood that tourists are shown how to cut it with the string provided instead of a knife and how to eat it with the dishes served alongside it or with sour cream.

Professional Representatives of Tradition, Innovation, R&D and Commercialisation: Turkish Cuisine

Afyon, Hatay and Gaziantep, which are visited in Türkiye and have also been selected for the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy, exhibit a more institutional structure in terms of gastronomic tourism, with universities, NGOs, private businesses and municipalities working together. While in Moldova, gastronomy is an activity that can be done alongside other activities serving tourism, in these regions, tourists can visit the area solely to experience traditional flavours. Our informants in Gaziantep mention only domestic tourists who come from other provinces for a day trip to eat or enjoy desserts. Therefore, the emphasis on the authenticity of the dishes made in the region is much more prominent. The region's production techniques, endemic plants and spices are highlighted,

conveying to visitors that the flavours found here cannot be found elsewhere. It is also stated that the designation as a gastronomy city has been embraced by the local population and that this carries certain responsibilities. Being declared a gastronomy city has had a significant impact on the compilation of recipes for local dishes and the creation of food inventories. During our research, we conducted studies on the creation of food inventories throughout the province of Afyon, which had recently been declared a gastronomy city, and particularly in the Phrygian region. Based on these studies, they designed around 30 menus consisting of traditional dishes.

"After Türkiye was selected as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, we saw that the dishes of our grandmothers and aunts were being served more often in restaurants. Eggplant borek, our pastries, ovmaç soup (with poppy seeds), poppy seed baklava... We are looking for ways to use these products in restaurants." (I9, Nevzat Kalkan, chef, Afyonkarahisar).

Gastronomy festivals and gastronomy houses are also seen to be used to promote the region's traditional cuisine and ensure spatial authenticity, just as in Moldova. The objectives of the gastronomy house opened in Afyon are stated as follows:

"The aim of the Gastronomy House is this. Dishes that have not been commercialised. In other words, to bring dishes that are in danger of being forgotten to light and present them to people's appreciation. So, when you look at it, we are extending their life." (I10, Fatih Bıyıklı, Afyon, Creative Cities Network, Contact person, Afyonkarahisar).

The "traditional discourse" partially used in creating a narrative about traditional dishes is considered alongside the expectations of the era. Some gastronomic cities consider the need for innovative work on local flavours in conjunction with today's changing human profile and expectations:

"As long as it does not lose its intrinsic value, I believe that innovative products will enable us to progress more quickly in the gastronomy business, and it is not only us but also Antep that is doing this. We are discussing this among ourselves... We are somewhat in favour of adding innovation. Because sometimes it is not always easy to continuously present the products that were made in the past. For example, someone made it in the past... That's why it's more enjoyable for us to work with these products in a way that ensures continuity, without straying from their essence, and with the same quality..." (I11, Hamza Kalkan, President of the Afyonkarahisar Professional Chefs Association, Afyonkarahisar).

Although all three have been selected as Gastronomy Cities and have become important tourism destinations, Hatay, Antep and Afyon have very different characteristics and experiences. Gaziantep was the first province to be selected as

a Gastronomy City. They use language that links the city's deep-rooted history and the civilisations it has hosted to the fact that its cuisine is not just one of the most important in Türkiye, but in the world:

"Gaziantep cuisine is the most famous in the Anatolian region. Approximately 21 civilisations have lived here. They have a history of 9,000 years, perhaps even more. That is why the existence of 21 civilisations here has created a rich food culture. Today, there is no other place in Türkiye with such culinary diversity and where fruit is used in cooking. In fact, there is no other place like it in the world. It is a unique cuisine. Now, looking at it from the outside, what can you say? You could say Chinese cuisine. You could say Lebanese cuisine. We could name a few more famous cuisines, but when we look specifically at Türkiye, it is Gaziantep cuisine because it is such a varied and rich cuisine. There are reasons for this, as I mentioned earlier. The fact that approximately 21 civilisations have lived here, that it is located in a fertile region, that is, within the geography we call Mesopotamia, that the Silk Road passes through here, and that it is a gateway to the Mediterranean, already shows that Gaziantep has been an important centre since recorded history. People have lived in this centre. The people who lived here left behind their food cultures. I taught you my own food, you taught me your own food. And an incredible richness emerged here." (I12, Doğa Çitçi, Gaziantep).

After becoming part of gastronomic tourism and in order to meet the expectations of the number of tourists coming, perhaps the chefs in Gaziantep are opening up an area they call innovation/innovative cuisine by adding new elements to traditional dishes. Traditional cuisine is an area that distinguishes the people of the region from other regions, but it also requires innovation to appeal to the tastes of today's population:

"For example, I make a dish. They say, 'My grandmother used to make this. I haven't eaten it since my grandmother.' The important thing is to keep these dishes alive and pass them on to future generations. Of course, there should also be innovation. We also have dishes that we make with innovation. For example, I made bread from firik." (I12, Doğa Çitçi, Gaziantep).

In Afyon, Antep and Hatay, we encounter chefs who could be considered new actors in the tradition, unlike in Moldova. The chefs in these regions have also been influenced by the modern world. They come and explain the dishes served to visitors one by one to those who will taste them shortly. They come to the table in their chef's uniforms, have their own unique style of narration, and answer any questions you may have about the dishes in between. Chefs are usually locals, but they have also received modern training specific to their work. When describing the preparation of the dishes, they emphasise that the cooking techniques and tools are specific to the region.

The Hatay R&D centre where traditional Hatay cuisine is prepared, starting from the cultivation of ingredients, an analysis laboratory where dishes are recorded, and a restaurant section where meals are served. An area has been created where both Hatay cuisine and Turkish and world cuisines are taught to students in both theoretical and practical terms.

Local/traditional dishes and foods have become an important component of tourism in recent years. During this process, a significant change has been observed in the meaning of tradition, the venues where dishes are served, the forms of presentation, and the people who prepare and serve the food. Data obtained from field studies in Moldova and Türkiye reveal that when food becomes part of tourism and commercial profit expectations, it takes on different forms in both countries.

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Traditional cuisine of the Bulgarians of the Republic of Moldova

Emilia Bankova*

Since ancient times, food has been perceived as one of the most visible and enduring signs of cultural differences between ethnic groups. The topic of traditional Bulgarian cuisine in Moldova has been chosen due to the widespread increase in interest in the cultural traditions of different peoples.

The main source for exploring this topic is ethnographic material collected by the author between 2000 and 2018 in Bulgarian villages in the Republic of Moldova: The villages of Korten and Valea Perzei (where Moldovans live alongside Bulgarians) and in the recently established towns of Taraclia and Tvardice. The chronological scope of the study covers the period from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 21st century. Analysis of the information gathered revealed no significant differences in the preparation techniques for certain types of food and only minor differences in some terms, despite the fact that the inhabitants of these settlements originate from different regions of Bulgaria.

The Bulgarians of the Republic of Moldova are descendants of Bulgarian refugees and forced migrants from the early 19th century. All this contributed to the intensification of migration processes – the outflow of part of the population of the Balkan Peninsula (Bulgarians, Gagauz, Serbs, Albanians, etc.) in the 18th and mid-19th centuries to the southern part of the Prut-Dniester interfluve, known as Budzhak or Bessarabia.

Until the second half of the 18th century, the Budzhak region was inhabited by the Nogai people, known as the "Budzhak Horde," who led a semi-nomadic lifestyle. However, as a result of the Russo-Turkish wars, when a peace treaty was signed between Türkiye and Russia (1774), the fate of the Budzhak Nogai people

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was sealed. In 1783, Russian Empress Catherine II issued a manifesto ordering the Nogai people to resettle from the Northern Black Sea region to other territories. In 1806 - 1808, they were evicted from Budzhak. After the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, the last Budzhak Nogais moved to the Ottoman Empire. The conquered lands were now free for Slavic colonisation.

As a result of these events, two large groups of Danube settlers arrived in Bessarabia and were settled and accommodated as foreign colonists in its southern part, in the uninhabited Budzhak region. The settlement of the Budzhak steppe by migrants from Bulgarian lands went down in history as the Bessarabian-Bulgarian settlement.

The climate of Bessarabia, in particular Budzhak, is temperate continental, with short, relatively warm, snowless winters and long, hot, dry summers. There was not enough rainfall in Budzhak for successful grain cultivation, and there were often very dry and unproductive years. Therefore, in the spring and summer, with its frequent heat and winds that dried out the land, farmers had to work very hard, and the settlers had to adapt to natural conditions that were somewhat different from those in Bulgaria. The religious affiliation of an ethnic group has a significant influence on the formation of food traditions. It is religion that determines the use of certain types of food and their symbolism in ceremonies and rituals, as well as the existence of dietary restrictions and preferences. The adaptation of Bulgarian immigrants to new conditions was facilitated by the fact that they were mainly farmers and cattle breeders and belonged to the Orthodox faith.

The Bulgarian nation, formed on the basis of three ethnic elements, namely the ancient Thracians, Proto-Bulgarians and Slavs, allows us to assume that the Bulgarian diet has developed over many centuries and under the influence of the historical conditions in which these ethnic groups lived. It is known that the diet of an ethnic group depends on and is determined by its economic and cultural type (ECT). The diet of a people consists of a set of main products, seasonings and spices used in cooking; characteristic methods of food processing and preparation, serving and presentation; food restrictions and preferences, as well as utensils and buildings, beliefs and traditions associated with the preparation and consumption of food.

The range of products most popular in the cuisine of metropolitan Bulgaria was determined mainly by climatic conditions, geographical location and the economic type of the country. Bulgaria's location at the crossroads of trade routes allowed for a more diverse range of products. One cannot ignore the beneficial influence on Bulgarian cuisine of neighbouring peoples such as the Turks, Greeks, Albanians and Romanians, who had their own culinary traditions dating back thousands of years. This interaction resulted in some dishes that are considered purely Bulgarian,

although exactly the same dishes exist in the cuisines of the aforementioned ethnic groups. For example, after almost five hundred years under Ottoman influence, Bulgarian cuisine incorporated a large number of recipes, especially meat dishes, which became part of it, and some of them became its hallmark. These include kebab, gyuvech, yahnia, kepoolu, imam-bayaldi (stuffed eggplant), kavarma, drob-sarma, tutmanik, kachamak, tatli, halva, kadaif, revani, rachel, ayran, etc.

The Bulgarians of the Republic of Moldova, having moved to Budzhak, brought with them and preserved the menu and technology of their dishes, which were characteristic of their historical homeland, Bulgaria. In Bessarabia, new features were added to them as a result of changes in the conditions of ethno-cultural development and contacts with Moldovans, Gagauz and other peoples of the region, as well as the influence and penetration of urban elements into folk culture.

The main types of traditional food of the Bulgarians of Moldova

Types of food are products that have undergone some kind of processing for consumption. Each nation has a specific set of dishes prepared from traditional products in accordance with the techniques accepted by the people.

In ethnographic science, it is customary to divide types of food into "food of plant origin", i.e. dishes prepared from wild or cultivated plants that grow in nature. The category "food of animal origin" includes meat, fish and dairy products.

Plant-based products

The main plant-based foods among the Bulgarians of Moldova are cereals and legumes: wheat (*rye, winter wheat*), beans (*bob, fasul*), peas (*grah*), rice (*uris, uris*), lentils (*lesht*), corn (*papur, papshoi*). It was not so much cereals as legumes that were widely used in cooking. Corn, which appeared in the territory under consideration at the beginning of the 19th century, also became widespread – it is an undemanding crop that is well adapted to local climatic conditions. In times of famine, corn became the main source of food, replacing bread. Unlike the dietary traditions of the East Slavic peoples, Bulgarian immigrants, both in their homeland of Bulgaria and here in Budzhak, used only wheat for baking bread.

Gradually, with increasing prosperity, the proportion of dishes made from corn and legumes has decreased significantly - they are usually prepared and eaten during fasting.

It is well known that Bulgarians are skilled vegetable growers, and vegetables played a significant role in the diet of Bulgarian colonists. Here, in Bessarabia, the colonists grew potatoes (*kartof, kartofi*), *onions* (*luk*), garlic (*ches*), leeks (*pras*), cabbage (*zeli*), carrots (*morkuli*), beetroot (*chukundur*), tomatoes (*patlajn, alyan patlajn*), aubergines (*sin patlajn*), peppers (peppers), hot peppers (*arnauški*,

chushki), cucumbers (*krastavici*), radishes (*ryapa*), turnips (*zimna ryapa*), courgettes (*kabachki*), parsley (*petruska, magdanos*), dill (*kopar*), thyme (*chubrika)*, sorrel (*lapad*), celery (*tselina*), horseradish (*khryan*).

Also, in the local climate, which is very similar to the Balkan climate, Bulgarians grew large quantities of fruits, berries, and grapes: watermelons (*dinia*), melons (*kauni*), pumpkins (*tikva*), apples (*abalky*), pears (*krushi*), various varieties of plums (*slivi*), apricots (*zerdali*), cherries (*vishni*), sweet cherries (*charishi*), peaches (*praskovi*), quince (*dulia, dyulia*), mulberries (*katsembali, charnitsa*), gooseberries (*agrus*), table and technical grape varieties (*grapes*). From the middle of the 20th century, *raspberries* (*malina*), currants (*smorodina, nemsku grozdi*), strawberries (*klubnika*) and others appeared in Bulgarian gardens. Each owner usually planted a walnut tree (*oryah*) in their yard or near their house. Of the wild berries, they used blackthorn (*tranki*), which was gathered in the few semi-wooded areas of the steppe zone. It was used to make jam, which was used as medicine. Sunflowers (*slanchuvtsi*) were also grown to obtain vegetable oil (*ulo)*. In the past, fields were often sown with rapeseed (*khardal*), which was also used to make oil for cooking.

Animal products

The Bulgarians of Moldova, who migrated from the Balkans, were engaged in crop farming and livestock breeding, which led to the inclusion of animal products in their diet. These include meat (primarily mutton, beef, pork and poultry), milk and dairy products, eggs and fish. The most widely consumed meats among the Bulgarians of Budzhak are lamb (*ofchu miso*) and pork (*svinu miso*), but perhaps the most shared meat product is poultry – every household raises large numbers of chickens (*kukoshi, pitel*), geese (*patki*), ducks (*yurdechki*) and turkeys (*fitki, misirki*). The eggs *("itsa"*) of these domestic birds are also widely used in the diet.

Due to the absence of large rivers and lakes in southern Moldova where fish would be found in large quantities, the inhabitants of this region do not engage in fishing. Therefore, at present, purchased fish (*riba*) is generally used – both fresh (*pryana riba*), frozen (*zamrazena riba*), and salted (*sulena riba*) and smoked (*koptena riba*).

Dairy products are made from cow's (cow's milk), sheep's (*sheep's milk*) and goat's (*goat's milk*) milk (*milk*).

Methods of processing and storing food

To prepare food from plant or animal products, they were subjected to preliminary thermal or other processing. Food products underwent the same processing when preparing them for more or less long-term storage, since everything that was grown in the summer on the farm had to be preserved for

consumption in the winter. Thus, grain products were ground into flour (*bran*) or groats (*bulgur, bulgur* – coarsely ground wheat groats, which were widely used for preparing various dishes, including ritual ones). Corn flour (*papuranu flour*) was also finely and coarsely ground, and used to make mamaliga (*polenta*) or to fry vegetables and fish. Until the beginning of the 20th century, grain was stored in pits, barns (*kambar*), attics (*tavan*), and dry wells (*sukh kladenets*). Wheat flour for baking bread or other dough products was stored in special wooden chests designed only for flour (*sanduk za brachno*). These chests were usually placed in a barn (large chest) or in the kitchen, near the hearth. Legumes were usually stored in barns or attics in baskets (*koshelek*) or in matting bags (*chuval*). Vegetables, some types of fruit and melons (cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, carrots, courgettes, onions, beets, apples and watermelons) were prepared for winter in the form of pickles *(kysyal, army, armee, turšia*) in vats (*kachi*) or in large, tall clay vessels with a fairly wide mouth (*kyup, kyup*).

Pickles *(army, kisalu, turšia*) were prepared as follows: selected and washed vegetables, fruits and watermelons were placed in layers in a clean and steamed vat, interspersed with dill (umbrellas), garlic, celery, horseradish or cherry leaves, chubirka (chubirka), poured with a salt solution, covered with a wooden lid (special, used only for vats) - *"kapak"* and placed a press (a clean large stone) on top. Cucumbers and courgettes were salted in separate containers and rarely mixed with tomatoes. Often, only tomatoes were salted, and brown tomatoes were selected for this purpose. Separately, in larger vats, cabbage (whole heads) was salted – "*kysala* zeli" – and watermelons (*kysali diny*). The leaves of this cabbage were used to prepare stuffed cabbage rolls (*sarma, gushki*) along with grape leaves prepared in the summer. Many families traditionally prepare stuffed peppers ("*p'lyan piper", "pl'ni chushki"*) and eggplants ("*sin patlajn"*) for the winter: Finely chopped parsley and dill are added to chopped cabbage and carrots, along with finely chopped garlic and pod pepper, salted to taste, seasoned with onions fried in vegetable oil, and used to stuff peppers and eggplants cut open on the side. Place the prepared vegetables in jars, pour in brine, sterilise and seal. Previously, until the mid-1960s, vegetables were placed in a "kyup" or special tub, a large pot, poured over with vegetable (sunflower) oil, covered with a lid and left to ferment. Pickles were stored in cellars (maza, bashka), in unheated storerooms or sheds (damchi). These methods of salting vegetables were brought from Bulgaria by Bulgarian immigrants, as well as by the Gagauz people who moved with them. However, their neighbours, the Moldovans, also used similar methods of preservation, which are traditional for the peoples of the entire Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor. There are other ways of storing vegetables: onions and garlic with their tops were braided into plaits and hung in the cellar or attic (where the temperature does not drop below zero). Potatoes were stored in boxes or on shelves in the cellar, periodically

removing any sprouts; carrots and beetroot were stored in boxes or baskets with sand in the same place, in the cellar. Watermelons, melons and pumpkins were stored in their natural form in cellars for future use.

Fruit was also preserved by drying: apricots, plums, apples, pears and cherries were cut into slices (cherries were dried with their stones), placed in a large sieve, which was placed on the low roof of a barn or outbuilding, and dried, stirring periodically. Then they were dried in the oven after baking bread. In winter, these dried fruits were used to make compotes (*oshaf, ushaf*) and were also given to children during the Christmas holidays. Grapes were also often dried – selected bunches were hung from the ceiling beams or rafters of the attic – the room had to be well ventilated. A common dish made from fruit boiled in syrup was "*pitimes, pekmes*". To make it, pumpkin (*tikyva*), watermelon rind (*dinya*), melon (*kaun*), and quince (*dyula*) *were cut* into pieces *(parchenets*) and boiled in a large amount of grape juice (*shara, shira*) without adding sugar until a thick syrup formed. This jam is not only very tasty, but also extremely healthy, as grape juice itself has medicinal properties, and, as we can see, pitimes contains only natural products without sugar. Unfortunately, nowadays pitmés is rarely made, obviously because of the labour-intensive process and the large amount of grape juice required: to make a bucket of this jam, you need to boil down 30 litres of juice for 9-10 hours. Another way of preserving grapes was to make "grozdnitsa" - an original method of marinating grapes: selected and washed bunches of grapes were placed in clay vessels (*kyupi*), horseradish root (*khryan*) was added, grape juice (*shira, shara*) or wine (*vinu*) was poured over them, the vessels were tightly closed with a lid, even sealed with clay, and placed in the cellar. With this method of storage, the grapes retain all their beneficial properties and can be stored for a long time. Despite this, nowadays "*grozdnitsa,* grozdenca" is rarely prepared. Another traditional method of preserving grapes, apart from those mentioned above, is to make wine (*vino*) from them. The methods of its preparation will be described in the "Beverages" section.

Herbs were also dried: savory (*chubrika, chubritsa*), mint (*gyuzum, gyozum*), dill (*kopar*), celery (*tselyana*), parsley (*petruska, magdanos*), etc.

Vegetable oil (*ulo, oloy*) was not produced at home. Sunflower seeds were taken to mechanical oil mills (*ulochniki*) located in towns or large villages. Sometimes rapeseed oil (*khardal*) was used for food, but this was rare, occurring only in years of poor harvests and drought.

Living in a region where, along with agriculture, the inhabitants were also engaged in livestock breeding and, having brought with them from the Balkans the tradition of consuming domestic animal meat, Bulgarians knew many ways of storing and preserving meat products. Preference was given to pork, lamb and poultry. Usually, each household, depending on the number of family members,

raised 2 - 4 piglets (for their own consumption and for sale), 25 - 40 sheep and numerous poultry (chickens, ducks, geese, Türkiyes). Pork fat (*bacon*) was salted: it was cut into small square or rectangular pieces, generously sprinkled with salt and spices, and placed in a tub (*kachi, kache*) or clay pot (*kyup*). In this form, it could remain edible for up to 2 years. Pork belly was also used to make fried meat (*tsigaridi, sazdarma, dzhumarki*) – fatty meat was fried, these "tsigaridi" into small clay vessels similar to jugs without handles (*kyupchata*), then poured hot fat over them and ate them mostly cold as food in the field. They were stored in a cool place – in the cellar. Sheep fat was poured (without salt) into special round moulds (*tava*), a string was placed in it, and when the fat solidified, it was pulled out by the string and hung in a dry and cool place. To this day, melted and solidified sheep fat is considered medicinal – despite its unpleasant smell, it is used to treat lung diseases.

Fillet and large pieces of pork, pork ribs are salted by Bulgarians for several days, then steam them in large cast iron pots (*chuvens, chauns*) in boiling water, fry them, arrange them in rows in large clay pots (*kyupoves*) or large pans (*tenjars*) and pour melted fat over them. They were stored in the cellar. Meat prepared in this way could be stored for a whole year and was used to cook a wide variety of dishes. This method of preserving pork was the most common until the early 1980s, before the widespread appearance of freezers or refrigerators with large freezer compartments in villages. With the advent of such technology in the home, meat cut into portions began to be placed in the freezer and taken out as needed. An even earlier method of preserving pork than frying was storing it in *brine*: the meat was cut into small pieces, placed in layers in tubs, clay pots or jars, covered with salt solution and stored in a cool place. Pork was also used to make homemade sausages for future use, such as *nadenitsa* and *karnatsi*. They were prepared as follows: wild boar intestines were thoroughly washed and rubbed with salt, then stuffed with minced fatty meat cut into small pieces, lard with spices - salt, ground black pepper, garlic, crumbled savory and bay leaves. After that, they were tied or twisted in several places like sausages, boiled and hung under the eaves or in a dry, cool room. Such sausages were made exclusively in winter, on the eve of Christmas, so they could be preserved until spring. Pork stomach – *"dyadu" and "shkembe"* – was stuffed in the same way. Unlike sausages, the minced meat here was spicier – hot, dry, chopped (not crushed) red pepper was always added, which gave it a special flavour and helped to preserve it for longer. This method of preserving meat is familiar to Bulgarian immigrants, as is drying, but it did not become as widespread as, for example, among the Gagauz people of Moldova or the Bulgarians in Bulgaria, where dried meat products are highly valued and expensive. Nowadays, only some of the older generation remember such a delicacy as "*sujuk"*. Another such product is *pastarma*, which is usually made from beef or mutton in the following way: the

fillet is cut into long, thin pieces, tenderised, and rubbed with salt, red and black pepper, crushed garlic and savoury. The meat prepared in this way was hung under the eaves or in a dry cellar to dry. The meat was dried during the cold and cool season, when there were no flies.

In Bulgarian villages, even the poorest families kept at least 10 - 15 sheep – these undemanding animals provided meat, milk for making brynza (*sirene*) *cheese*, sheep's milk cheese ("*uduvara*") and wool, i.e. the most basic products necessary for the survival of the whole family. Sheep meat was used to make a very tasty dish called *"kavarma".* To prepare it, they usually selected an old or surplus ram from the flock. The meat was cut into large pieces (it had to be fatty; if there was not enough fat, it was added), placed in a large cauldron and cooked for a long time (sometimes a little water was added) in its own juice until the meat could be easily separated from the bones. Once it had been boiled down to this state, the bones were removed, salt, red and black pepper, bay leaves, savory, and garlic were added, and it was cooked until the meat was very tender. After that, the hot mixture was poured into baking trays ("*tava")*, and when *the "kavarma"* solidified, taking the shape of the container into which it was poured, it was removed and stacked on top of each other, separated with clean paper; it was stored in a dry and cool cellar. This type of homemade preparation is still popular today, but instead of baking trays, it is poured into plastic bottles or wrapped in cellophane.

Another component of the diet of Bulgarians in southern Moldova was, of course, dairy products – cow's, sheep's and goat's milk. Unlike Bulgarians in Bulgaria, who, in addition to the aforementioned milk, also consumed buffalo and donkey milk (though not as widely as cow's or goat's milk), Bulgarian immigrants mainly used sheep's and cow's milk, and mixed goat's milk with sheep's milk when making brynza *(sireni)* to increase its fat content and improve its taste. Buffalo and donkey milk are sometimes remembered as having been used by our ancestors living in Bulgaria as a remedy for lung diseases. For longer storage and consumption, milk was usually fermented to make the famous Bulgarian sour milk known *as kiselya mlyaka*, as well as cottage cheese, sour cream, cream and brynza from sheep's or mixed milk. "*Kisala* mlaka" was made as follows: cow's or goat's milk, or a mixture of the two, was boiled, cooled to a warm state, poured into clean clay jugs or glass jars, starter culture *("podkvas")* was added, stirred carefully and thoroughly, wrapped up and left for several hours (usually overnight, depending on the strength of the starter culture). The finished milk was taken to the cellar or placed in the refrigerator, where it retained its beneficial properties for up to 4-6 days. In addition to sour milk, they also made sour cream, cream *("kaymak")* and cottage cheese *("ishumik"*). To make cream or sour cream, raw milk was left for several days in a cool place and the fatty layer that formed during this time, *"kaymak*", was skimmed off. This

layer of fat was collected from all the vessels in which the milk had been poured, strained through cheesecloth ("*tsidilka"*) and poured into a separate container. Cottage cheese was made from the whey left over after obtaining cream as follows: the whey was heated and strained. The resulting cottage cheese was lightly salted and stored in a cool place (nowadays in the refrigerator). Butter was obtained as follows: the cream was boiled, resulting in a layer of butter forming on the surface, which was collected and stored in a cold place. But more often, the butter was churned using a churn – a stick with a circle of holes at the end – called *a "butter churn".* It should be noted that both in Bulgaria and here in Budzhak, the migrants consumed sour milk more than any other dairy product. It was eaten as a separate dish, spooned with bread or mamaliga. Boiled milk (hot) was also eaten from a bowl with pieces of bread – *"popara".* Cottage cheese was used along with brynza to make various types of dough products, but it was rarely eaten as a separate dish with sour cream. Milk, sour cream and cottage cheese were foods for children, but not for adults.

The most popular dairy product was the famous Bulgarian brynza made from sheep's milk. The settlers brought the technology for its production with them from the Balkans. It could be made both at home and in the field at the evening sheep pen, known as a *"turla".* To do this, freshly milked sheep's milk, still warm (if it cooled down while being transported from the sheepfold to the village, it was slightly reheated), was fermented with rennet *("sireshti",* "maya"). The starter culture (*"maya"*) for brynza was prepared in early spring from the stomach of a small lamb that had been fed only its mother's milk. This stomach was thoroughly washed, and *the* so-called *"etki"* (from Bulgarian - kernels) were removed from it - small grains, which were, in fact, the necessary component of the starter culture - they were washed and put back into the stomach, filled with salt and hung up to dry. The dried and salted stomach was cut into 4-5 pieces, placed in a container (jar), filled with whey, and after 2 - 3 weeks, it was filtered and used to make brynza cheese. Serum could be added as needed. This starter culture was usable for 1-1.5 years. Milk was usually fermented in large wooden buckets *("vidritsa"),* which were wrapped up. The quality of the brynza depended on the degree of fermentation and the fat content of the milk. Then the milk was poured into bags *(*tsedilka) specially sewn from gauze or thin white fabric *(*khasa) and hung on a hook. After the liquid drained, these bags with their contents were placed under a press. The hardened brynza was cut into small pieces, salted and placed in containers (for example, basins) for a day. The salted and even harder brynza is placed in low wooden tubs specially made for brynza (nowadays in tanks), poured with whey or salt water (most often the whey is diluted with salt water) and placed in the cellar. The whey remaining after straining is used to make sheep's milk curd (*"udvara", "uduvara", "tsvik"*) as follows: the whey is heated and strained through *a "strainer"*

(to drain off excess liquid). *The* finished salted "*uduvara"* is placed in low clay pots (*"gurneta"*), covered with vegetable oil and sealed. This cheese was stored for a long time and used as a filling in various dough products.

Types of plant-based foods

For Bulgarians who migrated from the Balkans and continue to engage in agriculture in their new homeland, the main place in the traditional diet belongs to dishes made from flour and various grains.

Types of flour dishes. The most important and significant type of food is bread – *"khlyab", "lyap"*. Bulgarian colonists associated their well-being and hopes for a full and prosperous life with it. For them (as for all peoples), it was the main staple of their daily diet, which is why they treated it with special reverence and respect. The Bulgarians have a number of worldview ideas and beliefs associated with bread, and it remains an essential sacred component in all ritual practices. In the course of historical development, two types of bread and flour products made from unleavened and leavened dough have emerged and survived to this day. The more ancient type of bread is unleavened bread – *"pita", "pitka", "presenchena pita", "pogacha", "pazlama*". This is how N.S. Derzhavin describes the technology of its preparation in the Bessarabian province at the beginning of the 20th century: "... they bake such bread not in an oven, but on coals; the dough is placed on a spot cleared of coals, covered with a frying pan – *"tiptsi"* and then covered with heat." This method of baking unleavened bread is known throughout Bessarabia. The famous Gagauz ethnographer Marunevich Maria Vasily described its preparation as follows: "While the food is cooking, the base of the hearth under the suspended hearth is heated. After clearing it of ash and coals, they place the rolled dough on spread horseradish leaves or directly on the hearth and cover it with a large ceramic or cast-iron frying pan. After throwing the heat onto the flatbread laid out in this way, they continued to cook the food." Unleavened bread was kneaded from wheat flour, less often rye or corn flour, water and salt. It was baked on coals, hot ashes or in *a "podnitsa"* - a special clay mould with a lid, which was filled with heat. This bread could not be cut with a knife, but only broken by hand and eaten hot. The technological similarity in the baking of unleavened bread in the Balkans and neighbouring regions testifies to the antiquity and archaism of this technology, as well as its regional spread. In addition to its everyday use, this type of bread is associated with a number of worldviews and beliefs, as well as with many ritual activities. Bulgarian ethnographer Ivanichka Georgieva defines "unsweetened" unleavened bread as a transition between the present and the otherworldly - it connects "this" world and "that" world, between "here" and "there," "now" and "then," "before" and "after." These beliefs are based on the idea that bread is a soul associated with the steam rising from hot bread. This has found its way into funeral

customs — immediately after a person's last breath, *"putnyana pita" ("road cake")* is kneaded and baked.

When a child is born, fresh *"pita" bread* is baked in honour of the Holy Mother of God, the patron saint of women in labour – *"Bogorodichna pita" or "Byrza pita".* This "*pita" bread* is used to welcome the new person and accept them into human society; The same "*copper, sweet* pita", i.e. spread with honey, is used to welcome the bride into the groom's house – society sends its new member its first wish – to be "sweet" in the sense of being kind, agreeable, etc. Unleavened (*"unleavened")* bread is baked throughout the calendar cycle "*for health*", during the construction of a new house, at the end of field work from new flour, on New Year's Eve, and also to appease mythical creatures. For example, to appease diseases such as the plague and smallpox, unleavened flatbread is baked and spread with honey; to appease *the "oritsnits"* (who appear on the third day in a house where there is a newborn and predict its fate), unleavened flatbread spread with honey is also placed on the table. All these rituals are based on the popular belief that "*unleavened"* bread spread with honey can appease mythical creatures and the patron saint, while kvass, due to its property of increasing in volume, would signify magical reproduction, an increase in pests, diseases and demons. However, bread made with kvass, due to the more complex technology of its baking, is more important both in everyday life and in the ritual system. Sourdough bread is made from rye, corn and wheat or mixed flour (ritual sourdough bread is baked only from pure wheat flour), and it requires more time, skill and experience. This type of bread (*kisel, kvasen, kvasnik*) was baked once a week for everyday consumption, usually by young women. It was round and large – one loaf, or samun, required up to 4 - 5 kg of flour. The process of baking kvass, from yeast dough, was practically the same in all Bulgarian villages: dough is kneaded from flour (most often wheat), yeast and salt in warm water, covered and placed in a warm place, left for a while *to* "rise" (to rise), knead it. The finished dough is shaped into loaves, placed in moulds, left to rise (while the oven is heating up) and baked. This is a no-yeast method of baking bread. Sweet flour products - Easter bread (*paska),* loaves (kravai), kalachi (*kravaietsa),* buns, rich pies, etc. were baked using the leavened method: a liquid dough with the consistency of thick sour cream was kneaded from high-grade flour and high-quality yeast, salt and warm water; it was placed in a warm place and covered. When the dough begins to rise, it is kneaded, more flour, sugar, spices (ground cumin, cinnamon, nutmeg, etc.) are added, and it is placed in a warm place again. When the dough rises a second time, knead it gently and shape it into buns, let them rest for a while and bake them in a preheated oven. Yeast (*kvass,* drozdi) was prepared as follows: a liquid dough was kneaded from corn flour or bran on the foam of fermenting wine, stirred well, wrapped up and placed in a warm place. Small flatbreads, called *pitki,* were moulded from the risen dough and dried on the stove or in the sun (in the

shade), avoiding draughts. The dried pitki had a long shelf life and were stored in a canvas bag. In these difficult times, many families bake bread using yeast prepared at home. The use of fermenting wine foam to make yeast is linked to centuries-old traditions of viticulture and winemaking.

Flour dishes. Bulgarian settlers, who have been engaged in agriculture since ancient times, primarily growing grain, widely used flour dishes in their diet. This indicates that they have preserved archaic traditions in their diet. The most common and typical dishes are "*banitsa", "milina"*, "*tikvenik", zelnik, "ribnik", "luchnik", "mesenitsa", "tutmanik", "mekici", "darpani", "pitita", "gezlemi", "katmi", "kuvrichantsa", "krustachi*", etc., depending on the filling or type of dough. "*Banitsa*" is baked for all holidays and every Sunday (except during fasting). It is prepared as follows: unleavened dough is kneaded with water and salt, divided into several pieces, rolled into small balls and lightly rolled out, the resulting flatbreads are greased with vegetable oil and left for a while to soften. Then, on a tablecloth intended for this purpose *("mindilka")*, carefully stretch these flatbreads with your fingertips into thin transparent sheets, sprinkle with vegetable oil, sprinkle with a filling of brynza cheese (sometimes with the addition of cow's *("ishumik")* or sheep's milk *("uduvara"*) curd and, lifting *the "mindilka",* roll them into a roll, which is placed in a spiral in oiled moulds *("tava", "sach")*. This is the recipe for the so-called *"dărpana milina" ("*dărpă" in Bulgarian means "to stretch"). More labour-intensive is "*tochena* milina" - the only difference is that the flatbreads are not stretched, but rolled out with a rolling pin. This banitsa is called *"vita banitsa" ("vita"* in Bulgarian means "rolled"). Banitsa can also be prepared in another way**:** the rolled layers of dough are placed on top of each other, sprinkled with brynza cheese. This type of banitsa is called "*nalozena* banitsa", but this method is rarely used. Often, but not always, *the "milina"* was poured over with eggs whipped together with sour cream or sour milk, or sprinkled with sweet syrup, and, filled with salty brynza cheese, it acquired a slightly piquant taste. *Banitsa is an* essential ritual dish, which must be prepared on the eve of Old New Year - 13 January, on the eve of St. Vasil's Day - *"Vasiluvden", "Vasilden"*. In this *banitsa* - "*banitsa with* kasmeti" - they put fruit tree twigs according to the number of souls in the family, and each twig has a specific meaning: one twig is sheep, another is cows, the third is horses, etc.; along with the twigs, they put a coin, which means a house. In the evening, when the whole family sits down to a festive meal, the head of the family, the father, cuts this *banitsa* into pieces and turns it clockwise. Each family member takes the piece that ends up in front of them. It is believed that whoever gets a certain symbol must take care of those animals and pay more attention to them.

Varieties of banitsa – "*tikvenik", "ribnik", "luchnik"* - differ from each other in their fillings: tikvenik is filled with grated pumpkin and sugar, "*ribnik" with* cleaned small

fish, and "*luchnik"* with fried onions. Other ingredients can also be used as fillings. It should be noted that *banitsa and milina* can also be fried in a pan over an open flame.

Other popular Bulgarian flour dishes include "*pitita", "krustachki", "gyuzlami",* which are prepared as follows: Knead unleavened dough from wheat flour, water and salt with the addition of eggs, roll out thin (but not transparent) oval-shaped sheets of dough. One half of the rolled sheet is sprinkled with brynza cheese and covered with the other half, then cut into rectangular or square pieces, the edges are pinched together and fried in sunflower oil. There is a version of preparing them without filling, in which case the dough is kneaded with kefir, a little baking soda and sugar are added - in this case, the products turn out fluffy.

Also, from unleavened (yeast-free) dough, they bake *"primushki*" (from the Bulgarian *"promushvam, primushvam*" - to push through), the so-called "*khrustiki*". A very stiff dough is kneaded from eggs, rolled out thinly and cut into rhombuses. An incision is made in the middle of the rhombus and one of the corners of the rhombus is threaded through it, fried in sunflower oil, and sprinkled with powdered sugar or sugar.

"*Katmi"*, a type of pancake, is made from unleavened liquid dough. They are fried in sunflower oil. Nowadays, noodles, vareniki, pelmeni, and cupcakes from the city have become firmly established in the national cuisine, and with the spread of information via the Internet, various newfangled dishes, including baked goods, are served at the festive table.

Yeast dough was used to bake bagels *("kuvrichantsa",* "kravaychita") for Christmas and Old New Year to give to carolling children. They were made as follows: a stiff dough was kneaded from wheat flour, yeast, eggs, sunflower oil, a pinch of salt and sugar, cut into small pieces, which were rolled into thin tubes. These tubes were joined into a ring, placed in moulds and baked in the oven. But the most common yeast dough product after bread is "*mekitsa", "darpanici" (from the Bulgarian darpam*, meaning "to pull"). They are usually made from bread dough that has been deliberately left over - pieces of this dough are stretched with hands moistened with cold water and fried in a pan with sunflower oil. They are eaten hot with sour milk. Together with bread*, "tutmanik"* and "*mesyanitsa"* are baked in the oven. There are many ways to make tutmanik. Here is a description by N.S. Derzhavin: "...cheese pie ("tutmanik") is prepared as follows: when baking bread, a piece of dough is separated, rolled out, sprinkled with cheese several times, placed on a frying pan, cut into squares with a knife, poured over with sour cream and eggs, and baked in the oven together with the bread; It is eaten with sour milk." In Tvarditsa, this dish is called "*mesenitsa"* and is prepared in two ways: 1) The dough is not rolled out, but kneaded by hand to the size of the mould and placed in it in

layers, between which brynza cheese is placed, and then cut into squares; 2) the dough is lightly rolled out, crumbled brynza cheese is added and placed vertically in a greased mould.

Various porridges were also made from flour: *"triena", "trahana", "popara", "puparka", "yufka"*, etc. To prepare "triena" (from the Bulgarian *"triya"* - to grind) "trahana", the flour was sprinkled with water and the resulting lumps were sifted through a sieve, and then, after drying slightly, boiled in water or milk. Often, such "triena" was fried in oil with onions or added to borscht (obviously, instead of noodles). This dish was widespread until the 1960s. In the past, *"popara"* was also widely known and popular, which was eaten for breakfast. It is made from pieces of bread and brynza cheese, which are poured over with boiling water with the addition of sunflower oil or hot milk. Until the middle of the 20th century, Bulgarian immigrants prepared something similar to modern homemade noodles – "*yufka*". It was made as follows: stiff dough mixed with eggs was rolled out into flat cakes, dried, and then broken into pieces. As needed, they were boiled in water or milk. The same dough was used to make *"galushki"* – a teaspoonful of dough was dropped into boiling water. These dishes, which are still eaten in the metropolis today, have been practically lost by the Bessarabian Bulgarians. Corn flour was used to make mamaliga, a thick porridge served hot with brynza cheese, cracklings or sour milk. Mamaliga is widespread throughout Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Ukraine and other regions of the Black Sea coast where corn is grown. In the Balkans and eastern Türkiye, this dish is known as *"kachamak"*. Bulgarian immigrants borrowed the term "*mamaliga"* from the Moldovans, and the name *"kachamak"* is rarely mentioned.

Dishes made from grains. In Bulgarian folk cuisine, porridges, which are mainly made from grains, are rarely eaten, but dishes based on grains still occupy a significant place in the Bulgarian diet. The most commonly used grain was wheat from hard wheat varieties. Whole grains - *"zhito"* - were used to cook kutya - a ritual dish *'kolivo',* which was mandatory at funerals and memorial ceremonies, and **"***kolivo"* also had to be present on the table on Christmas Eve. Various dishes were prepared from coarsely and medium-ground wheat - "*balgur", "bulgur*". During fasting days, they prepared "*balgur s's zeli"* - balgur with cabbage, "*balgur s's cartofi*" - balgur with potatoes. On non-fasting days, it was cooked in milk - "balgur with mlaku," or prepared with meat - "balgur with meso" - similar to pilaf. *"Bulgur"* was mainly used as minced meat: it was cooked until half done, fried onions, various spices, pieces of meat or fat were added to it, and peppers were stuffed with it - *"p'lyan piper", "t'pkan piper*" (Taraclia), *"gushki" (*Tvarditsa), stuffed cabbage rolls were made from grape or cabbage leaves – "*sarmy ot zeluv list*", "*sarmy ot lozov list"*. The same minced meat with the addition of offal was used to stuff lamb, piglet, and

turkey, which were then baked in the oven. This dish is still the main and obligatory dish on the Easter table.

Bulgur was also one of the ingredients in minced meat used to make homemade sausages. Since the mid-20th century, bulgur has been replaced by rice, which is now used almost exclusively. Sometimes, in order to preserve the traditional recipe, the two are mixed together. Rice – *"uris"* – was rare for a long time because of its high cost.

Legume dishes. The main and most frequently prepared legume dish, especially in winter, is beans – *"fasul", "bial bob"*. Beans were cooked with lots of onions, red chilli peppers and peppermint. The cooked beans were seasoned with fried onions and red pepper – "*kavardisan bob".* Some of the beans, cooked until half done, were taken out and set aside for making bean soup – "*bobiana* churba" or dishes called "*bob i zeli" and* "*zeli s fasul*" – beans with cabbage. For this dish, sauerkraut prepared for the winter is usually used. In early summer, beans were cooked – "*cheren bob".* They picked young green pods, chopped them or peeled them and stewed them with fried onions, adding water and vinegar. The result was a very nutritious and spicy dish. Until the middle of the 20th century, lentils – *"leshta"* – were very popular in the cuisine of Bulgarian immigrants. There are many proverbs, sayings and fairy tales in local folklore where they are mentioned. Nowadays, they are no longer grown and are rarely eaten - sometimes they are brought in from Bulgaria or Türkiye, where they are still popular. Peas – *"grah"* – were less commonly used; they were cooked like beans, but without red pepper. Soybeans – *"soya*" – were also frequently used in the past; they were roasted like sunflower seeds together with pumpkin seeds and eaten in this form.

It is worth noting one significant feature of Bulgarian national cuisine that distinguishes it from the cuisines of most neighbouring peoples: the rare preparation of liquid first courses and the almost complete absence of soups and borscht from the menu. While for most Slavic peoples, neighbouring Moldovans, Ukrainians and even closely related Gagauz, soups and borscht were a mandatory, often daily first course, followed by a second course, for Bulgarians, soup or borscht could be the only hot dish for both lunch and dinner, accompanied by various cold appetisers and pickles. In Taraclia and Tvarditsa, soups and borscht are now a staple dish in most families; this, as we can see, is a Moldovan borrowing. Borscht was called "*churba s's zeli",* i.e. with cabbage, and soup was most often cooked with beans and was called "*churba s's bob", "bobiana churba".* It should be noted that the Turks also do not have liquid first courses on their menu, and their "semi-thick, semi-liquid" soup is called "chorba". The current prevalence of borscht and soups is also the result of the influence of newcomers who settled in Bulgarian

villages, Russians who brought many elements of their culture with them from their homeland, Russia.

Thus, we see that there is no clear distinction between first and second courses in Bulgarian cuisine. It is important to note another very interesting and important feature here, which is that the vast majority of dishes are called *"manja"*. Depending on the set of ingredients used to prepare the dish, *"manja"* has its own name, for example: *"pilyana manja"* - manja made from chicken or chicken, *"patlazhenena manja"* - a dish in which the main ingredient is tomatoes; *"kartofena manja"* is made from potatoes, etc. The method of preparing *"manja"* is, in principle, the same for all types: onions are fried in vegetable oil (during fasting) or fat, meat or vegetables are added, a little flour is added to thicken, salt, red pepper and spices are added; water is poured into the fried mixture and simmered until ready. The same name for the second course is used by the Bessarabian Gagauz ("manca") and Moldovans ("manje"). Here is what the well-known researcher of Gagauz national cuisine Nikoglo D.E. writes about this phenomenon: "It can be assumed that this dish appeared among the Bulgarians and Gagauz in the Balkans during the process of ethno-cultural contacts with Italian trading posts in the Middle Ages, and from them it was borrowed by the Eastern Romance peoples." The term "mandzha" undoubtedly comes from the Italian "mangia" – "food, dish" and "mangiare" – "to eat, to dine". The specificity of this dish among Bulgarians and Gagauz is confirmed by the fact that it is designated by a single lexeme. At the same time, it is absent among Turks and other Turkic peoples, as well as among Slavic peoples.

Vegetable dishes. Vegetables occupy a significant place in the diet of Bulgarian immigrants. Depending on the season, they consume and cook various vegetables, either fresh or canned, specially prepared in summer and autumn for use in winter. The most commonly used vegetables are potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, cabbage, beetroot, onions, garlic, carrots and aubergines, which are grown in their own gardens. Potatoes, among the Bulgarians of Bessarabia, as among many other peoples of Eastern Europe, rightfully occupy an important place in the diet. They are used to prepare many dishes: they are boiled, fried, baked, stewed; cooked with meat, with other vegetables, added to soups, used as a filling in pastries, etc. The most common and simple potato dish is considered to be *"kartofena mandzha" or "mandzha ot kartofi"* - potatoes stewed with or without meat. Potatoes are often baked in a cast-iron pan in the oven or stove with onions and seasonings. They are always sprinkled with crushed red pepper on top – "*pechen kartof", "pecheni kartofi*" Potatoes stewed or baked with meat – *"kartof s meso"* – along with beans – "*byal bob*" – and stewed lamb – "*ovchu"* – are still a mandatory hot dish at funerals. It should be noted that the spread of potatoes among Bulgarians in the metropolis and Bessarabian colonies is still inferior to some neighbouring peoples, such as the

Eastern Slavs. Bulgarian Balkan cuisine is closer to Mediterranean cuisine in terms of the range of products and methods of preparation. And, although many crops do not grow in the climate of the territories where the settlers live (Moldova and Ukraine), such as olives, citrus fruits, and herbs, many features of this cuisine have been preserved. This is evidenced by many surviving proverbs and sayings that contain the names of subtropical plants never seen by the colonists.

Peppers and tomatoes occupy an equally important place in the diet of the Bulgarian villages studied. In summer and autumn, they are eaten raw in various salads, stewed, baked, fried, pickled, etc. Vegetables are present in almost every dish (except sweet ones). The most commonly prepared dish was "*patlajena manja"*, made from fried onions, peppers, and tomatoes with seasonings. Since tomatoes were the main ingredient in this dish, it was called "*patlajena manja" (patlajen in Bulgarian means* tomato). *"Mandzha"* was often served with mashed potatoes and noodles. In summer, when the first vegetables appeared, they made a stew from them: they fried onions in vegetable oil, added chopped young courgettes, aubergines, peppers, new potatoes and tomatoes; everything is stewed, seasonings are added, a little water is poured in, and it is stewed until ready. Zucchini, peppers, and eggplants are fried throughout the season. A characteristic feature of these dishes was the obligatory dressing of garlic and vinegar. Vegetables were used to make various soups and borscht, borrowed from the Moldovans, Ukrainians and Russians, although not very often. These were often made with meat, meat broth or water, in which case a separate sauté was made. Beans, peas, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, tomatoes with peppers and onions, spices, etc. were used to prepare them. The specific method of preparing borscht and soups depended on the availability of certain products and the taste preferences of family members. Nowadays, it is rare to make *"borch"* - sour bread kvass - to accompany borscht, but until the 1960s and 1970s, "*borch"* was always on the dinner table. Nowadays, vinegar – *"utsets"* - is more commonly used to acidify soup, borscht or salad.

Another widely used vegetable, especially in winter, is cabbage. It was stewed with meat (often with duck or goose) – *"zeli s yurdechka"* (cabbage with duck) or *"zeli s meso"* (cabbage with meat). On winter fast days, sauerkraut with beans was prepared – "*zeli i bob*".

Zucchini, eggplant, and peppers were fried in a sauce made from onions and tomatoes. A popular appetiser has always been fried peppers – "*perjen piper*" – seasoned with tomato sauce.

Fruit complemented the daily diet of the inhabitants of Taraclia and Tvarditsa. Apricots, peaches, grapes, plums, pears, cherries and sweet cherries were eaten fresh and dried. In winter, dried fruit was used to make compote – *"ushaaf", "oshaaf" and "uzvar".*

Types of food of animal origin

In addition to farming, Bulgarian immigrants brought with them from their homeland the skills of raising domestic animals, which led to a large amount of animal products in their diet. These included meat, milk and dairy products, as well as fish and eggs. Meat dishes were mainly prepared by baking in an oven on hot coals, boiling and stewing (also in the oven), in clay pots or cast-iron cauldrons. Meat was often stewed in its own juices, with a little water or fat added. As noted above, meat was mainly prepared in advance and consumed in the form of semi-finished products that could be stored for a long time. These were used to prepare first and second courses, as well as composite dishes (i.e., those in which the main ingredient, along with potatoes, cereals, vegetables, etc., was meat). Preference was given to lamb *("ofchu meso"),* pork ("*svinka meso*") and poultry. Beef ("*guvazda meso*") and veal ("*teleshko meso*") were consumed less frequently. The consumption of chicken *("pileshko meso*"), duck ("*yurdechka*"), goose *("patka*") and turkey ("*fitka", "puyka", "misirka*") was widespread. It should be noted that there are few purely meat dishes in Bulgarian cuisine; meat was mainly added to dishes made from vegetables and cereals. One of the classic meat dishes that has survived to this day is "*usmianka",* which is always prepared when livestock (most often a pig) and consists of meat and offal (liver, lungs, heart and kidneys) cut into pieces and fried in a large amount of fat or oil with the addition of salt. *"Usmianka"* is also the name of the abdominal part of the animal (pig), and probably because the meat for this dish is taken from this part of the carcass, the dish itself has been given the same name. Another common meat dish was "*pilyana, pilyashka* manja" - stewed chicken or chicken in vegetable oil fried on a, onions with a little flour, spices, red pepper and water. A dish made in the same way from pork or beef was called "*mesyana kasha", "mandzha ot svinsk meso" or "mandzha ot govezhdo".* A well-known and widespread dish in the Balkans made from lamb, beef or pork – *"yahniya", "ikhiniya", "khiniyka", "iniya"* – was often prepared by immigrants until the middle of the 20th century. Nowadays, with the emergence of a large number of recipes borrowed from Moldovans, Ukrainians, Russians and other national cuisines, it is prepared much less frequently and has become virtually ritualistic. The peculiarity of its preparation is that the meat is not fried in oil with onions, but boiled for a long time in a large amount of water with the addition of coarsely chopped onions and spices. Note that *"kurban" and "kurbani",* which will be discussed below, are prepared in the same way. It should also be noted that in Tvarditsa, unlike in Taraclia and other Bulgarian settlements, a dish made from sheep meat is called "*kurban*", even if it is eaten as an everyday dish.

Among purely meat dishes, we must mention *"pacha" and "khladets"* - aspic, which is cooked from pig's trotters, head and tail, often cooked from rooster, adding

pig's trotters to it. *"Pacha"* is a mandatory dish for Christmas, winter weddings and other celebrations that take place during the cold season. Interestingly, the Turks have a dish called *"pacha"* that is prepared in exactly the same way (using beef or lamb, of course), but it is served hot.

Culinary innovations using meat, which have already become a tradition in all villages with a Bulgarian population, include cutlets – *"katleti", "mititei"* and others. To prepare mititei, eggs, fat, milk and spices are added to ground beef, the finished mince is passed through a meat grinder with a tube and fried in the form of sausages in vegetable oil or on a grill – "*gratar"* (Moldovan), *"skara"* (Bulgarian). Mititei are usually prepared on holidays or for family celebrations. Cutlets prepared according to the same recipe (minced lamb, beef, pork, mixed minced meat) and fried on a "*skara*" in Bulgaria are called "*kebabcheta*" (a name of Turkic origin). However, among the Bessarabian Bulgarians, this dish is known by its Moldovan name. Judging by the method of preparation of this dish and taking into account that it is always fried on a grill – *"gratare", "skare"* (this is how a similar dish is prepared in Bulgaria and the Near East, which is a purely Near Eastern tradition), it can be assumed that mititei entered the territory of modern Moldova under the influence of Turkish traditions, and the settlers borrowed this dish from the Moldovans, preserving its Moldovan name. It is possible and most likely that the settlers borrowed only the name of the dish, preserving the recipe for its preparation in the metropolis.

One of the ethnocultural markers of the traditional culture of the Bulgarians of Moldova is the ritual of "*kurban" or "kurbani", which* has survived since pagan times. Researchers of spiritual culture explain the existence of this ritual as a preservation of the tradition of biblical sacrifice from the Old Testament. The term "kurban" is of Arabic origin and is translated as "sacrifice" or "offering" and has several meanings depending on its purpose and intent: 1) a bloody sacrifice (i.e., when a sacrificial animal, usually a lamb, sheep, or rooster, is slaughtered in honour of a certain event), 2) a ritual meal with a sacrificial animal, 3) a ritual dish, 4) a bloodless sacrifice (i.e., when the sacrificial animal is not slaughtered, but given to someone alive). A ritual with a similar name and content is known to many peoples of the world: Jews, Arabs, Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Serbs, Macedonians, Gagauz, Chuvash, etc. The Bessarabian Bulgarians of Moldova have preserved the "*kurban"* ritual in general terms and to varying degrees of preservation. For example, in Tvarditsa, on 6 May, St. George's Day, a village-wide kurban is held, which is celebrated in a place designated for such events in this town. On 14 October, St. Petka's Day, after whom the local church is named, such a kurban is celebrated on the church grounds. Study of this ritual shows that it is still an integral part of the religious worldview of Bulgarians. *The "kurban"* is consecrated in the church, and then guests are invited to a feast. In Tvarditsa, they say: "...people ask God for help and promise a kurban

in return or in gratitude, and if they do not fulfil their promise, misfortune awaits them." From a long list *of* varieties *of "kurban"* performed until almost the middle of the 20th century (*village-wide kurban* of *the* church - in honour of the patron saint of the village church, kurban on St. George's Day, "*Petrovsky kurban*" - on St. Peter and St. Paul's Day, kurban on St. Nicholas the Wonderworker's Day, Easter, named in honour of the Guardian Angel, "kurban doma" - on the occasion of baptism, house consecration; wedding, for health, memorial kurban, for rain, for harvest, etc. Meals on all these days (holidays and non-holidays, village-wide and family) were always accompanied by a mandatory dish – *"kurban",* which was prepared using the same technology: the meat of the sacrificial lamb was cooked for a long time in a large amount of water with the addition of coarsely chopped onions and spices. This dish is still served at weddings, memorial services, housewarming parties, and christenings – practically all events significant to every Bulgarian settlement, including individual rural streets or families, and is called *"kurban"*. This type of kurban – boiled – is prepared by Bulgarians in Moldova. Bulgarian immigrants living in Ukraine prepare a dish intended for "*kurban*" by stewing the meat of the sacrificial animal in its own juice, like "*kavarma*", adding onions fried in vegetable oil. Unlike the Gagauz, among whom the kurban ritual is also widespread and who prepare *the kurban* dish by combining the meat of the sacrificial animal with potatoes, cabbage, rice or other grains, the Bulgarians' dish consists only of meat. Of particular note is *the* Easter *kurban* – at Easter, stuffed lamb or turkey (if for some reason the family was unable to purchase a lamb) is always prepared for the festive meal. This "*kurban*" is prepared as follows: a whole lamb, piglet or turkey is stuffed with prepared minced rice or *bulgur* with the animal's offal and spices, sewn up and baked in the oven (Orthodox Bulgarians use piglets for *the Easter sacrifice*). This dish is always prepared for Easter in almost every home and every family.

Egg dishes

As mentioned above, Bulgarian immigrants ran large households. In addition to growing various vegetables and fruits in their gardens, they raised large numbers of livestock, including poultry such as chickens, geese, and ducks, which allowed them to include eggs in their diet. geese, ducks, etc., which allowed them to include eggs (*"itsa"*) in their diet. Eggs were boiled – *"vareni itsa"* (most often for lunch in the field), fried – *"przhene itsa",* and even made into a *"mangia"* – *"itsana mangia"*. Scrambled eggs were eggs beaten and mixed with brynza cheese, fried in a pan with vegetable oil; fried eggs were less common. "*Itsana manja"* was prepared using the classic technology of all *"manjas":* Onions were fried in vegetable oil in a cast-iron pot or deep frying pan, beaten eggs were poured into it, stirred, a little flour and brynza cheese were added (it is possible to omit the cheese), a little water was added, spices were added, and it was lightly stewed. Standalone egg dishes were

usually prepared quickly. Most often, eggs were used as an addition to dishes to improve their taste. Almost all dough products, including noodles, were kneaded with eggs. A particularly large number of eggs were used to make "Easter" (up to 150-170 pieces). Boiled coloured eggs were an essential part of the Easter meal. Coloured eggs were also a must on "Sufin Den" - Remembrance Day, which is still celebrated by Bulgarians in Moldova on the Monday following Easter; they were given to all relatives and neighbours when they met at the cemetery.

Fish dishes

The range of fish dishes among Bulgarian immigrants is very limited, as the natural conditions of their new homeland did not allow for it. In many villages, artificial reservoirs were built – ponds that were used mainly for irrigating fields and partly for breeding fish. River fish was used to make fish soup – "*ribyana churba*" – but more often it was fried – *"pirjena riba"* – or baked in the oven – *"gotvena riba" or* "*pechena riba*". It was also eaten salted ("*sulenata riba*").

Spices and seasonings

One of the distinctive features of Bulgarian cuisine is the rich assortment and use of spices and seasonings, which significantly improve the taste of dishes. According to popular belief, each dish has a specific spice or seasoning, and the art of being a good hostess in Bulgaria is determined by the knowledge and ability to use various herbs and seasonings in cooking. Perhaps the most popular and indispensable seasoning in Bulgarian cuisine, which largely determines its specificity, is dried ground pepper – *"cherven piper"*. To prepare it, ripe red peppers are cut into slices or strung on a thick thread, dried in the sun, then dried in the oven (after baking bread), ground in a mortar and sifted through a sieve. Depending on whether hot or sweet peppers are dried and the degree to which they are ground, the result is a seasoning with a hot or sweetish taste, coarsely or finely ground. Pepper is stored in a dry place in a tightly closed container. This seasoning, made using the same technology, is popular among the neighbouring Gagauz people under the name *"kirmizi biber"*. In Moldovan cuisine, the equivalent of this seasoning is boiled tomato paste.

Along with the widespread, even obligatory, use of spices in cooking, such as red pepper, garlic, thyme, mint, dill, parsley and other herbs, a seasoning called *"mirudia"* is known throughout the territory of the former Bessarabia as a purely Bulgarian culinary phenomenon. *"myurda"* - a mixture of ground dried herbs and other ingredients (red and black pepper, salt). "*Mirudia"* consists of dried green onion and garlic feathers, dill, peppermint, parsley, dried stems of ripe bell peppers or gogoshar, other wild herbs collected in fields or forests – "*samardala", "pojata",* or specially grown in gardens. There should be many such herbs - from

seven to fifteen - the number must be odd. The main ingredient of this seasoning is an aromatic plant that gives the seasoning its specific smell - *"kukosha murdy" (satureja hortensis*), after which the seasoning got its name - without this herb, this dry mixture cannot be called *"mirudya"*. There is no single specific recipe for "mirudia", as each housewife adds spices to her own taste; the more ingredients, the richer the taste and aroma. The finished seasoning is eaten with bread, most often hot *("topul lap s mirudia"*) and as an addition to meat dishes.

In addition to the aforementioned red pepper and "mirudia", Bulgarian women used many other spices and seasonings to improve the taste of the dishes they prepared. These include: ground black pepper and peppercorns – "*cheren piper", "cher piper",* garlic – "chesan", horseradish – *"hryan",* hot peppers – "arnaushki", "*lyut* piper", *"lyuti* chushki"; herbs used fresh and dried: peppermint – *"gyuzum", "gyozum",* dill – *"kopir"*, celery – *"tsel*ina", thyme – *"chubrika", "chubritsa",* parsley – "*maydanos"*, etc.

When talking about seasonings in Bulgarian cuisine, one cannot fail to mention the famous Bulgarian *"lyutenitsa"* and the so-called red salt, characteristic only of the Balkans – *"chervena sol"* – as it is called by Bulgarians in Moldova and Ukraine. *"Lyutenitsa"* is, in fact, the well-known adjika (the birthplace of adjika is Adjara, and the term is of Turkic origin – *aji* means bitter). All national cuisines use table salt, and most southern cuisines use red ground pepper, but only in the Bulgarian culinary tradition are they mixed together to produce a bright red salt called *"chervena sol"*. In Bulgaria, ground dried green herbs are often added to salt - dill, parsley, "samardalu" - a wild plant with a very specific smell - in Bulgaria it is called "*sharena* sol" ("sharena" means "colourful" in Bulgarian). It should be noted that all the spices used in Bulgarian cuisine not only give dishes a unique aroma and rich flavour, but also improve digestion and blood circulation.

Drinks

A traditional Bulgarian table always features a wide variety of drinks: Strong, warming alcoholic beverages, light refreshing wines, low-alcohol drinks such as kvass, compotes made from fresh and dried fruit, and fermented milk drinks. The main alcoholic beverages are wine (*vino*) and vodka (*rakia).* Red and rosé wines predominate among those produced by Bulgarian immigrants. A barrel of white wine was specially made for holidays and upcoming major family celebrations (weddings, christenings, housewarming parties). Wine was an indispensable element of all meals. No holiday was complete without wine. It should be noted that in Bulgarian villages in Moldova, only men of a certain age were allowed to drink wine. Women and young people could only sip a little wine or rakia, and children were strictly forbidden to drink alcoholic beverages. No less popular than wine is rakia, a fruit and berry vodka. *Rakia* got its name during the Ottoman rule in the

Balkans from the Persian word *arak*, meaning vodka, which is also the origin of the name of Turkish vodka, *raki*. Rakia is made from grapes (grozdova), plums *(slivova,* slivovica), apricots (*kajsieva* rakia), pears (*krušova rakia),* and sometimes wheat or wine lees and pomace. The tradition of making homemade vodka from grapes and fruit was brought to by settlers from their historical homeland. This tradition remained strong until the middle of the 20th century. Despite the fact that Taraclia and Tvarditsa have been declared cities, their residents, as in Korten and Valea Perzei, have large garden plots where they grow grapes. They use these grapes to make wine or rakia. Until recently, until the 1960s, rakia was drunk very sparingly, one glass at large family and calendar celebrations, after which they moved on to wine. In general, Bulgarians consume alcoholic beverages quite moderately, and alcohol abuse is frowned upon.

In the past, they also brewed a low-alcohol drink called "*boza"*. The technology for making it was also brought by settlers from their homeland, and is essentially similar to the technology used in brewing beer. Small flatbreads called "*malaycheta"* were baked from coarsely ground corn flour, soaked in warm water, a little yeast and bran were added, and left for a day to ferment, then strained, sugar was added, and consumed in this form. This drink was similar to kvass or low-alcohol beer, and it was good for quenching thirst in the summer. It should be noted that boza is now rarely made. The recipe for its preparation has been almost forgotten and is remembered only by very elderly respondents. Among non-alcoholic beverages, Bulgarians love grape juice – "*shira", "shara"*. With the advent of new food storage technologies*, "shira"* began to be canned like compote, after being boiled. Tea consumption was associated with the treatment of illness, and herbal infusions were also used to treat ailments rather than to quench thirst. Until the middle of the 20th century, immigrants rarely drank tea, let alone coffee. They brewed mint, thyme, chamomile, and quince leaves and drank them for colds. In everyday life, the main water-based drink, apart from water itself, was compote made from fresh or dried fruit – *"oshaf", "ushaf" and "uzvar"*. Dried fruit compote has a sacred function, being part of the ritual meal on Christmas Eve (6 January). Milk is rarely consumed in its raw form in Bulgarian cuisine. Most often, it is used to make brynza cheese, butter, or simply fermented to produce sour milk – *"kisel mlyako"*. Sour milk has long been considered not a drink, but a separate dish in its own right. It was usually consumed in summer to quench thirst or with bread as a separate dish. As a thirst-quenching drink, sour milk diluted with water – *"ayran" – was* often consumed.,

The national cuisine of any people is of great value not only to chefs, but also to ethnographers and historians. It is influenced by the centuries-old history of the country in which it was formed. Nothing brings you closer to the material culture of

a people than their national cuisine. Understanding its peculiarities is perhaps the best and shortest path to mutual understanding between nations.

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Appendix 1: Anthology of Festive and Ceremonial Dishes of the National Cuisine of Bulgaria and Moldova

Vegetable caviar "Kepoolu"

Ingredients: 1 kg eggplant, 200 g tomatoes, 5-6 cloves garlic, 60 ml vegetable oil, 20 ml table vinegar, half a bunch of parsley, salt, ground black pepper - to taste.

Preparation: Bake the aubergines, drain off the bitter juice, peel and mash. Add oil, crushed garlic, chopped parsley, ground black pepper and salt. Place in a salad bowl, smooth the surface and arrange the sliced tomatoes around the edge.

Tarator

Ingredients: Sour milk (yoghurt or kefir) - 500 ml, fresh cucumbers - 400 g, garlic - 5-6 cloves, vegetable oil - 40 ml, shelled walnuts - 70 g, a bunch of dill, salt to taste.

Preparation: Add the garlic crushed together with the walnuts, finely chopped cucumbers, oil and salt to the whipped sour milk (plain yogurt or kefir). Stir the mixture and, if necessary, dilute with cold water. When serving, sprinkle with finely chopped dill.

Bob-chorba

Ingredients: 100 g beans, 2 tablespoons tomato paste, 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, ground red pepper, salt, garlic, parsley and dill.

Preparation: Boil the beans in salted water until tender, season with vegetable oil and tomato paste. If desired, add finely chopped ham. Cook for another 10 minutes, then add salt and pepper to taste. When serving, sprinkle with finely chopped dill, parsley or green onions.

Kurban-chorba made from young lamb

Ingredients: lamb meat – 300 g, carrots – 50 g, potatoes – 150 g, onions – 50 g, tomato puree – 10 g, flour – 10 g, butter – 50 g, garlic – 3-4 cloves, parsley, ground black pepper and salt – to taste.

Preparation: Cut the meat into small pieces and boil in salted water together with finely chopped carrots. Sauté finely chopped onion in oil, add flour and tomato puree and add to the soup. Cook for 10 minutes, add diced potatoes, then add garlic and cook until done. When serving, sprinkle with finely chopped parsley and black pepper.

Shkembe chorba

Ingredients: 1 kg sheep's stomach, 1 onion, flour - 2 tablespoons, eggs - 2, vegetable oil - 3 tablespoons, vinegar - 40 g, parsley - 1 bunch, ground red pepper, garlic - 3-4 cloves.

Preparation: Thoroughly clean and wash the sheep's stomach (tripe), boil in salted water and cut into small pieces. Sauté finely chopped onion and flour in oil, sprinkle with red pepper. Pour in the strained broth and add the chopped stomach, cook. Season the finished soup with egg and vinegar. Serve with finely chopped parsley and black pepper (to taste).

Beans in a pot ("Fasul")

Ingredients: white beans – 400g, vegetable oil – 100ml, onion – 50g, hot red pepper (arnauški) – 3-4 pods, ground red pepper, peppermint, salt to taste.

Preparation: Soak the beans in cold water overnight. In the morning, put them on the stove, and when they boil, drain the water. Then put the beans in a clay pot with finely chopped onions, mint, hot peppers, pour cold water and vegetable oil, sprinkle with red pepper and cook over low heat, covering the pot with a lid. A few minutes before they are ready, salt the beans.

Potato mandzha with pork

Ingredients: pork – 700 g, potatoes – 1.5 kg, onion – 1 large, vegetable oil – 50 ml, tomatoes – 2, sweet pepper – 1, ground red pepper – 20 g, parsley – half a bunch, bay leaf, salt to taste.

Preparation: Fry the finely chopped onion in heated vegetable oil, add the thoroughly washed meat, simmer, then add the diced potatoes, finely chopped sweet pepper and tomatoes, sprinkle with red pepper, salt to taste and cover with water (to cover the meat). Finally, add the bay leaf, a sprig of thyme (chubrika), chopped parsley or dill and 1 hot pepper.

Aspic ("Pacha")

Ingredients: rooster - 1 carcass; pork legs - 2 pieces, onion - 1, carrots – 2, hot pepper – 1 pod, garlic – 10 cloves, black peppercorns – 10, bay leaves – 3, water – 5 litres, eggs – 3-4.

Preparation: Thoroughly wash the rooster carcass and pork legs, cut into 4 pieces and soak for 1 hour. Place the prepared meat in a large saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Skim off any foam that forms and cook for 4-5 hours over low heat until done, skimming off the foam periodically. Two hours before it is ready, add salt and add the onions and carrots. Towards the end of cooking, add black pepper and bay leaves. Remove the cooked meat, onions and carrots from the saucepan, strain the broth and add the chopped garlic. Separate the meat from the bones and arrange on plates, place them in a cool, flat place, and pour over the strained broth. Garnish the aspic with boiled eggs, carrots, and green parsley.

Stuffed lamb ("Pelnyanu agne")

Ingredients: lamb (5-6 kg) with offal, 500 g rice, 250 vegetable oil - 250g, green onions - 2 bunches, garlic - 7-8 cloves, ground red pepper - 20 g, parsley - 1 bunch, mint - 1 bunch, chubrika - 2 sprigs, salt and black pepper to taste, bay leaf.

Preparation: Wash and salt the carcass. Fry the finely chopped onion in oil, stir in a tablespoon of red pepper and remove from the heat. Cut the lightly cooked offal and add to the onion along with the half-cooked rice, chopped garlic, parsley and mint, and salt. Place the lamb on a baking sheet, fill with this mixture, sew up the abdominal opening, brush with oil and red pepper, and bake first on high heat, then on medium heat. During baking, turn the meat several times and baste with the juices that are released.

Beef stew

Ingredients: beef - 750 g, oil - 100 g, onions - 500 g, garlic - 10 cloves, tomatoes - 200 g, flour - 10 g, black peppercorns - 10-15, ground red pepper - 5 g, bay leaves - 2-3, salt to taste.

Preparation: Cut the meat into small pieces. Heat the oil in a cast iron pot, simmer the meat, adding a little water, then remove. In the same oil, simmer the finely chopped onion, stirring it with flour, pour in warm water and bring to a boil. Put the meat back in, add salt and cook with the seasonings. When the meat is tender, add the coarsely chopped onion, garlic and finely chopped tomatoes.

Chicken Manja (Pilyana Manja)

Ingredients: 1 kg chicken, 200 g onions, 200 g tomatoes,

vegetable oil - 60 ml, flour - 30 g, ground red pepper - 10 g, hot pepper - 1 pod, salt to taste, chubrika, bay leaf, half a bunch of parsley.

Pre*paration:* fry and simmer coarsely chopped onions in heated vegetable oil, add chicken cut into portions, sprinkle with flour and pepper. Add water and finely chopped tomatoes, bay leaf and chubrika. Season with salt and simmer over low heat. Sprinkle with chopped parsley before serving.

Stuffed peppers ("Plyan piper", "Tipkani chushki")

Ingredients: 500 g minced meat, 800 g bell peppers, 100 g rice or bulgur, 100 ml vegetable oil, 150 g onions, 150 g tomatoes, parsley, ground black and red pepper, salt to taste.

Preparation: Wash the peppers and remove the seeds and stalks. Finely chop the onion and fry in oil until golden brown. Add the rice or bulgur wheat, red pepper, grated tomatoes, a coffee cup of warm water and minced meat. Season the mixture with salt, stir in the black pepper and chopped parsley, and remove from the heat. Fill the peppers with this mixture, cover with the cut-off tops, place tightly in a pot or saucepan with a thick bottom, pour in a glass of warm water or tomato juice, and cook over low heat. Serve with sour cream.

Grape leaf rolls ("Sarmy")

Ingredients: minced veal – 800 g, vegetable oil – 100 ml, a bunch of green onions, rice or bulgur – 100 g, young grape leaves – 35-40 pieces, red and black ground pepper, dill and parsley.

Preparation: Fry the finely chopped onions in oil, add a little red pepper, then add the minced meat, rice, black pepper and chopped herbs. Salt the minced meat, pour in a small amount of hot water so that the rice absorbs the water. Pour salted boiling water over the fresh grape leaves (rinse the canned leaves well). Place a teaspoon of the mixture on each leaf. Shape the stuffed cabbage rolls into envelopes or tubes, place them in a low clay pot (gyuvetch), pour in 1.5 cups of water, cover tightly with a lid and cook over low heat. Serve with sour cream.

Mamaliga ("Kachamak")

Ingredients: 1 kg cornmeal, 3 litres water, 500 g brynza cheese, salt to taste.

Preparation: Cook in a cast iron pot or a thick-bottomed saucepan! Pour the flour into boiling salted water in a thin stream, stirring continuously. Remove from the heat when the mamaliga begins to pull away from the sides of the pot. Place the finished mamaliga on a clean table or wooden board and cut into pieces with a strong thread, distribute among plates and sprinkle with crushed brynza cheese, pour oil over it, and if desired, you can also serve it with cracklings.

New Year's banitsa ("Banitsa with kusmeti", "Novogodishna milina")

Ingredients: 700 g flour, 400 g brynza or cottage cheese, 250 g vegetable oil, 3 eggs, salt to taste.

Preparation: knead a stiff dough from water, a pinch of salt and 1.5 cups of flour, divide it into 8-10 pieces and roll them into balls. Lightly roll out each ball with a rolling pin, brush with sunflower oil and let the dough rest for 20-30 minutes. During this time, the dough will become soft and can be easily rolled out into a thin sheet (no more than 2 mm) or stretched with your fingertips until transparent. Sprinkle each stretched or rolled sheet with oil or place small pieces of butter on it, spread the filling of brynza or cottage cheese with eggs over the entire sheet, roll it up and place it on a greased baking tray. If the baking tray is round, roll the roll into a "snail" shape. Prepare some twigs from fruit trees with different numbers of buds, which will signify different predictions for the new year, and a coin. Place them on one of the sheets of dough and roll them up with the others. Bake at a moderate temperature (180 degrees) in the oven for 45-55 minutes. You can sprinkle the freshly baked banitsa with sugar syrup and cover it with a towel to make it softer.

Tutmanik ("Mesenitsa")

Ingredients: 800 g flour, 400 g cottage cheese, 200 ml vegetable oil, 20 g yeast, salt.

Preparation: Make a starter from a small amount of flour, yeast and warm water and leave it overnight. Add the remaining flour and water to the risen starter and knead the dough, divide it into 4 balls and leave it to rise. Then roll out 4 layers and place them on a baking tray one on top of the other, alternating them with cottage cheese and butter. Cut the tutmanik into diamond shapes, brush with beaten egg and bake until golden brown. Each layer with the filling can be rolled into a roll, cut into 10-15 cm pieces and placed vertically in a baking tin.

Ayran

Ingredients: 1 litre of fermented milk, 1 litre of drinking water, salt, juice of 0.5 lemon.

Preparation: Beat the fermented milk with a whisk or mixer and dilute with cold water, add salt to taste and lemon juice (if desired).

Pitmes

*Ingredients:*Grape juice - 12-15 litres, pumpkin - 4 kg, quince - 2 kg.

Preparation: Remove the seeds from the pumpkin, cut it into cubes together with the skin, wash and peel the quince, cut it into cubes as well, place in a metal saucepan with a thick bottom, pour in the grape juice and cook for 8-10 hours until the jam becomes thick like honey. Then pour it into jars or clay pots and store in a cool, dark place.

Grape jam

Ingredients: 5-6 kg of whole bunches of ripe (usually white) grapes, 3-4 litres of grape juice, 3 horseradish roots.

Preparation: Clean and wash the grapes thoroughly. Wash the horseradish root and grate it or cut it into slices. Place the grapes in a clay pot, pour in the grape juice, add the grated horseradish. Cover tightly with a lid and store in a cool place.

Turshiya ("Armeya")

Ingredients: ripe and brown tomatoes, bell peppers, small beets, carrots, small onions, apples – a total of 40-45 kg of vegetables and fruits; for the brine: 10 litres of water, 2 cups of salt; sugar – 1 cup, as well as horseradish, cherry and currant leaves, celery, dried dill umbels, bay leaves, garlic.

Preparation: Clean and thoroughly wash the vegetables. Line the bottom of a wooden tub with cherry and bay leaves. Place the vegetables and fruit in layers in the tub and pour in the brine. Layer each layer with garlic, celery and dill umbels. Place a weight on top.

Lyutenitsa

Ingredients: tomatoes – 3 kg, gogoshari – 1 kg, apples – 0.5 kg (optional), bitter peppers (arnauški) – 7-8 pieces, garlic – 300 g, vegetable oil – 200 ml, salt – 2 tablespoons.

Preparation: Pass the peeled and washed tomatoes, gogoshari and apples through a meat grinder, cook for 2 hours, add 2 tablespoons of salt, 200 ml of sunflower oil and cook for another 2 hours. Pass 300 g of garlic through a garlic press, add to the lyutenitsa and roll up. You can choose not to cook the lyutenitsa, but in this case, you will need to add 1 aspirin tablet to each jar.

Photos

Photo 1: General view of the festive table of Bulgarians in Moldova.

Photo 2: Festive loaf of bread.

Photo 3: New Year's banitsa (milina) with kusmeti.

Photo 4: Velikodna Easter.

Photo 5: Easter table.

Photo 6: "Easter meal".

Photo 7: "Easter table".

Photo 8: Jellied meat ("Pacha").

Photo 9: Mesyanitsa ("Tutmanik").

Photo 10: "Hvorost" ("Promushniki").

Photo 11: Making homemade noodles.

Photo 12: Kavarma.

Photo 13: Stuffed cabbage rolls with grape leaves ("Sarma s lozov list").

Photo 14: Cabbage rolls with cabbage leaves ("Sarma s zelyuv list").

Photo 15: Making homemade sausage.

Photo 16: Making brynza.

The Maaza (Cellar) as a Space in the Food and Beverage Storage and Sharing Culture of the Gagauz

Adem Koç*

From ancient times to the present day, food production and storage techniques have constituted an essential sphere of life, accompanied by a significant accumulation of cultural knowledge. Along with the ways in which produced food and beverages are consumed, the necessity of storing them in order to meet long-term nutritional needs has also emerged. For this reason, it can be said that storage methods themselves have developed into a cultural accumulation through long periods of experimentation. Today, refrigerators are the most common means of food storage. However, refrigerators allow nuclear families to store food only for a limited period, while household freezers also serve the limited preservation of certain foods. Considering that extended families live together in many regions, it cannot be claimed that technological devices alone are sufficient. When we look at human history, we can see that various solutions were developed to preserve and store food even in the absence of technological means. Many of these methods have been used from the past to the present both in Türkiye and in different parts of the world, such as smoking, salting (brining), burying in snow or soil, cooking, drying, storing in honey or olive oil, canning, freezing, vacuum sealing, and so on.

Due to factors such as seasonal changes, climate, geography, wars, migrations, and urban and rural lifestyles, the protection of food and beverages - from humans, animals, pests, and similar threats - and their storage in a form suitable for long-term consumption have constituted a distinct field of culinary culture. In this context, ways of consuming food run parallel to durable methods of storage. In addition, alongside the kitchen as the area where food and beverages are prepared, the necessity of creating a separate space for storing food has also arisen. Storing food and beverages produced according to a culinary culture in a space capable

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of sustaining extended families over long periods is of vital importance, especially during seasons when access to food becomes difficult (particularly in winter). In this sense, the production, storage, and sharing of food and beverages have formed a cultural domain.

The word *mahzen* (cellar), commonly used in Turkish, derives from the Arabic root *hazn*, meaning "to store, to accumulate," and is used as a technical term denoting a place. In Eastern Islamic states, the words *hazine* (treasury), referring to a place where valuable items such as money, gold, and jewelry are kept, and *hazinedar* (treasurer), referring to the person who guards and records them, also originate from the same root. These spaces also appear as places where food is stored or where communal eating and drinking culture develops. In the sense of a food and beverage storage space, such places are known as *kiler* (källare, kelder, kellari, etc.) in the Baltic countries, *podval* (подвал) in Russia, *beci/pivniţă* in Romania and Moldova, and *maaza*[1] in Gagauzia, the autonomous region of Moldova. The common feature of these spaces is that they are built underground.

The *maaza* of the Gagauz, which constitutes the main subject of this study, offers far more than a simple storage space for food and beverages. While the "house" represents life, the *maaza* represents an underworld that ensures the continuity of life. Incorporating many aspects such as spatial design, indicators of social status, and the culture of food sharing, the *maaza* also has a historical background among the Gagauz. Along with culinary culture, the *maaza* has found its place in folk literature genres such as folk songs, manis (rhymed couplets), anecdotes, and tales.[2]

Maaza dibi taşlıdır / The bottom of the cellar is stony
Benim yauklum yaşlıdır / My lover is old
Bän ona pek hızlanmam / I don't rush towards him
Aalemden pek utanmam / I'm not ashamed of my family (Özkan, 2017: 232)

The Russian soldier and ethnographer Valentin Aleksandrovich Moşkov compiled his book *The Gagauz of the Bender District* (Гагаузы Бессарабского уезда) in the early 1900s based on ethnographic and folkloric materials and information collected during his travels through Gagauz villages and from the places where he stayed as a guest. He also dedicated a special section in his book to the "House and Courtyard Structure" that he provided information about. The oldest source from which we can obtain information about traditional Gagauz house architecture and cellars is Moşkov's work. In 1983, S. Kuroglo and M. V. Maruneviç also provided information accompanied by drawings about Gagauz houses and courtyard

1 Maaza: An underground chamber where barrels, wine, fruits, and vegetables are kept (Köksal, 2024: 165).

2 For example texts, see (Sevinç, 2024: 718-724).

structures. Moşkov gave detailed information based on the Gagauz house and auxiliary buildings of Yancu Köse in the village of Beşalma, where he stayed during his travels. He noted that he resorted to such an example because houses and courtyard structures in the region did not display uniformity.

Yancu Köse's house was located at the corner of two streets. The courtyard included the following: the house, the *hayat* (open hall), the front yard, an unfenced cellar, the kitchen, a shed, a granary, a fence separating the front and back yards with a gate for passage, a hayloft, and a threshing floor. The hayloft and threshing floor were located in the back yard, which was enclosed only by a fence and contained no other auxiliary structures (Moşkov, 2021: 314).

According to Moşkov, although Gagauz families were large, married sons were required to establish their own households. The family and the best man assisted them according to their economic means. Married sons began constructing their courtyards and houses, starting with the kitchen, on land allocated to them on the edge of the village. A hardworking and thrifty new family could build its house within a few years after constructing the kitchen. The most fortunate child in the family was the youngest son, and it was considered lucky for a daughter to marry the youngest son, as the house and everything in the courtyard would be inherited by him. He continued to live with his parents and did not need to establish a new household.

Moşkov listed the auxiliary structures traditionally found in a Gagauz courtyard as follows:

1. A granary-fence for storing unhusked corn
2. A granary for storing other crops
3. A small place for storing hay (*plevnik*)
4. A wine cellar (*maaza*) (Moşkov, 2021: 311)

The *maaza* (cellar) is one of the places to which the Gagauz show the greatest care, along with the house itself. This can be understood from the fact that cellars, like guesthouses, are decorated externally in a manner considered excessive for other structures. Entrances to cellars are usually decorated. Some are constructed with rounded arches made of soft stones plastered with mud and whitewashed with lime. On the upper and side parts of these arches, there are spherical or small vase-like ornaments made of the same soft stones or clay and painted with lime or colorful paints. Sometimes decorative paintings similar to those on stoves and the outer walls of houses are also found above these arches (Moşkov, 2021: 312).

The interior of cellars (maaza) can vary greatly depending on the owner's means. The simplest form of a *maaza* is a rectangular pit dug into the ground (this is not difficult to do here since the soil is clayey chernozem). Above the pit, a roof sloping on two sides is built from wood or rounded soft stones. If the roof

is wooden, six posts are placed along the long sides of the pit and one post in the middle of each short side to support the main beam. Then, as in houses, a roof is made of wooden slats (lyatsa)[3] using three trusses. Wooden roofing material or corn stalks are placed on top of the wooden slats instead of reeds. A similar roof is built over the stairway (kırlek) leading down into the cellar, after which everything is covered with soil. If the owner has extra soft stones, semicircular molds are placed over the pit and stairway, fixed with wooden planks, and then covered with stones bound together with clay instead of cement. When the clay dries, the molds and planks are removed, leaving a rounded stone roof, which is again covered with soil. The steps of the staircase used to descend into the cellar are made of earth, designed to be flat and not excessively high; in well-preserved cases, they are covered with soft stone or wooden planks. The entrance of the cellar is closed with double hinged doors. Although very rare, these cellars are sometimes constructed beneath houses, usually beneath the area known as the "hayat."[4] In such cases, the floor of the hayat is made of wooden planks and also serves as the roof of the cellar (Moşkov, 2021: 312-313).

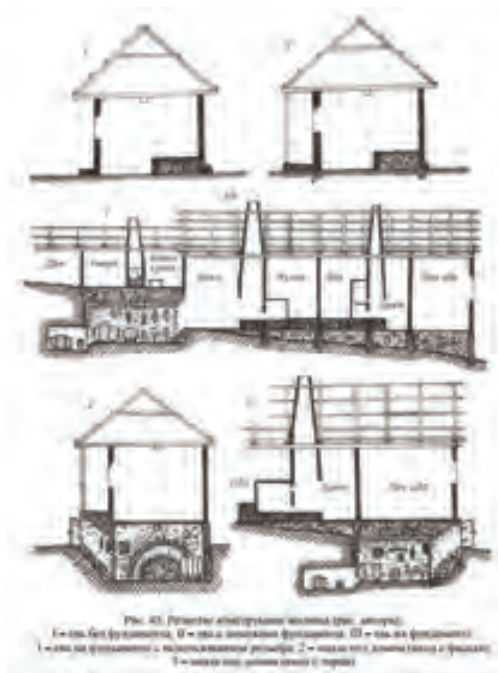

Figure 1: Drawing of a Gagauz house and cellar by M.V. Marunevich, Романова, 2018: 344.

3 läţ: A flat wooden slat.

4 The common area where the room doors open.

The walls and stairs of the cellar are usually plastered smooth with mud and whitewashed. In some cellars, a niche (*beç*)[5] is made in the back wall, which is twice as wide and three times as deep as the rest of the cellar. In summer, the temperature in these niches is lower than in the rest of the cellar, making them very suitable for storing milk and other perishable foods.

Although these cellars are mainly used for wine barrels laid on the ground, preserves prepared for winter are also stored in small barrels, clay jars, and various suitable containers. Cheese, meat, and similar products are hung in bags or sacks from iron hooks attached to the ceiling. Beehives are also stored in the same space for the winter.

In years with abundant grape harvests, homeowners produce large quantities of wine, but if the warehouses are small and cannot accommodate all the barrels, the excess barrels are left in the courtyard throughout the winter. However, in these cases, care is taken to ensure that the barrels are absolutely not moved or even touched, otherwise the wine in these barrels will spoil very quickly when spring arrives. Those who want to have the best wine turn this situation to their advantage. While the outside of the barrels left in the courtyard freezes, the wine in the middle hardens and does not freeze. This unfrozen wine in the middle is then taken from the barrels and placed in the warehouse, where it can be stored for a long time without spoiling, whereas normally wines do not last long in the warehouse and begin to sour (Moşkov, 2021: 313).

According to our field research in Gagauzia, in cities such as Comrat, Ceadir-Lunga, and Valkaneş, as well as various villages, Gagauz people still use preservation methods such as cooking, drying, pickling, and canning. Fruits, vegetables, pickles, dried herbs, dairy products, meat, fish, and kampot (compote) are stored in cellars. Wines are also aged in barrels in cellars.

Gagauz cellars come in two types: those located in the garden and those located beneath the house. Garden cellars are accessed through a straight door, while those beneath the house are accessed through a horizontally positioned door. Horizontal doors are usually double-winged and narrow, as this provides protection from both cold and heat. (Photo 1-2).

The storage areas, varying in size and design depending on the family's economic situation, are typically 2 - 2.5 meters high and 20 - 30 m^2 in size. The storage areas maintain an average temperature of 10-15°C in summer and 4-8°C in winter. This allows for the preservation of food and the maturation of wines prepared in September and aged in oak barrels. Food containers are placed on

5 Beç: The deepest part of the cellar, the bottom (Köksal, 2024: 37).

wooden and metal shelves, sometimes in niches in the walls, while fruits and vegetables are sometimes placed on cloths and newspapers spread on the floor. Some storage areas have deeper compartments called "beç" at the back, which are cooler. Wine is usually aged in these beçs. (Photo 3).

Cellars can also be an indicator of a family's economic power and social status. The hospitable Gagauz people welcome guests warmly into their homes and readily share their food and drink. It is a source of pride for the family, especially when the male head of the household (çorbacı) shows off the cellar. A well-organized cellar filled with plenty of food and drink is a testament to the skills of both men and women for the year. While the men gather and socialize in the cellars, the women prepare the table and then retreat to their rooms, generally not participating in these gatherings. Ivan Mardan (I1) is a prominent farmer and landowner in Comrat. He was also a former member of parliament. He conducts business meetings and entertains guests in the cellar of his factory. He states that this method is very useful because he hosts many guests, and thus business meetings are successfully concluded. He entertains those he considers closer, as well as family friends, on the veranda and in the cellar of his house. The walls of Ivan Mardan's two meticulously prepared cellars are decorated with reliefs, paintings, and niches depicting himself and his family. Although Ivan Mardan is a wealthy farmer, he doesn't mention it; however, the design of his cellars clearly conveys this status. He also mentions that he is very happy and proud to give tours of his cellars (Photo 4-5).

Elizaveta Kvilinkova has conducted numerous studies on Gagauz culture. In her book about Gagauz people living in Moldova and Belarus, she includes the memoirs of a Moldovan businessman. The businessman usually didn't visit his employees' homes. However, upon the invitation of a Gagauz employee who had earned his trust through honesty and diligence, he visited his home. He was impressed by the Gagauz family's welcome and the meal they prepared. He was particularly struck by the variety of food and the abundance of wines in the cellar. In later years, taking Gagauz hospitality as an example, he hosted his own guests with a traditional Gagauz feast (Kvilinkova, 2023: 232-256).

In terms of showcasing Gagauz hospitality, there are two particularly important festivals in Gagauzia that are relevant to our topic and are tied to the calendar: Hederlez and the Feast of November. Hederlez (Saint George, May 6) marks the beginning of summer, and the Feast of November (Saint Dmitry, November 7) marks the beginning of winter.[6] These two important festivals divide the year into two parts for livestock farming and agriculture. In May, the animals are entrusted to the shepherds, and in November they are retrieved, and accounts are settled with

6 For Hederlez and November festivals, see (Zanet, 2017: 21-23).

the shepherds. Therefore, these periods, symbolizing abundance and prosperity, are marked by important celebrations. Hederlez is celebrated in Ceadir-Lunga with the participation of all villages, featuring food sharing and various competitions. At the end of summer, the grape harvest fills the cellars, and wines are made. Sacrifices are also offered and shared during the Feast of November. In Komrat, the current capital of Gagauzia, celebrations are also held annually in the first week of November under the name of Gagauz Wine Festival. Therefore, the Hederlez and Kasım festivals are also significant for Gagauzia in terms of gastronomy and tourism. Besides Gagauz people from abroad, culture enthusiasts from within Moldova and other countries also participate in these celebrations.

Thanks to the efforts of the Gagauzia Cultural Directorate, Gagauz cuisine and culinary culture are showcased at fairs held both domestically and internationally. The diverse dishes, pickles, cheeses, and wines of Gagauz cuisine are attracting considerable attention from visitors. (Photo 6).

Traditional Gagauz cellars and Gagauz hospitality also serve as inspiration for new venue designs. Establishments in Gagauzia such as Vinuri de Comrat (Komrat), Gagauz Sofrası (Kongaz), Fiesta (Avdarma), Hakikat (Çadır-Lunga), and Karagani (Valkaneş) welcome local and foreign tourists in their venues, where they combine their cultural heritage with gastronomy, cellars, and tourism, and serve as good examples of representation, increasing awareness of Gagauz culinary culture.

This raises the question, "Could new cities have new cellars?" In the 21st century, migration from rural areas to cities is shrinking the living spaces of urban dwellers, vertical architecture is becoming widespread, and city dwellers, whose primary function is to transport food between the refrigerator and the market, are increasingly distanced from the land, becoming dependent on ready-made food and unable to participate in the natural production chain. In the long run, this lifestyle jeopardizes people's access to food. Cellars would be a good example of how traditional knowledge contributes to modern life, facilitating the transition from vertical to horizontal architecture, involving people in food and beverage production, and simplifying management during crises (COVID-19, earthquakes, etc.). Indeed, the cellar culture we see in different countries supports this idea. At the same time, while large underground storage areas seen in Türkiye and many other countries have a commercial character, they are insufficient in terms of individuals' access to food and the ease of managing the kitchen cycle. To reduce risks such as food access and storage, individuals' own storage areas should be included in the process and supported.

In the Netherlands, those wishing to create individual food storage areas by installing underground food storage systems face various difficulties, including issues with groundwater and building permits. However, all of this inspired

art director and designer Floris Schoonderbeek. Schoonderbeek created an underground cellar called "Groundfridge" (URL-1) that solves all these problems. This underground cabinet, where traditional knowledge meets technology, also appears to have a quality that can easily adapt to urban life. Similar cellar or underground storage techniques can be proposed as good practice examples for the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development 2030 in combating negative events such as disasters, wars, migrations, famine, food insecurity, climate change, urbanization, and vertical architecture.

Gagauz culinary culture and its associated shops, which can be evaluated under the heading "Knowledge and Practices Concerning Nature and The Universe" in the definitions section of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage- 2003, constitute living examples of cultural heritage. Equipped with traditional knowledge and skills, Gagauz shops serve functions such as food and beverage storage, socialization and entertainment, food sharing and gift-giving, hospitality, and as indicators of identity and social status. Furthermore, if adapted to modern cities and life, they appear to have the potential to contribute to the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development 2030. Increasing awareness of these shops in Moldova, and especially in Gagauzia, is seen as positive within the context of the cultural economy, particularly in terms of gastronomy, culinary culture, and tourism.

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URL-1: https://groundfridge.com/ Erişim Tarihi: 03.02.2023.

Informant

I1: İvan Bardar, Çiftçi, Lisans (Hukuk), Komrat, 04.29.2023 tarihli görüşme.

Photos


Photographs 1-2: I1. Entrances to the cellars located under Ivan Mardan's (Başkalen) house and in the factory.

Photo 3: Inside a cellar in Gaydar village (panoramic)-2022.


Photos 4-5: The cellar beneath Ivan Mardan's house.

Photo 6: Moldexpo-2018, Gagauz Cellar.

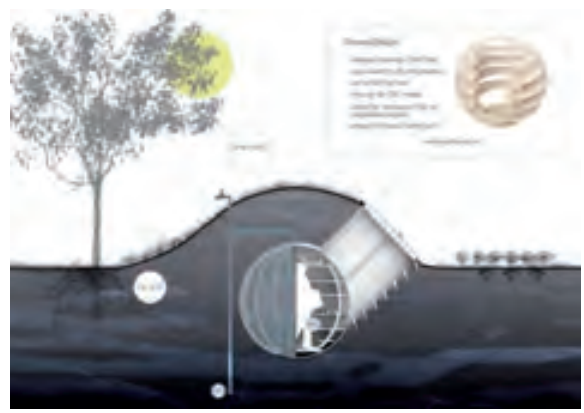

Photo 7: Floris Schoonderbeek, Groundfridge Project.

Photo 8: Sacrificial offering and hosting guests in front of the cellar - Beşalma Village, 2022.

Photo 9: Inside a cellar in a Kipchak village – 2022.

Photo 10: Inside a cellar in Kriet-Lunga village – 2023.

Photo 11: Gagauz Table, Kongaz (Ana Statova and Turkish National Commission for UNESCO research team, 2022).

Food and Nutrition of the Ukrainian Population of the Republic of Moldova

Катерина Кожухар*
Віктор Кожухар **

Food and nutrition constitute an important component of traditional culture, reflecting the economic, social, religious, and ethnocultural characteristics of a community. Information on the traditional food culture of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova, including the nomenclature of food products, dishes, tableware, and kitchen utensils, can be found in the works of Moldovan and Ukrainian scholars (Зеленчук, 1979; Кожухар, 2008: 19-44; Несторовский, 1905; Степанов, 2001). However, a comprehensive synthesis of this material that takes into account recent field data has so far been lacking.

The aim of this article is to characterize the food and nutrition of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova and to determine the role of the Turkic factor in the formation of the nomenclature of food products and dishes.

The source base of the study includes the authors' field materials collected between 1994 and 2023 in 44 Ukrainian and Ukrainian - Moldovan villages across the Republic of Moldova, as well as published sources and scholarly literature.

An examination of the issues addressed in this article requires a brief retrospective overview of the formation of the Ukrainian ethnic community on the territory of present-day Moldova and its long-standing contacts with Turkic peoples. Scholars agree that the Ukrainian population of the region was formed from two main components: descendants of the Slavic population of the Prut–Dniester interfluve and migrants from "mainland" Ukraine who arrived in the region during different historical periods under the influence of socio-economic, political, and religious factors. These migrants represented several ethnographic groups, including Rusyns from Galicia and Bukovina, Ukrainians from Podillia and Volhynia, as well as settlers

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from Slobozhanshchyna (Зеленчук, 1979; Кожухар, 2008: 19-44; Несторовский, 1905; Степанов, 2001).

During the early Middle Ages and subsequent historical periods, the population of the region existed within a zone of intensive interethnic contacts with Eastern Romance populations and Turkic nomadic and sedentary groups, such as the Huns, Pechenegs, Torks, Cumans, Mongols, and later the Ottoman Turks (Полевой, 1979; Хайдарлы, 2008; Хайдарлы, 2010; Postică, 2006;). These interactions were particularly intensive during the period when the Moldavian Principality was under Ottoman rule (1538–1812), when a significant part of the territory between the Prut and the Dniester formed part of the Ottoman rayas. The Kiliya, Izmail, Akkerman, Bender, and Hotin rayas were located in the Prut–Dniester interfluve. The ethnic composition of these rayas included Moldovans, Ruthenians, Little Russians, Armenians, and others, with a substantial proportion of the Muslim Turkish population (Хайдарлы, 2008: 384). In the mid-eighteenth century, the Ottoman rayas and the Budjak Nogais in the Prut–Dniester region occupied a total area of 25,495 km², or 55.7% of the territory (Хайдарлы, 2010: 58). Thus, over the course of centuries, Ukrainians maintained active contacts not only with the Moldovan population but also with Turkic groups.

Today, the northern, central, and certain southern regions of the Republic of Moldova, as well as Transnistria, continue to constitute zones of active Moldovan–Ukrainian ethnocultural interaction, while the Budjak area (the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia) and the Taraclia District represent zones of Gagauz–Bulgarian–Ukrainian contacts. These long-term and multidirectional ethnocultural interactions have shaped the specific features of the material culture of the Ukrainians of Moldova, including their food tradition, in which pan-Ukrainian traits are combined with local elements of Moldovan, Bulgarian, Gagauz, and Turkic origin. [1]

At present, more than 442,000 ethnic Ukrainians reside in the Republic of Moldova: approximately 282,000 (8.4%) on the right bank of the Dniester River and about 160,000 (28.8%) on the left bank, in Transnistria (Демографические, национальные, языковые, культурные характеристики, 2006: 52-89).

The Food System of the Ukrainians of the Republic of Moldova

The food system may be defined as a set of characteristics that characterize the traditional everyday culture of an ethnic group. It includes a diet adapted to specific natural and geographical conditions; types of dishes; a range of food products and

[1] Ukrainians live in compact groups in the northern districts of the republic: Briceni, Glodeni, Drochia, Edinet, Ocnița, Rîșcani, Soroca, Sângerei, Fălești, Florești, as well as in Transnistria. They are dispersed in the central districts and in the south – in the ATU Gagauzia, Calarasi, Causeni, Criuleni, Anenii Noi, Orhei, Taraclia, and Ștefan Voda.

methods of their processing for immediate consumption and long-term preservation; food restrictions and prohibitions; dietary preferences; meal patterns; rules of customary and ritual behavior associated with the preparation and consumption of food; as well as everyday and ritual dishes (Арутюнов, 1981: 5).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ***the meal patterns and quality of nutrition*** among Ukrainians in Moldova depended on the level of material well-being, the season of the year, and the observance of religious fasting periods. Food was relatively simple to prepare and did not exhibit great diversity. The daily meal schedule, including the number of meals per day, was determined primarily by seasonal factors. In late autumn and winter, three meals a day were typical for most of the Ukrainian and Moldovan population. Fixed mealtimes usually did not exist. Meals were taken by the whole family; loud talking, laughing, or clattering dishes at the table were not customary, and each family member had a designated place. The head of the household, typically the father, was the first to begin the meal. During fasting periods, peasants often skipped breakfast, limiting themselves to lunch and dinner.

In spring and summer, when daylight hours were longer and agricultural work required considerable physical effort, the daily meal pattern generally consisted of four meals. According to informants, wealthier households could afford even a five-meal daily pattern.

The diet depended on the type of labor activity and the season. Food restrictions and prohibitions were predominantly religious in nature and were common to both Ukrainians and Moldovans, between whom there were no confessional differences. Fasting periods accounted for nearly half of the calendar year: the Great Fast before Easter — *Ви^{е}ˈл$^{(ʼ)}$ик’иj, Ви^{е}л$^{(ʼ)}$иˈкодн’іj пост* (seven weeks), the Apostles’ Fast — *Пи^{е}тˈр’івск’иj* (four weeks), the Dormition Fast — *Усˈпенск’иj, Сˈпас’івск’иj* (two weeks), and the Nativity Fast — *Р’іздˈв’аниj, Рожˈд’еств’енск’иj* (six weeks). During these periods, the consumption of eggs, meat, dairy products, and other animal-based foods was prohibited.

The basis of the food system of the Ukrainians of the Republic of Moldova consists of products derived from traditional agriculture and animal husbandry, typical of the agrarian-pastoral type of economy typical both for this region and for Ukrainians of “mainland” Ukraine in general. This type of economy was already characteristic of the Old Rus’ period (Артюх, 2014: 29-38). Archaeological sites associated with the Slavic tribes of the Antes and Sclaveni from the sixth–seventh centuries, discovered on the territory of present-day Moldova, attest to their sedentary agricultural way of life. Archaeological materials indicate that charred grains of cereals—wheat, millet, barley, rye, and oats—were consumed both whole and in processed form (Тельнов, Степанов тощо, 2002: 13-28; Кожухар, 2008: 20-24).

Among cereal crops cultivated in household farming, wheat occupies a leading place in nutrition. Maize, potatoes, carrots, cabbage, beets, onions, garlic, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and other vegetables are also widely grown. Legumes play an important role in the diet. Animal husbandry is based on the breeding of pigs, large and small livestock animals, and poultry. Poultry and pork are most commonly consumed, while beef and mutton are eaten less frequently.

Dairy products include fresh cow's milk, fermented dairy products (*kefir, ryazhenka*, and in recent decades yogurt with or without additives), as well as curd cheese, various cheese products, and *bryndza* made from sheep's or cow's milk. Traditional horticulture and viticulture further supplement and diversify the diet.

To this day, everyday nutrition among certain segments of the population is influenced by auxiliary forms of economic activity, such as hunting, fishing, beekeeping, and gathering.

Bread and Flour-Based Products

Dishes made from cereals, primarily wheat flour, occupy a central place in the diet of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova. As noted by L. Artiukh, during the Kyivan Rus' period and later, bread constituted the main food product, staple reserve, and foundation of everyday nutrition (Артюх, 2013: 29-38). In the early stages, bread was unleavened; leavened bread began to be prepared much later, following the development of sourdough fermentation.

The methods of bread preparation depended directly on the economic status of the household, the types and varieties of cereals cultivated, and inherited local traditions. According to Old Rus' chronicles, rye bread predominated during the Kyivan Rus' period. In the studied region, this tradition persisted almost until the mid-twentieth century. Informants report that until the mid-1960s, everyday consumption more often included bread made from maize or rye flour (Кожухарь, 1997: 141, 142).

The spread of maize bread, locally referred to as *ма|л(ʼ)аї* (із рум. *mălai), ма|л(ʼ)аїч'ик, ку|руз'аниї хл'іб(п), пап|шоїний хл'іб(п)*, is explained, on the one hand, by the influence of the Moldovan culinary tradition and, on the other hand, by economic factors and specific features of local agricultural practices. (Photo 1) (Both scholarly sources and respondents' testimonies indicate that wheat bread at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was consumed mainly by wealthier peasants. Others baked bread from rye flour or from a mixture of rye and wheat flour — *сур|жохи*. Wheat bread was prepared exclusively for festive occasions.

In particular, in the Codru zone during the pre-war and post-war periods, rye was sown more extensively than wheat, as it yielded more stable harvests. Consequently, as local residents recall, rye bread made from sprouted grain — *пек|л ̇и же^{и}т|ни^{е}ї*

хˡл'іб // ˡк'іл'ч'еᶦл˙иᵉ јіˡго — was baked more frequently [2]. Similar evidence was recorded in all surveyed villages. From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, peasants began to bake predominantly wheat bread. (Photo 1a)

In many Ukrainian villages of Moldova, bran — *ґрис* — was added to wheat flour, which, according to villagers, imparted a distinctive flavor to the bread. In some villages of Edineț and Florești districts, boiled potatoes were added, while in villages of the Anenii Noi and Rîșcani districts, both boiled potatoes and mamalyga were used. Such bread did not keep for long; therefore, three or four neighboring women, by prior arrangement, baked it in turn and shared it among themselves, thus providing their families with fresh bread [3]. The tradition of baking homemade bread persists to this day in many Ukrainian and Ukrainian–Moldovan villages of Moldova.

Since commercial yeast was previously unavailable, peasants prepared sourdough starters independently, using remnants of earlier starters, grape pomace, as well as hops, potatoes, and onions.

Bread — ***хл'іб(п)*** — was baked in ovens using special molds. In addition to bread, smaller loaves made from the same dough were baked in the oven **—** ***пампушˡки*** — small (fist-sized) round loaves known under various local names: *баˡлабушки, ˡбоханц'і, ˡбоханц'і ч'есноˡч'ен'і с карˡтофл'ами, боˡханч'ики, буханˡц'і, пампушˡки́ / памˡпу́шки, пеˡре́пички, шуфˡл'а́ник'і*. (Photo 2)

In some villages, these were filled with potatoes or other fillings. They were served with fried onions cooked in sunflower oil and *муждеј* — a sauce made of crushed garlic, salt, water, and oil. Additionally, so-called quick bread was baked directly on the oven hearth, sometimes on cabbage leaves: *баˡлабушки, ˡвишкрабок, голубˡки / голубиᵉˡн'ата, ˡгуси / ˡгуски / гусиᵉˡн'ата, ˡкачку, переˡпичку, струˡгач', ˡт'ут'ку*.

A widespread dish in the diet of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova has been and remains ***коржі́*** — flat, round products made of unleavened or fermented dough, known in the majority of the surveyed settlements. They are represented by the following local names: *корж, пісˡниј корж, корˡж'і гˡруб'і, корˡж'і маі́ гˡруб'і* [4]*, корˡж'і з мол˙оˡком симеˡн:им* [5]*/ з бугаˡјачим молоˡком* [6]*,*

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2 Записано від Віри Романчук (Кошелик), 1946 г р., в 2013 г., в с. Булаєшти Оргеївського р-ну.

3 Записано від Ганни Павлівни Лаврентьєвої (Назарко), 1946 г. р., в 2013 р., в с. Максимівка Ново-Аненського р-ну.

4 *Корˡж'і гˡруб'і* готуються на кефирі чи кислому молоці.

5 *Мол˙оˡко симеˡн:е* – на півночі Молдови цією назвою позначали страву з розтертого насіння конопель, розведеного водою.

6 *Бугаˡјаче молоˡко* – так називали розтерте насіння конопель, розведене водою, півдні республіки, в с. Мусаїт Тараклійського району.

кур|ж'і з |жуфо[7]ju / |с'імн'ам, ко^{y}р|ж'і з жуфлоју [8], тон|к'і кор|ж'і з |маком на |ватр'і, ма|чалники / |мач'ал ̈ники, пл ̈ес|кач'. (Photo 3)

A favorite dish among Ukrainians in Moldova has been and remains pies made from unleavened dough with a variety of fillings, represented by the following nominations: *вир|тута, вар|зар', пал ̈а|ница / пал ̈а|неч'ка, пир'і|жок, пла|цинта / пла|чинда, пл'а|цок, сала|р'ija*. (Photo 4, 5, 5а, 5б, 5в)

Unleavened *пал ̈а|ниц'і, варза|р'і,* and *пла|цинти* are borrowings from the traditional Moldovan cuisine, where they are known under the name *plăcintă*. These are typically round pies made of unleavened or layered dough with various fillings. *Сала|р'ія / сара|л'ija* is a variety of *plăcintă* shaped like an incomplete figure eight. In the Moldovan tradition, *sarailíe* refers to a rolled pastry filled with honey and dried fruits (

As evidenced by field materials, in none of the surveyed Ukrainian villages of Moldova is the lexeme *паляниця (пал ̈а|ница)* used in the meaning of 'bread', as it is in standard Ukrainian. In Ukrainian villages of the Republic of Moldova, this word, in different phonetic variants, is used to denote:

1) 'a flat, round pie made of unleavened dough with various fillings (potatoes, cheese mixed with egg, bryndza, cabbage, pumpkin, boiled eggs with green onions, cheese or bryndza with dill, leek, etc.), prepared by rolling out a thin round flatbread, placing the filling in the center, and sealing the edges divided into 4–8 segments'; (Photo 6)

2) 'a round pie made of yeast dough with various fillings'; (Photo 7)

3) 'a yeast-dough pie in the form of a roll'; (Photo 8)

4) 'a round pie made of a twisted strand of dough'. (Photo 9)

In spring, with the appearance of fresh greens—primarily green onions and dill—these components are widely used as fillings.

The range of fillings is notably diverse. In addition to those mentioned above, fillings made from sugar beet — *со|лоткого бура|ка* or *|сахарного бура|ка* mixed with crushed walnuts, as well as apples with walnuts, cherries, and others, have been recorded.

A variety of *ве^{и}р|тута* includes *сала|р'ija / сарал'ija* and *к|руч'а^{е}ни* — products made of unleavened dough twisted spirally from both ends.

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7 *|Жуфа, |с'імн'а* – подрібнене насіння конопель (с. Голяни Єдинецького р-ну).

8 *|Жуфла* – у селах Балцата, Долинне та Сагайдак Криулянського р-ну — суміш подрібненого круто звареного яйця з підсмаженою цибулею або ж сиру / бринзи з підсмаженою цибулею.

The dish and the name ***книш*** are known only in settlements of the Dniester region and the Codru zone of the Republic of Moldova. (Photo 10)

Варе́ники are small products made of stiff unleavened dough kneaded with water or, less frequently, with sour milk, filled with various ingredients (potatoes, stewed cabbage, sauerkraut, cheese, meat, cherries, or other fruits) and boiled in vigorously boiling water. The name *ва|реник (-и)* is characteristic of southern and left-bank areas, as well as some northern villages. In northern and central regions, the name *пирíг* is more widespread. Cooked *вареники* are dressed with fried onions prepared in sunflower oil or lard, cracklings, and occasionally butter and *муждéй*; sour cream is served separately. *Вареники* with joined ends (so-called "horns") are referred to in some villages as *к|рапл ̆ик* (plural form — *к|рапл ̆ики*) (Photos 11, 11а, 11б, 11в).

From leftover dough used for *вареники*, or as a separate dish, *вара|ниц'і* are prepared—pieces of thinly rolled dough cut into diamond-shaped segments 4–5 cm long, boiled in water and dressed with fried onions cooked in sunflower oil or lard, cracklings, and seasoned with garlic: *вара|ниц'і / ло|заники / пал( )анич|ки*. In this case, the dish is referred to as *вара|ниц'і до часни|ку*. When cottage cheese or bryndza is added to melted butter, the dish is known as ***лінúві варе́ники***.

Ukrainians in Moldova are also familiar with ***галушкú***—a dish consisting of cut or torn pieces of unleavened dough boiled in water or milk: *гал( )уш|ки / га|л( )ушки, к|л( )ецки / к|л'оцки.* In some villages, *галушки* are dressed with grated bryndza and melted butter or sunflower oil.

За́тірка is a dish made of flour rubbed with water until small pellets are formed and then boiled in water or milk: *|зат'ірка / |затерка /зати^{e}|руха /зати^{e}|рушка / ск|рутн'і*. The name derives from the method of preparation, whereby small lumps of dough are "rolled" between the fingers. *Затірка* was consumed either as a first course or as dumplings, dressed with fried onions and grated bryndza. In some villages of the Briceni, Edineț, and Rîșcani districts, *|затерка* refers to milk with sugar thickened with dough made from flour and eggs [9].

Among products prepared from batter, the most commonly consumed are ***оля́дки*** and ***налúсники***. ***Оля́дки*** — *бл ̆и|ни / бл ̆е^{и}не / б|л ̆енч'ік'і / блин|ц'і / б|л( )инчики / мл( )ин|ц'і / м|л( )инчики, о|л ̆ад'і / о|ладки / о|лад'ji / о|ладушки* — готують на кислому молоці або сироватці. *Налисники — блинчики / б|л'інч'ік'і / ма|лисники / мал'іс|н'іки / на|л ̆есник'і / на|лисники / на|л'існик'і / пла|точки / сул|тани / сул|танчики* — are thin pancakes made with sweet milk and eggs (5–6 eggs per liter of milk), rolled into small rolls with filling. The most common filling is cottage cheese flavored with vanilla and raisins; however, seasoned meat, pork liver, or fruit

9 Recorded by Cheban Angela in the village of Slobodka-Shireuc, Brychani district, in 1996.

preserves are also used. Traditionally, *нали́сники* are made from high-grade wheat flour, though in some villages maize flour is added.

An extremely popular dessert is *«Ша́пка Гуґу́це»* [10] — thin pancakes filled with cherries, layered in the shape of Gugutse's hat and generously spread with whipped sour cream between the layers [11].

In the village of Răcăria (Rîşcani District), refers to a baked product made of maize flour mixed with milk and a small amount of wheat flour. The batter was poured into elongated molds and baked together with bread in the oven. In summer, chopped greens, mainly dill, were added. Today, the dish has fallen out of use. *Ма'лисники* are also known to elderly residents of other villages, such as Maksymivka (Anenii Noi District), where they are referred to as *на'лисник*.

In some surveyed villages (Volchynets, Kodryany of the Ocniţa District, and Răcăria of the Rîşcani District), *б'л'інчики 'постн'і* are baked. They are served as a ritual dish on Christmas Eve. In the village of Malynivske, *б'л'інч'ик'и* are prepared from liquid yeast dough.

Ло́кшина is a product made of unleavened wheat dough in the form of thin dried strips and is represented by a wide range of local names: *'локшина, 'т'істо, 'к"істо, 'т'істо 'р'ізане, до'машн'е 'т'істо, до'машн'е 'к"істо, на'р'ізане 'т'істо*; *лап'ша*; *до'машн'а лап'ша, мака'рони*. (Photo 12) *Ло́кшина* is cooked in milk, or boiled in water and most often dressed with fried onions, *bryndza,* cottage cheese, or butter, and may also be served with meat. In addition, homemade ло́кшина is an obligatory component of *'зами* (*'з'еми, 'дз'ами*) — a national Moldovan first course prepared with chicken broth and soured with *борш*.

From homemade **ло́кшина**, a complex festive dish is prepared — ***ба́ба*** (baked noodles with eggs): *'баба, 'бабка, т'істо'ва 'баба, 'б'іла 'баба* (white *baba*), *'ч'орна 'баба* (black *baba*). ***Біла баба*** *is served either with fried meat or as a sweet dish, whereas* ***чорна баба*** *is served exclusively as a sweet delicacy.* (Photo 13)

In some villages, the dish ***кне́длі*** — *к'недл'і* — has also been recorded; these are boiled products made of unleavened dough with a filling of cracklings and fried onions (Voronkove, Rîbniţa District). Another widespread complex dish is ***стру́длі*** — *шт'рудл'і* (Balţata, Criuleni District; Colbasna, Rîbniţa District; Maksymivka, Anenii Noi District), as well as *кар'тошка з ст'рул'ами* (Voronkove, Rîbniţa District). This dish is prepared from thinly rolled unleavened flatbreads seasoned with crushed bryndza and rolled into logs; the rolls are cut into small pieces and layered, alternating

10 Guguce is a hero of the fairy tales of the Moldovan writer Spiridon Vangeli.

11 Recorded by Kitsovan Halina and Shiban Valentina in the village of Rakaria, Rishcani district, in 2014.

with potatoes, fried onions, and spices, then placed in a cast-iron pot (*чавуне́ц, чау́н*). The prepared ingredients are covered with water and cooked until done.

In the village of Tyrnovo (Edineț District), *стˈрудел'* refers to a roll made of unleavened dough prepared with honey and filled with nuts and fruit preserves. In the villages of Volchynets and Kodryanka (Ocnița District), *штрудель* is prepared from enriched dough with crushed nuts and preserves or with rose petals. In the village of Malynivske (Rîbnița District), the dish *ˈм'асо с ˈк"істом* is widespread (meat stewed with pieces of dough that are thinly rolled, greased with fat, and cut).

Бу́блики were prepared from various types of dough, primarily as festive or ritual dishes: *ˈбубл(˙)ик* (plural – *ˈбубл(˙)ики*, *ˈбубл˙еки*), *оˈбаренок, о^{у}ˈбар'інок, уоˈбар'анок, уоˈбаре^{и}нок, (w)оˈбаренок*, *уˈбар'інок*, *каˈлачики* (singular – *каˈлачик*), *коˈл˙ач'іки, ковˈриг*.

Dough products fried in large quantities of oil are represented by the following nominations: *ˈпончики* (singular – *ˈпончик*):

1) 'small ball-shaped flour products with the addition of eggs';

2) 'products made of flour mixed in equal parts with cottage cheese or bryndza and eggs, fried in a large amount of oil'; *дзарˈдзари^{е}ки^{е}* (singular – *дзарˈдзари^{е}к,* Bulăiești, Orhei District), which result from a metonymic transfer of the name from the dialectal *ˈдзардзар'і* — 'wild apricots' (Photo 14).

This group also includes *ˈсирники* — a type of ***по́нчики*** prepared from semolina and a large number of eggs (ten eggs per kilogram of flour) (Musait, Taraclia District); *кˈнишики* — products made with potato broth or from boiled potatoes (Volchynets, Kodryany, Ocnița District); *пˈр'ан'ік'и на к'ішл'аˈкови* — diamond-shaped cookies (Răcăria, Rîșcani District); *призиˈцеjі / пражиˈцеjі* (Voronkove, Rîbnița District); *хрусˈти / хˈрустики* (in all settlements), *хˈрустит"е* (Holiany, Edineț District)—*verhuny*, sweet figured pastries made of thinly rolled yeast dough. (Photo 11. Пиріжки. Фото 11а. Пряники).

Пря́ники — products baked in an oven (now mostly in an electric oven)—are also represented by a wide range of names: *ˈмед'їўники / ˈмед'івник'и, ме^{и}ˈд'аники / ме^{и}ˈд'авники / ˈмед'аўники, квасˈн'і / ˈк'ісл'і ˈмед'івник'и, зˈдобн'і ˈмед'івник'и, пˈраники, ˈпран'іки, прижиˈцеj, пˈр'аники з ˈґо́ґоч'ку і ˈпудр'у* (with cherries and powdered sugar), *пˈр'аники / пˈр'ан'іки, ˈк'исл'і пˈр'ан'ік'и, прижиˈтури, ˈпал'ч'ики*. In the village of Illichivka (Florești District), *ˈмед'аўники* were prepared in two variants—plain and glazed with whipped egg white [12]. A common type of pastry has been and remains *роˈгал(˙)ики, роˈгал'іки ˈк'исл'і, скˈрутн'і*.

12 Recorded by K. Kozhukhar from Vasyl Prysyazhnyuk in the village of Illichivka, Floreshtsky district, in 2014.

Cereals, Vegetables, and Their Use in Food

It should be noted that plant-based foods, like bread, formed the basis of the everyday diet of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova not only due to limited material resources, but also as a result of adherence to religious prescriptions. A significant part of the region's population, including Ukrainians, for a long period—and to a lesser extent today—strictly observed fasting periods which, given that fasting was practiced even on Wednesdays and Fridays outside major fasts, covered more than 27 weeks of the calendar year.

The most common components of the everyday diet of Ukrainian peasants in Moldova included dishes made from maize flour, various types of porridge, as well as dishes prepared from potatoes, cabbage, beets, beans, peas, broad beans, pumpkin, peppers, eggplants, tomatoes, cucumbers, and radish. These foods were prepared both as independent dishes and in combination with meat, onions, carrots, herbs, and other seasonings. It should be emphasized that beets, beans, potatoes, and maize began to be cultivated in the region only a few centuries ago; nevertheless, over time they became firmly integrated into the dietary practices of the local population (Photo 15).

Among first courses, ***борщ*** was and remains the most popular dish. In the past, it was prepared with meat exclusively on festive occasions, while on weekdays it was dressed with lard. A characteristic local feature is the method of seasoning: the lard is fried in small pieces, unlike the traditional Ukrainian cuisine, where it is usually pounded, and the Moldovan tradition, where sunflower oil is used instead of lard. The recipes and names of *борщ* are extremely diverse: *борщ чер'воний* (with red table beets, carrots, potatoes, cabbage, and onions), *борщ із цук'ровим ('сахарним) бура'ком, борщ с фа'сул'ами* (with beans), *борщ зе'ленij* (with greens and egg), *борщ за'б'іл'анij* (whitened with whey and beaten egg), *борщ з пап'шойними к'рупами* (with maize groats, potatoes, cabbage, garlic, and horseradish). (Photos 16, 17).

No less widespread among the local Ukrainian population is *'зама / 'з'ама / 'дз'ама* — a first course borrowed from Moldovan cuisine, prepared with chicken broth and seasoned with homemade noodles or rice. (Photo 18) Like *борщ, зама* is soured with a fermented bran starter — *борш*. To sour *борщ,* fermented red beets, fresh or pickled tomatoes, or tomato paste are also used.

The repertoire of soups (***суп,*** singular) is diverse. These soups are prepared with meat or vegetable broth, as well as with whey, and include barley, wheat, pearl barley, buckwheat groats, rice, peas, beans, noodles, mushrooms, and other ingredients. Chicken broth is also prepared as a separate dish. Fish soups — *у'ха, 'jушка* — are cooked primarily from freshwater fish (carp, crucian carp, silver carp, catfish, and other species).

An important place in the diet of Ukrainians in Moldova is occupied by dishes made from cereals and legumes. The most widespread is the Moldovan ***мамали́га*** — *мама'л(ʾ)ига / мама'л(ʾ)иґа, ма'л(ʾ)ига / ма'л(ʾ)иґа, ма'л(ʾ)ич'ка*. Popular are porridges made from wheat groats, primarily *арнау́тка*, as well as barley, buckwheat, rice, and pearl barley groats. Boiled peas, ***ли́нта*** (lentils), chickpeas ***(нут),*** and various varieties of beans are widely consumed, while lentils are less common From large white beans, a bean purée dressed with fried onions — *фасоɪл'іцу* — is prepared; both the dish and its name are borrowed from the Moldovan tradition.

Another popular traditional Ukrainian dish is ***кулі́ш*** — *ку'ліш* — a thick cereal soup or porridge made from wheat groats and dressed with fried lard and onions. In southern Moldova, in the village of Musait, *куліш* is most often prepared with offal and red pepper paste (Nicoglo, 2012: 14-23).

Dishes made from potatoes are extremely widespread. On weekdays, potatoes are consumed mainly boiled "in their skins," as mashed potatoes, baked, or fried. An important place in the diet is also occupied by salads made from fresh, fermented, and marinated vegetables—cabbage, zucchini, various varieties of peppers, eggplants, as well as mushrooms—which have become firmly embedded in the dietary practices of local Ukrainians. To a much greater extent than in Ukraine, which also testifies to the influence of Moldovan culinary tradition, Ukrainians in Moldova consume spicy seasonings and sauces. It is impossible to imagine the local Ukrainian menu without onions, garlic, hot red pepper, pickled vegetables, and aromatic spices.

Fermented Products

Fermentation as a method of food preservation and processing has long occupied an important place in the traditional food culture of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova. Fermented products ensured the long-term storage of plant-based raw materials, diversified the diet during the winter–spring period, and played a significant role in shaping the population's taste preferences.

The most widespread fermented products were fermented vegetables, above all cabbage — *к'ваши^{е}на / квас'на /'ки(е)сла ка'пуста*, which was prepared in autumn in large wooden tubs. Cabbage was fermented both in shredded form (cut on shredders or grated) and as whole heads or quarters (*на крижалки́*), with the addition of carrots, black peppercorns, and occasionally dill seeds, apples, or red beets. Fermented cabbage was consumed both as an independent dish and as an ingredient in first and second courses — *борщ* with sour cabbage, stewed cabbag, *голубці́*, as well as fillings for *варе́ники* and pies.

The fermentation of cucumbers — *в(w)огиркіў*, was widely practiced. They were salted in tubs, *ґавано́си*, or glass containers with the addition of garlic, dill, horseradish leaves, and leaves of cherry or currant. In spring, when the cucumbers

became over-fermented, the brine was drained and replaced with a decoction of boiled red beets, which imparted greater sharpness and significantly improved the taste. Tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, zucchini, eggplants, as well as watermelons and apples, were fermented in a similar manner. Peppers and eggplants were often stuffed with cabbage and carrots or with carrots and fried onions. Such products served as an important source of vitamins during the cold season (Photo 19, 20).

A separate group of fermented products consists of lactic acid products, including *бри́нза* made from sheep's, cow's, or goat's milk, as well as various beverages and starters. First and foremost among these is sour milk — *кисˈл'ак / киш ˈл'ак*, which was consumed as an independent drink or used in dough preparation. For souring first courses, in particular *борщ* and *за́ма*, *борш* — a sour bran starter, also widespread in Moldovan culinary tradition—was used, as well as beet kvass made from red beets.

Fermented products also include homemade *квас,* prepared from rye bread, fruits, or beets, which in the past was a widely consumed non-alcoholic beverage.

Fermented products played an important role in the system of food restrictions and fasting nutrition, as they made it possible to diversify the Lenten diet without the use of animal-based ingredients. The complex of traditional fermentation practices testifies to a high level of adaptation of the local population to natural and climatic conditions and to centuries-old experience in the rational use of food resources.

Complex Dishes

Among complex dishes, the preparation of which requires a larger number of ingredients and more elaborate culinary techniques, a primary place in Ukrainian tradition is occupied by ***голубці́*** — *ˈголубˈ'і, галушˈк'и / гал ˈушˈк'еи, гаˈлус'і.* It should be noted that *голубці* are also regarded as a national dish by Moldovans, Bulgarians, Gagauz, and Roma living on the territory of the Republic of Moldova: in the Moldovan tradition — *sarmále*, in the Gagauz tradition —*sarmá*, in the Bulgarian tradition — *гу́шки, сарми́*, and in the Roma tradition — *sarmále*.

Ukrainians prepare both Lenten and non-fasting *голубці,* wrapping the filling in cabbage leaves (fresh or fermented), grape leaves, leaves of coltsfoot, young beet leaves, and others. Lenten *голубці* are prepared from rice with bulgur or maize groats, sometimes only from rice or from buckwheat groats, seasoned with a sauté of onions, carrots, tomatoes or tomato paste, and aromatic herbs. During non-fasting periods, minced meat is added to the filling (most often pork, less frequently chicken, beef, or mixed meat). *Голубці* are served with sour cream. Stuffed peppers are prepared using a similar technique (Photo 21, 22).

No festive table is complete without ***пе́ченя*** — *ˈпечен'а / жарˈкоје,* which is prepared from baked potatoes with poultry, rabbit, pork, and other meats. In many villages *м'ясний ˈсоус* is also very popular.

Гна'тина is a complex dish made of vegetables (potatoes, carrots, fried onions) with the addition of pieces of dough.

'Ти^{е}рба / бал˙ан'да is a dish prepared from maize flour, eggs, bryndza, and cracklings.

Ска'зут is a dish made of boiled fermented cabbage with meat (most often fatty pork) or with cracklings; potatoes, a small amount of carrots, and fried onions are sometimes added. During fasting periods, this dish is prepared with sunflower oil and without meat.

Stewed cabbage with meat — *'туше^{и}на ка'пуста / 'б'іїус* is prepared from sweet or fermented cabbage with carrots, onions, and finely chopped meat.

То'кана is a complex dish made of boiled potatoes and nettles, dressed with onions and garlic fried in vegetable oil. Closely related in terms of recipe is the dis *'соус* з *кро'пиви*, in which lightly fried flour is combined with potatoes, nettles, fresh tomatoes, and greens.

Meat Dishes and Meat Preservation

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, meat dishes in the diet of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova were consumed mainly on festive occasions. This was due, first, by confessional restrictions and food prohibitions, and second, by the high cost and limited availability of meat products. Preference was given to pork. Fresh meat was consumed primarily during the winter period, following the traditional slaughter of livestock.

Meat products were also prepared for storage: they were salted and smoked, and various types of sausage products were produced — *ковба'су, кро'в'анку, салт'і'сон, жан'бон, д'і'док*. Today, meat and meat products are consumed much more frequently and in larger quantities.

The contemporary range of meat dishes includes fried, stewed, and boiled pork, beef, and mutton, as well as poultry, rabbit, and nutria meat. Pork, poultry, rabbits, and other meats are smoked. The repertoire of festive meat dishes has expanded significantly and includes both traditional dishes and those borrowed from the cuisines of other peoples: *холоде́ць — холо'дец$^{(ʲ)}$ / студе'нец*, roasted duck, chicken, goose, or quail, meat in sauce — *'соус*, cutlets — *кот'л$^{(ʲ)}$ети, чигирі́* (a borrowing from Moldovan cuisine; cutlets prepared from offal—liver, lungs, heart, and spleen—wrapped in the animal's internal fatty membrane, *caul fat*) — *чиги'р'і / щиги'р'і, гу'л'аш, би'точ'ки* and many others. A special place in the festive menu is occupied by baked meat dishes prepared with vegetables, cheese, and spices.

A particularly favored dish remains *холодець*, which is prepared from pork, beef, or poultry. Stuffed meat dishes are widespread, including stuffed chicken or duck

and meat rolls, often combined with various flour-based products and vegetables. For long-term use, homemade canned meat from various types of meat is prepared in autoclaves or baked in ovens. (Photos 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27)

Dairy and Fermented Dairy Dishes

Dairy and fermented dairy products occupy an important place in the food system of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova. Preference is given to dishes made from cow's milk, which is determined by the traditional structure of animal husbandry in the region. Among the most common dishes are *ло́кшина* cooked with milk, milk-based soups, and various types of porridge prepared with the addition of milk.

Fermented dairy products are also widely represented, including *сир — сир / бˈринза,* sour milk — *кисˈл'ак / кишˈл'ак / ˈкисле мол(ˌ)оˈко*, ря́жанка — *ˈр'ажанка* and others. *Сир* and *бри́нза* are consumed both as independent dishes and as components of fillings for flour-based products or as dressings for various dishes.

Due to the well-developed sheep breeding in certain regions of the Republic of Moldova, dishes made from sheep's milk — primarily various types of porridge and *bryndza* — have become widespread. In the contemporary period, the diet has also been supplemented by modern industrially produced fermented dairy products, including various cheese spreads, hard cheeses, and yogurt — *ˈйогурт / ˈйогурт*, which are consumed both in their natural form and with fruit additives.

Alcoholic and Non-Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic beverages have long occupied an important place in the festive culture of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova. The well-developed traditions of viticulture and winemaking meant that wine was traditionally the principal alcoholic drink. Less affluent households, as a rule, limited themselves to wine, whereas wealthier families also served purchased vodka — *моноˈпол'на гоˈр'івка, каˈз'онка*.

Самоˈгон, which became widespread from the mid-1960s of the twentieth century, had not previously been produced or consumed. Its emergence is associated with changes in economic practices and the increased availability of raw materials.

Among non-alcoholic beverages in the past, *квас* — both fruit and bread varieties —occupied a significant place. Today, *квас* is prepared much less frequently in private households, as it is now produced in a wide assortment by specialized enterprises. In recent decades, the main everyday beverages have become tea—both imported natural tea and herbal infusions made from locally available medicinal plants (such as St. John's wort, mint, raspberry leaves, cherry branches, and others)—as well as coffee.

Dried fruits, which were widely consumed in the past, are now used much less frequently, having been largely replaced by preserved fruit products such as compotes, jams, and preserves.

Ritual Food

The ritual food of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova, despite the inevitable influence of contemporary globalization processes, the loss and leveling of certain elements of traditional culture, has preserved a significant number of archaic features. Particularly rich and diverse is the repertoire of dishes traditionally prepared for Christian holidays, first and foremost Christmas and Easter.

On the eve of Christmas, for the Holy Supper (*Sviatyi vechir*, January 6), it is customary to prepare twelve—sometimes nine, five, or three—Lenten dishes. The most widespread among them are: *кутя́ — ку|т'а/ку|т'а із арна|утки |б'ілоjі, пши^{е}|ница/пше|ница/пши^{е}|нич'ка ва|рена, пше^{и}|нич'ка із |маком, |п'іхана пше^{и}|ница, |кол$^{(ʾ)}$иво/|кол$^{(ʾ)}$ево /|кол˙е^{и}во с |медом/|сахар'ом / |маком і го|р'іхами* — boiled wheat grains seasoned with honey, raisins, walnuts, and ground poppy seeds; *кала́ч — ко|лач'/ко|л˙аш'/ко|л˙аш' п|л˙ечени/ко|л˙аш' у д|в'і п'і|л'устк'и / кол˙ач' пл˙еч'енij ўд|woje*; *варе́ники — пи^{е}ро|ги / ва|реники* filled with stewed cabbage, potatoes, sauerkraut with potatoes, or cherries; pies with various fillings — *пала|ниц'і, пи$^{(е)}$р'іж|к$^{(ʾ)}$и*, beans — *фа|сул'і, ба|бани*; poppy-seed flatbreads — *|мачаники/|мачал'ники / кор|ж'і з |маком/кор|ж'і |тонк'і на |ватр'і*; fish aspic — *холо|дец/студе|нец з |риби*; stewed potatoes — *кар|тофл'і*, potatoes stewed with herring; and *узва́р — уз|вар* (a traditional beverage made from boiled dried fruits, primarily apples, pears, and plums), among others. (Photo 28).

Special ritual baked goods — *калача́ми, бу́бликами, кречуна́ми — кре|ч'ун/ кра|ч'ун / хри^{е}ш|ч'ун* (Photo 29, 30), gingerbread, cookies, ritual *г|решниками, го|л˙убиками / гол˙уп|ками / го|л˙упч'іками* and others—are given to Christmas carolers. (Photo 31) In the villages of Malynovske (Rîşcani District), Berlintsi (Briceni District), and Nova Chokalivka (Făleşti District), a Christmas tree made from blackthorn or plum branches — *|деревце / кра|ч'ок*, was prepared and decorated with sweets, apples, and nuts. In Nova Chokalivka, all decorations were strung on a thread — *в|jазка*, which was used to decorate both the tree and **пома́на** (a ritual offering in memory of the deceased). In Malynovske, the main decoration of the tree was a baked figure in the shape of a doll — *|л'ал'ка*.

The Christmas feast is distinguished by an abundance of meat dishes, complex dishes, and flour-based foods, as well as marinades and pickled products. The festive table necessarily includes stewed, smoked, and roasted meat; various sausages, *чигирі́,* cutlets, aspic, fish, herring, *голубці́, нали́сники*, assorted salads, cakes, and rolls. (Photo 32, 33).

Defining attributes of the Easter meal include the baking of ritual Easter bread—*паски,* ˈ*сирника*; decorated and dyed eggs —ˈ*писанок, к*ˈ*рашанок / га*ˈ*л*(ˈ)*унок*, as well as roasted lamb, poultry, and other dishes (Photo 34, 35, 36).

Ritual baked goods — *ба*ˈ*лабушки*, *ко*ˈ*кош'і, голуб*ˈ*к'и, драбин*ˈ*к'и, кор*ˈ*ж'і з* ˈ*маком, манд*ˈ*рики,* ˈ*мач'ник'и*, *пала*ˈ*ниц'і з* ˈ*јаблуком* and others—are prepared for calendar holidays such as St. Catherine's Day, St. Andrew's Day, the Feast of the Forty Martyrs, Trinity, Saints Peter and Paul, the Transfiguration (*Spas*), and others.

Ethnic distinctiveness and archaic features are also preserved in ritual dishes associated with family and commemorative rites. These include wedding breads — *ко*ˈ*л*(ˈ)*ач, коро*ˈ*ваj,* ˈ*жевна, хл'іб(п),* ˈ*шишки*; breads used in childbirth rituals — *хл'іб(п), ко*ˈ*л*(ˈ)*ач,* ˈ*жевна,* ˈ*пупица*; and commemorative breads — *ко*ˈ*л*(ˈ)*ач, кре*ˈ*ч'ун, пе*ˈ*рер'іч'ка,* ˈ*боханц'і, пала*ˈ*ниц'і*, as well as ˈ*коли*ᵋ*во* (a variety of kutia prepared from boiled whole wheat grains, less frequently barley or rice, sweetened with honey or sugar syrup), etc. (Photo 37).

Turkic Borrowings

Among the recorded names of food and nutrition used by Ukrainians of Moldova, East Romance borrowings occupy a prominent place. At the same time, a substantial group of borrowings of Turkic origin can be identified, including both proper Turkicisms and borrowings from Persian and other languages that entered Ukrainian dialects through Turkic mediation. These borrowings encompass the names of food products, dishes, beverages, as well as certain culinary and household realities.

Names of plants—fruits and vegetables used as food, and dishes prepared from them

alychá — *ал*ˈ*и*|*ч'а* — a variety of plum ← from Azerbaijani *aluča* 'alycha, small plum';

baklazhán — *бакл*ˈ*а*|*жан* / *бакл*ˈ*а*|*жан* ˈ*си*$^{(e)}$*ній* ← from Turkish *patlikan* (cf. Also *патл*ˈ*а*|*жел'а,* etc.);

гарбу́з — *бош*ˈ*тан* ← from Turkish *bostan* 'vegetable garden';

harbúz — watermelon (in Standard Ukrainian, the lexeme *harbúz* denotes 'a creeping garden plant of the gourd family with large fruits, as well as its fruit (yellow, orange, or gray), used in cooking'; cf. Russian *arbuz* 'watermelon', Belarusian *harbuz*, Polish *harbuz* 'watermelon', Bulgarian *karbuz*, Macedonian *karpuz*, Serbo-Croatian *kárpuz(a)* 'pumpkin') ← from Turkic languages: Polovtsian *harbuz, karbuz*, Crimean Tatar *къarpuz*, Turkish *karpuz*, Gagauz *karpuz* — watermelon;

zhar*ˈ*del'i / zher*ˈ*del'i,* ˈ*zarzar'i /* ˈ*zarzur'i /* ˈ*dzardzur'i /* ˈ*dzerzdzur'i /* ˈ*zerzer'i — wild apricot (tree and fruit) ← from Turkish *zerdali*, Gagauz *zerdeli*;

ka*ˈ*bak — pumpkin; ***kaba*ˈ*ch'ok***← from Turkic languages: Turkish, Tatar, Chagatai, Gagauz *kabak*;

ka*ˈ*vun, ka*ˈ*un — watermelon ← from Turkic languages: Turkish *kavun, kaun* 'melon'; Tatar (Kazan) *kaun* — watermelon; Uzbek *kovun*; Nogai *kovyn*; Chuvash *kavun* — pumpkin

ky*ˈ*z'il', k'i*ˈ*z'il(') **—** dogwood ← Turkish *kızıl* 'red', derived from Turkish kız 'to redden, to blush';

patla*ˈ*dzh(')el'a / patla*ˈ*zh(')el'a / patla*ˈzhan*** — tomato (in the speech of older people); ˈ***syn'a patla*ˈ*dzh(')el'a*** **—** eggplant ← from Turkish *patlıcan*.

Names of flour products and dishes

bul*ˈhur*** **—** 1) wheat groats; 2) porridge used as stuffing for stuffed cabbage rolls and peppers ← from Turkic languages: Turkish, Oghuz, Gagauz *bulgur*;

zar*ˈzaryky*** **—** doughnuts (derived from ˈ*zarzar'i,* formed through metonymic transfer based on visual similarity to wild apricots — ˈ*zarzar'i*);

lap*ˈsha,*** ˈ***loksha*** ← from Turkic languages: Northern Turkish *lakša*; Tatar, Uyghur, Kazan Tatar *lakča* 'vermicelli, small pieces of dough boiled in broth'.

Names of animals, fish, their parts, and meat and fish dishes

ba*ˈlyk*** **—** smoked meat ← from Turkic languages: Crimean Tatar balyk — fish; ***Turkish,*** Gagauz *balık* — fish; Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Tatar, Yakut balyk; Uzbek *balik, etc.;*

bu*ˈhai*** **—** *breeding bull* ← probably an Old Rus' borrowing from Turkic languages: Tatar *buha,* ***Turkish*** *boğa,* Azerbaijani, Karakalpak *buğa,* Uzbek, Uyghur *buka;*

zhan*ˈbon*** **—** pork ham smoked in a chimney ← from Turkic languages: Turkish *iambas,* Gagauz *janbon*;

ka*ˈban*** ← from Turkic languages *kaban*;

kavar*ˈma*** **—** mutton prepared in a special way ← from Turkic languages: Gagauz, Turkish *kavurma* 'fried meat' (cf. *kavurmak* 'to fry, to sauté');

kovba*ˈsa*** **—** sausage ← from Turkic languages: Turkish *külbastı* 'grilled meat; fried cutlets'; Tatar *kolbasa* — sausage;

kur*ˈd'uk*** **—** fat deposit near a sheep's tail; *kur*ˈ*d'uchnyi zhyr* ← from Turkic languages: Turkish *kuyruk* **—** tail; Kazakh *құйрық,* Kumyk *къуйрукъ,* Tatar, *Kyrgyz kuyruk,* Tuvan *kuduruk* 'tail; fat tail', evidently related to Mongolian *gudurug* 'tail'.

4. Names of dairy products:

ˈ***yohurt / ˈyoğurt*** **—** fermented dairy product, a recent borrowing, probably via

Russian ← from Turkic languages: Turkish *yoğurt,* Gagauz *yuurt* (cf. Polish *jogurt,* Czech *jogurt,* Russian *yogurt,* Bulgarian *yogurt*).

Names of sweets

i'z'um ← from Turkic languages, most likely Turkish: Turkish *üzüm* 'grapes', related to Azerbaijani *züzüm,* Crimean Tatar *jüzüm,* Uyghur *özüm,* Mongolian *uzum;*

kura'ha **—** dried apricots without pits ← from Turkic languages, apparently via Russian from Kumyk: Kumyk *kurägä (or kuraga)* 'dried apricots'; Azerbaijani *kuraga* derives from Turkic *kūr* 'dry' (cf. Oghuz *kur,* Turkish *kuru,* etc.);

khal'va ← from Persian via Arabic-Turkic mediation: Turkish *helva,* Azerbaijani *halva,* Uzbek *halvo,* Turkmen *halva.*

6. Names of spices and condiments:

sala'makha **—** a sauce served with mamalyha or small loaves, made from young garlic shoots, salt, and sunflower oil. The etymology has not been definitively established. The term is attested in Northern Turkic dialects: *solomat,* Teleut *salamat* 'porridge', Kazakh *salma* 'soup'.

Thus, the food and nutrition of the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova constitute an important component of their traditional everyday culture, in which both all-Ukrainian features and local specificities are clearly manifested. These local features have been shaped by long-term residence in a polyethnic environment and by intensive ethnocultural contacts with Moldovan, Bulgarian, Gagauz, and other peoples of the region.

The basis of the food system of Ukrainians in Moldova, as in the case of Ukrainians of "mainland" Ukraine, is formed by products characteristic of an agrarian–pastoral type of economy. At the same time, the food tradition of the studied community contains a significant number of borrowings, primarily of East Romance and Turkic origin. These borrowings are reflected both in culinary technologies and in the nomenclature of food products, dishes, and beverages.

Despite centuries of external influences, the Ukrainian population of the Republic of Moldova has preserved a considerable number of archaic elements in everyday, festive, and ritual food practices, which attests to the high degree of resilience of traditional culture. This continuity is especially evident in the ritual sphere, particularly in calendar and family rites, where food functions as an important marker of ethnic identity and cultural continuity.

The analyzed field materials make it possible to consider the food system of Ukrainians in Moldova as a complex, multi-layered phenomenon formed over centuries under the influence of natural-geographical, socio-economic, historical, and

cultural factors. Further comprehensive study of this issue holds significant promise for the development of ethnology, ethnography, dialectology, ethnolinguistics, and cultural anthropology.

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Photos

Photo 1: Malai. Village of Danu, Glodeni District.
Photo 1a: Homemade bread. Village of Ivancha, Orhei District.

Photo 2: Loaves of bread. Village of Bulaeşti, Orhei District.
Photo 3: Thick flatbreads (coarse korzhi). Village of Stolnicani, Edineț District.

Photo 4: Pies with cabbage filling. Village of Unguri, Ocnița District.
Photo 5: Palanitsi with cherries. Village of Goliani, Edineț District.

Photo 5a: Palanitsi with potatoes and cheese with herbs. Village of Grigorivka, Căușeni District.
Photo 5b: Palanitsi with cherries. Village of Goliani, Edineț District.

Photo 5c: Small palanitsi with poppy seeds. Village of Vovchynets, Ocnița District.
Photo 6: Palanitsi. Village of Unguri, Ocnița District.


Photo 7: Palanitsi with potatoes. Village of Grigorivka, Căușeni District. Small palanitsi with poppy seeds. Village of Vovchynets, Ocnița District.
Photo 8: Palanitsa. Village of Unguri, Ocnița District.


Photo 9: Vertuty with cheese. Village of Pașcăuți, Rîșcani District.
Photo 10: Knishyky with potato filling. Village of Vovchynets, Ocnița District.


Photo 11: Varenyky with potatoes and cracklings. Village of Naslavcea, Ocnița District.
Photo 11a: Varenyky with cheese. (location not specified).

Photo 11b: Kraplyky. Village of Balțata, Anenii Noi District.

Photo 11c: Varenyky with cherries.

Photo 12: Homemade noodles. Village of Alexeevka, Florești District.

Photo 13: White baba and black baba (traditional cakes). Village of Biliavynți, Briceni District.

Photo 14: Festive table for the village church feast. Village of Bulaești, Orhei District.

Photo 15: Vegetable assortment. Village of Nagoryany, Rîșcani District.

Photo 16: Borshch with sugar beet. Village of Stolnicani, Edineț District.

Photo 17: Red borshch. Village of Naslavcea, Ocnița District.

Photo 18: Zama. Village of Goliani, Edineț District.

Photo 19: Marinated mushrooms with green peas. Village of Nagoryany, Rîșcani District.

Photo 20: Fermented watermelon with apples. Village of Vasileuți, Rîșcani District.

Photo 21: Holubtsi (stuffed cabbage rolls). Village of Grigorivka, Căușeni District.


Photo 22: Holubtsi (stuffed cabbage rolls). Village of Stolnicani, Edineț District.
Photo 23: Meat roll and meat patties. Village of Nagoryany, Rîșcani District.


Photo 24: Aspic (kholodets). Village of Grigorivka, Călărași District.
Photo 25: Aspic (kholodets). Village of Nagoryany, Rîșcani District.


Photo 26: Meat patties and cutlets. Village of Grigorivka, Căușeni District.
Photo 27: Meat baked with vegetables and cheese. Village of Nagoryany, Rîșcani District.


Photo 28: Kutia. Village of Unguri, Ocnița District.
Photo 29: Krechun. Village of Palanca, Călărași District.

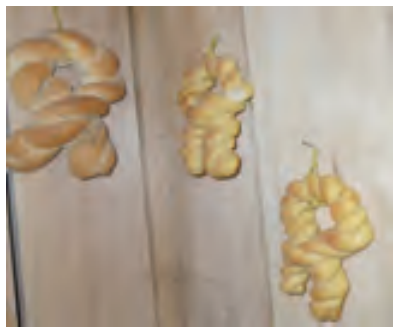


Photo 30: Krechuny. Village of Palanca, Călărași District.
Photo 31: Holubky. Village of Palanca, Călărași District.


Photo 32: Christmas Eve table. Village of Tețcani, Briceni District.
Photo 33: Nagut (chickpeas) with duck. Village of Voronkove, Rîbnița District.

Photo 34: Easter breads (pasky). Village of Alexeevka, Florești District.
Photo 35: Pysanky (decorated Easter eggs). Village of Palanca, Călărași District.

Photo 36: Easter table. Chișinău.
Photo 37: Kolachi for memorial rites (pomana).

Tables Set at the Threshold: The Relationship Between Rites of Passage and Food in the Case of Türkiye and Moldova

Tuna Yıldız*

The rites of passage are important thresholds that appear at every stage of life, primarily birth, marriage, and death. These rites are special moments when a person's position in society becomes clear. Therefore, although at first glance they may appear to be a transition to a new individual status, rites of passage are actually special days that concern the whole society and around which various rituals are formed. Although Türkiye and Moldova appear to be two separate countries due to their geographical distance, the flavors that come together on their tables have formed a common language over time. This paper aims to examine the role of rituals and food cultures during the rites of passage in their social context by tracing this common language. This article focuses on the culinary and food-related rituals performed in Turkish and Moldovan cultures. The starting point of the study is the project launched by the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO and the Moldova National Commission for UNESCO to identify the shared culinary culture of Türkiye and Moldova. Field research was conducted between September 19 - 29, 2021, and May 22 - 28, 2022, as part of this project. During the field research conducted in Türkiye between September 19-29, 2021, the field research team, consisting of experts from Türkiye and Moldova, visited Afyonkarahisar, Gaziantep, Hatay, Antalya, and Istanbul, which are included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy. In the second phase, field research began on May 22, 2022, and was conducted in Moldova. Observations were made in the villages of Comrat, Cadır - Lunga, Beşalma, Congaz, Avdarma, and Palanca, and the research was completed on May 28, 2022, in Taraclia. A total of 88 informants were interviewed, 48 of whom were participants from Türkiye and 40 from Moldova. This article examines similarities in the shared culinary culture of Türkiye and Moldova

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and in the foods associated with three important rites of passage —birth, marriage, and death— first through a literature review and then supported by informant data.

Transition periods, according to Sedat Veyis Örnek, consist of birth, marriage, and death, but are divided into many subcategories. Örnek states that many beliefs, customs, traditions, ceremonies, rituals, religious and magical practices cluster around these three fundamental transition periods. According to Örnek, the purpose of these is to determine, sanctify, and celebrate the person's new status during this transition period (Örnek, 2000:131). Therefore, one of the ways of celebration and sanctification during transition periods is food and the rituals and practices that revolve around food. In this respect, there are deep connections between food and ritual. The deep connections between food and ritual are used to give meaning to important events during transitional periods and to place these events in a social context. According to Gülin Öğüt Eker, there is a close connection between food and identity. Those who separate themselves from other people in society and come together for a special event gain the characteristic of being a social group based on food and experience a sense of belonging. The food and kitchen culture at shared tables also determines the social role of individuals within the group to which they belong (Öğüt Eker, 2018: 172). Therefore, people who gather around a meal at the same table during transitional periods both celebrate and sanctify that period and realize their sense of belonging to that community. For example, after a birth, family members and close friends may gather to set a special table to welcome the newborn into life. The food shared at this table symbolizes abundance and contributes to the celebration of this special moment. During marriage periods, meals symbolizing the family are prepared to celebrate the young couple establishing a new home. Meals shared to strengthen the new acquaintance between two families signify the approval and celebration of this new union within the community. Special dishes or traditional flavors from the bride's or groom's family hold a special place in this ritual. During times of death, meals serve as a means of creating meaning and sharing grief for those who have lost loved ones. People gathering at death ceremonies support each other through shared meals while also going through the process of remembering the deceased together. Memorials and Mevlids held on specific days after death, such as the third, fifth, seventh, and fortieth days, along with the special meals and treats served on these days, exemplify the relationship between rites of passage and food.

This relationship between food and ritual strengthens solidarity and identity within a society, while also serving as a means of rapprochement with other societies. Food builds bridges not only between individuals and their own communities, but also between different cultures. The shared culinary culture of Türkiye and Moldova

allows people to come together with similar food rituals during similar transitional periods, despite their geographical distance. For example, there are various practices related to food before, during, and after birth. Before birth, especially in beliefs related to gender determination, it is believed that eating certain foods will determine the sex of the baby or that eating certain foods will bring about changes in the baby's physical appearance. Sedat Veyis Örnek also mentions this subject in his book. He mentions beliefs that eating sour foods during the craving period will result in the birth of a girl, while eating sweet foods will result in the birth of a boy (Örnek, 2000: 134). Natalia Gradinaru (I9), one of the informants, also states that it is a widespread belief that if a pregnant woman eats snails, her lips will be split, and if she eats twin cherries, her tongue will be attached to the roof of her mouth. Therefore, it can be seen that the role of food and various dishes in matters concerning both the mother and the baby begins during the first transitional period of life, which is before birth. It would not be wrong to say that this role is related not only to the physiological dimension but also to the dimension of belief. Indeed, Sedat Veyis Örnek emphasized that it should not be overlooked that such prenatal practices are also performed under the influence of analogical (comparative) magic (Örnek, 2000: 134).

Both before and after childbirth, there are many rituals related to food. During field research in Afyonkarahisar, Ayşe Öz (I2), one of the informants, mentioned that a dish called bulamaç is prepared after childbirth to give strength and energy to the new mother. Natalia Gradinaru, one of the informants from Moldova, explained that a type of bread called kolac, or birth kolac, is made during childbirth. She added that it is made to bring health to the child and prosperity to the home. Similarly, Valentina Perçemli wrote in her thesis titled *Birth, Marriage, and Death Customs among the Gagauz Turks* that two feasts, a large pita and a small pita, are held after birth. Perçemli states that after the midwife washes the woman and the baby, the floor is swept and the area is cleaned, and then three round loaves of bread, or pitas, are made together with relatives. She also mentions that those attending the ceremony bring crispy, sweet, and various other foods with them. Honey is spread on the bread, which is then cut into pieces and distributed to those attending the feast (Perçemli, 2011: 33). During field research in the city of Taraclia, a source named Olga Georgiva (I10), who identified herself as Bulgarian, also mentioned a feast similar to the ones held by the Gagauz people after childbirth, as described above. According to the informant, on the third day after birth, a visit is made by close relatives, during which malka bread is baked, and a few weeks later, a visit open to everyone is organized, and bread is baked again. During this visit, visitors bring sugar to the mother and baby. In some regions of Türkiye, similar visits are made to the new mother during the first week after birth to congratulate her, and during the second week to inquire about her well-being. During these visits, foods

such as rice pudding, milk, soup, pastries, desserts, sugar, rice, honey, sugar for new mothers, or sherbet are brought (Örnek, 2000: 144). As can be seen, the shared element in the rituals practiced in both Moldova and Türkiye to celebrate and bless both the mother and the baby after birth is food. The main purpose of these meals and treats can be summarized as helping the mother regain her strength as soon as possible, enabling her to acquire the physical attributes necessary to feed her baby in the shortest time possible, supporting the mother during this transition period so she is not left alone, and helping her get through the process easily. Furthermore, baking and distributing bread in the house where the birth took place symbolizes the birth and represents the sharing of abundance, prosperity, and joy.

It is possible to multiply examples of the relationship between birth and food with data from field research and literature. For example, during a visit to the village of Palanca, located near the Ukrainian border and inhabited by people who came from Ukraine in ancient times and settled there, an informant was interviewed. According to the informant, after birth in the village of Palanca, a soup called zama is brought to the new mother, along with walnuts or walnut sweets, with the aim of compensating for blood loss. Kira Dragni (I6), the informant from the town of Kongaz, also said that after birth, rice pudding is brought to the new mother so that she will have plenty of milk, and that natural chicken is boiled.

Marriage is another transitional period in Türkiye and Moldova where rituals are shaped around food. Like birth, marriage is a transitional period that must be considered in terms of its before, during, and after. In the traditions of Türkiye and Moldova, similar rituals are shaped around various foods before the wedding. For example, in Moldovan culture, the emiş (yemiş) ceremony ritual is performed before the wedding. This ceremony is usually held a few weeks after the engagement, and gifts are sent from the groom's house to the bride's house. Among the gifts are söz kolacı, boiled chicken, sweets, walnuts, and raisins (Petrovici, 2002: 76). Irina Iusiumbeli provides detailed information about the yemiş day in her doctoral thesis titled *Kadın (Woman) in Gagauz Yeri*. According to Iusiumbeli, although the established name of the ceremony within the tradition is yemiş, in the 20th century it also began to be referred to by names such as *goda* and *çotra*. The names of the ceremony derive from the yemiş, çotra, and goda, which are used in the ceremony and hold an important place. Yemiş refers to dried fruits such as raisins, hazelnuts, and walnuts that are part of the ceremony. Çotra is a carved wooden jug used to pour wine at many wedding ceremonies. Goda was transferred into Gagauz from the ceremony name meaning "agreement ceremony," which is called *godeş*, *godej*, or *godyavane* in Bulgarian (Iusiumbeli, 2008: 101). In Türkiye, it is known that there are customs such as sending gifts before the wedding, seeing the bride, and distributing okuntu. For example, in the bride-seeing ceremony, similar to the

fruit ceremony in Moldova, the groom visits his fiancée's family with various gifts. The prepared gifts also include foods such as nuts, fruit, sugar, and pastries. In the okuntu tradition, three or four days before the wedding, the reader distributes sugar to all relatives and neighbors, inviting them to the wedding. In Moldova, there is a similar tradition of going from house to house to invite people to the wedding. In this tradition, a sip of wine is offered from a wooden cup called a çotra, and the wedding date is announced verbally to extend the invitation (Petrovici, 2009: 216). These practices in both cultures are somewhat similar to modern-day invitations. In both cultures, it can be seen that certain foods and dishes have an important meaning before the wedding. It can be said that these ceremonies, which are part of the wedding preparations, are shaped by the meanings associated with the foods that are prepared or distributed. The use of sugar and cookies, in particular, symbolizes abundance and fertility. "The existence of many rituals is shaped around the meals that are prepared. In the rituals performed within the belief system, food and drink appear as part of the sacred, or even as the sacred itself, in a new context and function. Food is also a shared, secret, digestible, and even "enjoyable" part of the ritual" (Ersal and Görgülü, 2017: 145). The relationship between food and ritual also applies to rituals involving various foods during the preparation for marriage. These pre-marriage rituals help the individuals who will share their future lives together to get to know each other and their families more closely. Food allows them to strengthen their love, respect, and understanding for each other during this process. Therefore, the food and rituals that take place during marriage preparations are not just a practice of nourishment, but also become a meaningful experience that strengthens emotional bonds.

Another similar ritual in Turkish and Moldovan cultures during the marriage process is the food ceremonies that take place during the wedding. According to the accounts of informants in Moldovan culture, various dishes are served on the wedding day. Maria Ivanimakasap (I8), the informant, explained that in the village of Beşelma, bulgur, tripe, cabbage, sweet rice, crispbread, and rice pudding are prepared during weddings. Tatiana Kazmalı (I12), the informant from the village of Avdarma, stated during interviews that dishes such as tripe, meatballs, sausage, roast meat, and salad are prepared on the wedding day. Tatiana Popa (I12) from the village of Palanca also said that weddings in Moldova are generally held between August and November, and that dishes such as sarma, various hot dishes, mushrooms, and meat and vegetables cooked in a casserole are served during these months. She also mentioned that various walnut and nut cakes are placed on the tables at wedding meals. Elizayada Papova (I3) also stated that stuffed peppers and stuffed vegetables are made at weddings, along with noodles, boiled chicken, baked potatoes, and lamb patties. In Türkiye, it is possible to say that the dishes prepared at weddings vary according to the region. For example, Ayşe Öz (I2), one

of the informants interviewed in Afyonkarahisar, said that they made okra stew, pilaf, wedding soup, and salad during weddings. Informants interviewed in Antalya mentioned that keşkek is made at weddings. Therefore, the food prepared is an important part of wedding rituals in both Moldova and Türkiye. In both cultures, these dishes express the hospitality and generosity of families. At the same time, the flavors shared with these dishes are considered a symbol of unity and community. The presentation and consumption of these meals contribute to strengthening social relationships and solidifying the bonds between people who come together. These rituals should be considered more than just a meal presentation; they are also a way for the community to come together and celebrate each other.

One of the similar practices in Turkish and Moldovan wedding traditions is the hair tradition. According to Elizayada Papova (I3), one of the sources, when the bride arrives at the house, a chair is placed outside, and the bride sits on it and is given a bride's cake. Papova explains that the bride's cake is decorated, filled with sweets, and topped with flowers. After the bride's cake is divided, everyone takes a piece to wish the newlywed's good fortune. Nina Petrovici also mentions this in her doctoral thesis. Petrovici wrote that the wedding ceremony began with baking bread. Explaining that two types of dough were kneaded in both the bride's and groom's homes, Petrovici stated that the bread baked from sweet dough with eggs for the wedding is called kolac in Komrat and that the dough is usually kneaded two or three days before the wedding and baked in the oven. Petrovici emphasized that kolac was baked to be "broken over the heads" of the bride and groom (Petrovici, 2009: 216). In addition to the practice of breaking kolac and distributing pieces to everyone so that the bride and groom would be lucky and the wedding would be auspicious and fruitful, Galina Mitsiva (I5) from the village of Taraclia explained that wheat seeds were placed in a tray and scattered over the bride and groom for good luck. It is possible to say that these practices in Moldova are similar to the practice in Türkiye of scattering various nuts, wheat, and sugar over the bride and groom. *Saçı* is a name given to inanimate objects offered to spirits and souls believed to possess extraordinary powers and distributed to gain their consent and help on their behalf; it is essentially known as an inanimate sacrifice ritual (Bekki, 1996: 22). These similar traditions reflect shared themes in people's search for marriage and happiness, despite coming from different geographical areas. At the same time, it can be seen that these rituals developed as a result of cross-cultural commonality and similar thought systems and have been passed down to the present day.

The final transition period, death, and the traditions surrounding it also feature various foods playing an important role. Both in Türkiye and Moldova, rituals related to food are present in many stages of funeral ceremonies. During field research in Moldova, one of the informants explained that meatless stuffed grape

leaves and vegetable potatoes were brought to the house of mourning to help, and mentioned that the third, seventh, ninth, and fortieth days after the funeral, as well as the sixth month and the anniversary of the death, were important, and that various commemorations and food offerings were made on these days. Another source also said that funeral meals in Moldova are meatless, consisting of dishes such as sarma, vegetables, and beans. Makukla Spanna (I7), one of the informants in the village of Beşelma, also mentioned that koliva is made and distributed on the ninth day after the death. Olga Georgiva (I10) from the village of Taraclia, also mentioned that a fat-free flatbread made with flour is distributed to those who come after the funeral. Nina Petrovici also discussed in detail in her doctoral thesis what is done after the death. Petrovici states that the ritual of serving food after the death is called *pomana* and is performed on the third, ninth, twentieth, and fortieth days after the death, as well as three months, six months, nine months, one year, and in subsequent years. It is known that koliva, kolaç, and different seasonal dishes are served on pomana days (Petrovici 2009: 235). Anatoliy F. Orlioglo (I1), one of the people interviewed in Moldova, also mentioned that koliva has a special symbolism, as it is placed on the table hot so that the warm steam from the food is likened to the spirit of the deceased. Another informant, Elizayada Papova (I3), said that koliva is the most important meal after the funeral and is similar to the Turkish helva tradition. Therefore, in Moldova, certain food rituals are performed on specific days after funerals for the purpose of remembrance and blessing. This practice is also continued in a similar way in Türkiye. Today, the first evening, third day, seventh day, fortieth day, fifty - second day, first Friday, first holiday, and anniversary of the deceased are known as important days. It is known that meals called *ölü aşı* (meal for the deceased) are served on these days (Ersoy 2002: 100). The most well-known and prominent of these days is the fortieth day. On the fortieth day after the death, a "fortieth meal" is served. At this meal, halva is distributed, water is given, a mevlüd is recited, and the fortieth prayer is said (Örnek, 2000: 220). Known among Turks as "yog/yuğ aşı" or "funeral meal," the "yuğ" ceremonies performed in Turkish society after a death continue today as funeral meals in Anatolia (Ermeçli, 2022: 95-96). Funeral meals vary in content from region to region, and their names also change. It is known by names such as kırk yemeği, kırk ekmeği, can helvası, ölü aşı, and hayır yemeği. These meals are served starting from the first evening after the death (Örnek, 2000: 222). Furthermore, in Türkiye, just as in Moldova, neighbors bring food to the home of the deceased. This process, which generally lasts about a week, aims to support the bereaved and ease their grief.

As can be seen, food plays an important role in funeral rituals in both Türkiye and Moldova. In both cultures, various food-related rituals are performed on specific days after the death of a person for the purpose of remembrance and blessing. In Moldova, various commemorations and meals are held on the third, ninth, and

fortieth days after the death, as well as on the sixth month and anniversary of the death. In Türkiye, important days after the funeral include the first evening, the third, seventh, fortieth, fifty - second day, the first Friday, the first holiday, and the anniversary of the death. It is known that on these days, meals called *ölü aşı* are served and neighbors bring food to the bereaved family. In both cultures, it is understood that meals after death play an important role in supporting families and sharing their grief. In addition to strengthening neighborly and friendly ties with the family of the deceased, meals also serve as a source of emotional consolation in the process of coping with death. Sharing meals creates a strong bond among people who come together to ease their grief and cope with the loss of their loved ones.

This study has attempted to examine the cultural similarities between Türkiye and Moldova and how these similarities are expressed through food rituals during transitional periods. It has been observed that food rituals performed during important transitional periods such as birth, marriage, and death in both countries are important elements that strengthen cultural ties and support social solidarity. In conclusion, it has been understood that food is not only a means of satisfying physical needs but also an important tool that strengthens social bonds, brings cultures closer together, and provides clues for tracing cultural continuity. The shared culinary culture of Türkiye and Moldova allows people to come together with similar food rituals during the same transitional periods, despite their geographical distance. Informants stated that many of the practices mentioned in this article are disappearing today, with new generations beginning to abandon these traditional practices. Based on field research observations, it can be said that food is an important tool for identity and socialization for both cultures. Food is not only part of celebrations and commemorations, but also a facilitator for individuals or communities on the threshold of change, sometimes a symbol of solidarity, and sometimes an expression of identity.

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I1: Anatoliy F. Orlioglo, 1971, Valkaneş.

I2: Ayşe Öz, 1977, Afyonkarahisar

I3: Elizayada Papova, 1973, Komrat.

I4: Evdokia Soroceanu, 1954, Kişinev.

I5: Galina Mitsiva, 1970, Taraclia.

I6: Kira Dragni, 1975, Kongaz.

I7: Makukla Spanna, 1953, Beşelma

I8: Maria İvanimakasap, 1951, Beşelma.

I9: Natalia Gradinaru, 1979, Kişinev.

I10: Olga Georgiva, 1973, Taraclia.

I11: Tatiana Kazmalı, 1961, Avdarma.

I12: Tatiana Popa, 1942, Palanca.

AI Foods Consumed for Preventive Purposes in Traditional Moldovan and Turkish Cuisine

Natalia Grădinaru*

Today, the entire world is undergoing a broad transition to a new global civilisation. Food, like many other aspects of social and economic life, reflects the process of globalisation. Eating habits are increasingly subject to the pace of work, and the emergence of a whole range of fast-food restaurants is destroying conviviality. At the same time, entrepreneurs, in order to preserve food products for as long as possible and increase their marketability, process them with various toxic substances, thereby increasing their harmfulness and disrupting the consumer's entire metabolic system.

According to the WHO, most non-communicable diseases are currently caused by factors such as poor-quality food and a sedentary lifestyle. At the same time, these factors lead to high blood pressure, high blood sugar levels, lipid disorders, and excess body weight, which often cause the development of chronic diseases, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, etc.

Things have also changed culturally: the call for consumerism is being replaced by an invitation to eat a predominantly plant-based diet. This choice is not based on moral or religious values, but is mainly motivated by aesthetic or utilitarian considerations, which can again have serious consequences for human health, as the same product can be medicine for some people and toxic for others.

All these facts motivated us to initiate this investigation, which aims to reflect, on the one hand, the therapeutic value of traditional food, specific to the Prut-Nistru region, in the prevention and cure of pathological processes and as an important mechanism for maintaining the health of the population, without, however, claiming to provide a complete explanation of the issue. On the other

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hand, the article aims to identify the medicinal foods used for prophylactic and therapeutic purposes in the cultural tradition of Moldovans and Turks.

The subject of traditional food in the historiography of the Republic of Moldova has been presented over time by several lines of research. Few authors, however, have been interested in highlighting our ancestors' constant concern for maintaining health through food and diet. From a historical perspective, food has mostly been approached as a random topic.

The earliest sources that tell us about the eating habits of our predecessors can be found in antiquity. Some of them (Columella, 1st century AD, Ptolemy) refer to the Getae as "a nation ignorant of grain, ...living off flocks of sheep", while others (Ptolemy, Criton) present them as good farmers. Dimitrie Cantemir later wrote about the western part of Moldova: "the inhabitants live only from cattle breeding" (Cantemir, 1975), opting for the idea that pastoralism gave rise to dietary habits related to the preparation of non-breadable cereals. What is certain is that both occupations have endured over time, forming the basis of the current diet.

Later information about eating habits comes from Leyon Pierce Bathasar von Campenhausen, who mentioned that "the peasants of Bessarabia and Moldova usually live on a daily dish called mămăligă, made from corn flour, which they prepare with butter, bacon or milk. They improve this dish by adding small balls of well-cooked millet (Moldovan porridge) and then call it mălai. Peasants' bread is made from barley, known in Moldovan as pită..." (Foreign travellers on the Romanian lands, 2001: 863).

From a medical perspective, traditional nutrition has been researched since the 19th century and more thoroughly since the early 20th century. Several Romanian doctors have published papers analysing the quality of peasant nutrition in the area in question. The conclusion of this medical research argued that there were major protein deficiencies due to an unsatisfactory diet of animal products, caused by shortages in peasant households, a circumstance aggravated by long periods of fasting during the year (Horvath, 2017: 19).

Ethnological approaches to the traditional food system of the population living in the Prut-Nistru region can be found in several works written by Romanian authors. We begin by mentioning the contribution of Tudor Pamfle with his work *Industria casnică la români* (Domestic Industry among Romanians), published in Bucharest in 1910. This veritable study provides a wealth of information about the production and processing of goods useful to humans and about peasant food, along with the tools used to prepare and preserve food. Tudor Pamfle notes that peasants are not big consumers of meat and that this is due "only to poverty"; poultry, he says, was rarely consumed, except on special occasions, and beef even

more rarely, when peasants were forced to sacrifice their animals due to illness or accidents (Pamfle, 1910: 22).

The physician Ioan Claudian shared this opinion, stating that "until the 18th century, millet and oats (less so corn) were, together with milk, the daily food of ordinary people. Bread was only baked at Easter and Christmas (Claudian, 1939: 39). Unleavened cakes made from various types of cereals were also used in the diet: barley, wheat, rye, millet, corn.

The study of food in the area under analysis was carried out most thoroughly in the second half of the 20th century. Ofelia Văduvă brought to Romanian ethnology works that ly dealt with the transformation of food, through the imagination, in the sense of blurring the nutritional values that generate physical strength in favour of those that generate spiritual strength (Văduvă, 1996: 31). The author analyses the symbolism of food in ceremonial and festive meals, as well as the refusal of food during fasting.

Festive food, as defined by Ofelia Văduvă, has two dimensions: the ceremonial and the ritual. Considered "a sequence that reflects ancient beliefs, the food ritual is based on the idea of simulating magical acts," through which a system of communication with the divine is created (Văduvă, 1996: 21). Ofelia Văduvă also analyses food as a gift, with a mediating role between people or between humans and the divine.

Traditional food in the Prut-Nistru region has been addressed, on the one hand, in ethnological works and monographs and, on the other hand, in articles published in specialised journals, which treat food as a single subject, focusing on how food is prepared and consumed, as well as ceremonial and ritual food. The ritual dimension of food in the Republic of Moldova has been addressed by researchers who have persisted in analysing bread as an essential food, but also the typology and symbolism of ritual bread. The most representative work on this subject is by Varvara Buzilă in the volume "Bread, food and symbol. The experience of the sacred" is an in-depth ethnological study of bread and ritual doughs present in the consumption habits of Moldovans.

The author also publishes various studies analysing the role of food and liquids in human life, traditional etiquette, the symbolism of ritual bread (Ritual bread in the tradition of popular Christianity; The custom of honouring wine among Moldovans; Mechanisms for maintaining the cycle of life in the value system of traditional culture, etc.).

Olga Luchianeţ and Valentina Iarovoi, in their joint study on traditional food, recount interesting moments about occasional, everyday and fasting food (Luchianeţ, Iarovoi 2001: 52-54). Relevant data on the food and ritual foods of the

ethnic groups cohabiting in the Republic of Moldova can be found in the works of researchers Diana Nicoglo, Eudochia Soroceanu, Ecaterina and Victor Cojuhari.

The fact that the works mentioned above address the issue of nutrition as a mechanism for maintaining health and preventing disease has been partially debated, justifying the need to explore this topic in greater depth, using both the specialist literature referred to and information from the digitised ethnographic archive as sources.

Starting from the less stated postulate that every living being is connected to its natural environment through flows of matter, energy and information, we will insist on a more in-depth exploration of this topic.

Traditional food and the festive customs inherent to humans are the result of an amazing fusion of biology, history and culture. If the food we eat is the main source through which the energy and substances necessary for the continuous process of cell renewal enter the human body, traditional cuisine is also a unique system that reflects the ecosystem in which our people were formed. This is because, over time, the act of eating has been influenced, to varying degrees, by natural and climatic factors, socio-economic structure and, above all, the level of cultural development. The degree of influence that the ecosystem has on food is overwhelming, reflecting both in the choice of available food resources and in the intensity of the metabolic process of the inhabitants of a given region. Thus, the specific biotope influences the emergence of food traditions.

Research into food includes not only its material aspects, such as adaptation to the environment, but also spiritual aspects, which are useful not only for understanding popular culture, but also, and above all, to understanding the concepts on which a specific way of life has been built over time, to explaining human behaviour in numerous circumstances and to perceiving the mental mechanisms underlying people's eating habits at one time or another in their lives (Văduvă, 1996: 14).

The moderate use and optimisation of environmental resources has allowed the local population to adapt anatomically and physiologically over time to the food they consume, which has led to the formation of a cultural-economic type of social organisation. In order to diversify their diet, various food processing technologies were used, thus establishing ecological behaviour norms, which resulted in a stable and balanced interaction between the human group and its environment.

Thus, the specificity of the traditional diet consists of moderation and the successful combination of food products in such a way as not to harm humans. Most authors who have researched the traditional diet believe that vegetarianism was specific to local peasants, and that the daily consumption of meat and alcohol

is an invention of "urban civilisation". The development of agricultural crops and fruit growing has made it possible to develop a rich culinary tradition based on the processing of cereals, vegetables and fruits. Animal husbandry has made it possible to consume meat, milk, dairy products, and meat and milk products that are specific in terms of taste, flavours used and processing techniques.

The diet of the local population in the Prut-Nistru region includes both everyday dishes and special festive dishes. The staple foods were and remain polenta and bread. In the past, white flour was used only to make ritual and festive bread. Black bread, which was baked once a week, was used in everyday meals. The peasant's food was usually prepared by boiling. Not many dishes were served, but salt, onions and garlic were always present on the table.

Meat was considered a precious food. Pork was and still is used to prepare several dishes: roast, stew, borscht, broth, sausages (chişte împlute), shish kebabs made from liver and lungs, wrapped in prăpurică. In traditional cuisine, an important place was occupied by offal (jumările), which was stored in clay pots. Beef and mutton were used less frequently in the Moldovan diet. Mutton dishes are mainly prepared and consumed in the southern part of the country, whose inhabitants specialise in sheep farming. Traditional sheep meat dishes in the south of the country include cavarmaua, meat fried in fat, according to the Dacian recipe. Sheep meat was also a favourite in the cuisine of the Gagauz and Bulgarian ethnic groups (Marunevici, 2004). In the villages in the centre and north of the republic, lamb is prepared and eaten especially during the Easter holidays, while sheep meat is eaten on special occasions. Lamb dishes (roast lamb with garlic and onions, boiled) are welcome in the spring season because they are an important source of niacin and B vitamins: B1, B2, B6, B9, biotin, B5, B12 and vitamins that are particularly important for restoring the body after the winter period. Beef was recommended more for children and the elderly. Rabbit, prepared in various ways, is eaten throughout the year as a light meal.

Chicken meat is used to make broth with tocmăgei (Iarovoi, 2011), roast, sauce with sour cream and flour. Rooster meat is used to make borscht, broth and cold soup. Duck meat is used to make borscht with autumn cabbage, broth, meatballs, and goose meat is used to make roast. Turkeys are raised for broth, meatballs, and roast. Home-raised pigeon meat is also used in the preparation of dietary soups. It is fried or baked on charcoal.

Fish was farmed or caught. It was eaten fried with cornmeal, baked on charcoal and served with garlic sauce. It was also used to make broth and cold dishes.

Cow's milk was consumed raw, boiled and curdled. The boiled milk was eaten with a spoon from a bowl, to which pieces of polenta or bread were added. Freshly

milked milk and milk boiled with tocmagi were a real treat for children. Donkey milk is an excellent remedy, used by both Moldovans and Turks against asthma and bronchitis.

Cow's cheese is eaten with polenta, used as a filling in pies, rolls and dumplings. Sour cream is eaten with polenta, bread or mixed with cheese. Butter is selected at the cob and eaten in its natural state, in scrob or melted with polenta and sheep's cheese. This is made from sweet curd (a derivative of curdled sheep's milk) by adding salt. In winter, it was stored in barrels with brine, which were covered with a gauze e and well-washed vine leaves. Urda was prepared from sheep's whey. Eggs were also frequently used in the peasants' diet and were eaten raw, boiled, fried or scrambled.

The most commonly consumed plant products were: vegetables (cabbage, potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkin, aubergines), legumes (peas, beans, chickpeas), root vegetables (carrots, beetroot, radishes, celery, parsley), and aromatic herbs (dill, thyme, saffron, coriander).

Cabbage (cabbage) was used in food all year round. It is used to make fasting borscht, in combination with other vegetables, borscht with pork, duck or rooster. When fried, both fresh and pickled, it can be used as a filling for pies, rolls and even dumplings. In the autumn and winter seasons, sweet peppers stuffed with cabbage are in high demand. Fresh and pickled leaves are used in dumplings.

Potatoes were eaten fried, boiled, boiled with their skins on and peeled for salad with garlic or onion, mashed, or baked in ashes. They are used in the preparation of soups and borscht during fasting, but also as a filling for pies, stuffed cabbage rolls and dumplings. In northern Moldova, a dish of potatoes with fried onions and sugar is prepared for memorial feasts.

As a medicine, potatoes are used mainly for external use. Prof. Dr. M. Öcal OĞUZ (I5), President of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, reported at the International Conference on Traditional Turkish and Moldovan Culinary Culture that in his native village (Izdat), potatoes were cut into rounds and applied to the forehead of people suffering from headaches. This form of headache treatment is found in several villages in the Republic of Moldova.

Tomatoes are eaten fresh, pickled, in borscht, and in broth (paste). Aubergines were baked for salad with raw onion and sour cream or eaten fried with chiperi. Fresh and pickled cucumbers were an addition to the main dishes. Bell peppers are eaten baked, fried, in salads or with tomato sauce.

Pumpkin played a special role in the diet due to its distinctive taste. It was eaten boiled in milk or baked; it was also used to make pie fillings.

Green peas are eaten raw in summer borscht. Dried peas are boiled and crushed, with fried onions added. Beans also play an important role in the diet, especially during fasting periods throughout the year. They are prepared boiled, with raw onion and oil; crushed, with fried onion and garlic; fried; in borscht. Soybeans are mostly eaten fried. Carrots and beetroot were used in the preparation of borscht and salads throughout the year. Radishes and autumn radishes are used to prepare salads with onion, vinegar and oil.

Parsley (leaves and root), dill, thyme and lovage give meat and vegetable dishes a distinctive flavour. Celery is used in pickles. Spring borscht is prepared from sorrel (chard), green and red loboda. Nettles were highly sought after in spring for their rich vitamin content. They were used to make green borscht and ciulamale. An excellent source of protein, iron and other minerals essential for the body, as well as having anti-anaemic and remineralising properties, nettles were able to satisfy the needs of the human body during Lent, when food was poor in nutrients. To eliminate intestinal worms, it was recommended to consume nettles in the form of tinctures or tea. Externally, nettles were used to make hair shinier and stronger, internally – to cleanse the blood, in the treatment of arthritis, coughs or tuberculosis.

Mushrooms (porcini, morels, white and black mushrooms) and coltsfoot were widely used from the wild flora. Mushrooms were eaten fried with garlic, in ciulamale, in borscht, pickled and dried. Rich in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals such as selenium, vitamin D, vitamin B and copper, mushrooms strengthen the immune system and protect the body against infections and diseases. Consuming coltsfoot brought benefits in cases of inflammatory conditions such as asthma and gout.

The fruits are eaten fresh, cooked (chisăliță), dried, in preserves, in the form of jam and marmalade. Some are used to make brandy. The fibre in dried plums helps maintain intestinal health and prevent constipation, which is why dried plums were highly sought after for preparing holiday dishes.

Seeds and nuts played an important role in the Moldovan diet. They were a treat for children, but were also used as medicine. Pumpkin seeds are good for combating intestinal worms, and walnut jam is good for high cholesterol and for strengthening children's immunity etc. (Grădinaru, 2019: 109-113).

Ceremonial food is the system of food goods and practices that contribute to the celebration of moments with significant implications for social relations in the community (Ciocanu, 2005). Ritual food is found in the spiritual aspect of traditional life. During family and calendar celebrations, dishes were prepared that were different from everyday meals in terms of how they were prepared and

their significance. The dishes prepared at the birth of a child (rodina, baptism, godparenting) have meanings of recognition and integration of the child into society, they become the framework of wedding customs and represent the social cohesion of the participants. The post-wedding parties with food and drink are part of a series of acts intended to integrate the new family into the ranks of the household and facilitate the transition from the great family celebration to everyday life. The food prepared at funerals and memorial services signifies the separation of the deceased from this world, the preparation for the passage to the world beyond and integration into the other world, the restoration of the social balance broken by the departure of the dead, the communication of the living with the ancestors , the care of the living for the future existence of those who have departed, but also a moment of social solidarity in the village (Iarovoi, 2009).

Meals dedicated to major events in human life (birth, wedding and funeral) remain the most prestigious. Meat is always present at ceremonial meals, except during fasting; lamb was traditional for the ritual Easter meal; chicken is thrown over the grave, as it is considered to be of great help to the soul in the afterlife; fish is eaten during fasting only on days when it is permitted.

Bread was the dominant ritual and ceremonial food in folk customs, because it symbolises fertility, prosperity, fruitfulness and health. There is a wide variety of shapes and names for ritual bread: colacii (distinctive signs at festive and ritual meals, they are constantly present and extremely diverse), plăcintele, jemna, pupăza, sfinţişorii, crăciuneii, hulubaşii, etc. Other ritual foods, often consumed as part of calendar and family customs, were: honey, fruits and nuts, eggs, lamb, garlic, etc.

Lenten dishes are prepared during the fasts throughout the year (Lent, Christmas, St. Paul and Peter, Assumption of the Virgin Mary) and on Wednesdays and Fridays during the week. The main dishes for fasting days are those prepared from vegetables, grains, legumes, vegetable oils, dried fruits and berries, etc. Fasting foods include crushed beans (mixed/mashed beans), fried, boiled or baked potatoes, cabbage, potato and cabbage pies, chiseliţa, etc.

Fasting dishes cooked for Christmas Eve dinner include boiled wheat, dumplings with groats, cabbage, poppy seed cakes, boiled plums, etc., in the hope of a bountiful harvest in the coming year.

The dishes prepared during Lent are based on fresh greens that appear in spring: nettles, sorrel, wild garlic, and horseradish. Lenten dishes during this period of the year include nettle borscht, nettle stew, Lenten stuffed cabbage rolls wrapped in chard or coltsfoot leaves, nettle stew with crushed walnuts, various baked cakes kneaded with homemade borscht or tomato paste.

The diet during fasting, becoming predominantly vegetarian, was seen by many authors as poor and incomplete (Ştirbu, 1943, 45). However, we cannot unanimously agree with the supporters of this theory, as vegetarian food, lacking in excess fat and alcohol, could not lead to illness but was an effective method of preventing many diseases and an alternative to a rich diet.

For prophylactic purposes, people consumed so-called "picked plants" (edible weeds) as well as vegetables, which were the main source of nutrition in spring and summer or on fasting days. In addition to their prophylactic effect, they also have important therapeutic qualities, being called "medicinal foods". Some of them are still consumed today, but much less frequently : *stevia* is classified as a superfood, having the ability to regulate blood sugar levels, curb cravings for sweets and temper acute hunger; it is excellent for stimulating mental and physical energy, and can even destroy the bacteria that cause tooth decay. *Dandelions* were used to make salads and honey, and nettles are still used today in the preparation of sauces; *green barley*, which is now considered one of the most powerful antioxidants that can cure a host of diseases, is chewed in the mouth or ground and added to dishes. Research confirms that barley, especially green barley immediately after sprouting (germs), contains certain substances with amazing healing effects, even in seemingly incurable diseases: hepatitis, cancer, pancreatitis, diabetes, tuberculosis, and barley juice regenerates cells and delays the ageing process. *Turnips* were eaten raw, baked, boiled, and less often fried. Being an excellent source of vitamins C and B6, they are used by the body in the metabolism of proteins and fatty acids, contributing to the formation of red blood cells and helping the immune system to function properly. Folk healers also knew about the beneficial effects of *sea buckthorn*, using the fruit juice as a medicinal drink in cases of jaundice (hepatitis), even giving it to children to "grow up healthy and strong" (I2, Ghitmanenco Varvara, Baurci). The survival of this ancient custom of using many vegetables in the diet undoubtedly compensates for the same insufficiency of vegetable cultivation, which, according to historiographical data, began quite late in our country.

Herbs were consumed both raw and cooked (in the form of teas, infusions), macerated, etc. *Comfrey* tea*,* for example, was often used in cases of fractures to promote faster healing. Comfrey was one of the most effective remedies for hernias (injuries) and pains of various aetiologies. If the patient wanted to heal quickly, they had to eat cakes made from bran mixed with crushed comfrey roots or wrap themselves in a bundle made of comfrey and pedicula. Acacia flower tea also had multiple uses, being drunk both for stomach pains and for disorders of the nervous and respiratory systems; teas made from cherry stems and corn silk are two other teas widely used by the people, recommended for kidney disorders. These teas have a diuretic effect and are good for those with kidney stones (I4, Sofronie Ana, Nemirovca).

People suffering from kidney problems also used *juniper* tea; and *dandelion* tea, which is a panacea for treating all internal organs, was used as a liver cleanser. Anti-diarrhoeal teas have been known since ancient times. They could be made from *mulberry*, *blueberry* or *mint* leaves. The strongest anti-diarrhoeal tea was considered to be that made from *sumac* (Rhus Cotinus). *Rosemary* infusion was used to wash the oral cavity, to disinfect and tone the gums, and to freshen breath; hazel flower tea was given as a remedy for pulmonary tuberculosis (Paveliuc-Moraru, 2004).

The most representative and widely used medicinal foods were *garlic* and *onions*. They could be used to treat both internal and external diseases. Onion juice was frequently used in cases of flu and colds. A little onion was grated, pressed until the juice came out, and then put into the nose (I3, Scutelnic Evdochia, Glingeni). Onion juice was also used for throat inhalations, to strengthen immunity and in cases of stomach ulcers.

For faster healing of fractures, it was recommended to eat as much boiled onion as possible, and people sensitive to sudden changes in weather were prescribed to eat raw onion with bread, as this strengthened the tone of the blood vessels. For tuberculosis sufferers, a quantity of onions was finely chopped, mixed with the same amount of sugar and baked in the oven covered with a lid. When it cooled, it was cut into cubes. Nine days before, several large autumn radishes were taken, washed thoroughly, chopped and mixed with 2 litres of alcohol. Leave for 9 days in a dark place. In the morning, on an empty stomach, take 1 tablespoon of radish tincture, then eat 1 cube of baked onion. Repeat 3 times a day until the disease improves.

Baked onion is another remedy used by both the Turkish and Moldovan peoples in the treatment of boils, to speed up the process of "ripening" the boils. Garlic had prophylactic, vermifuge and anti-inflammatory properties and was one of the best medicinal foods in the early treatment of cancer. Onions, like garlic, were attributed with magical properties and were also used to cleanse spaces and restore positive energy (probably due to their pungent taste and the sensation of burning they cause). Garlic was drunk with milk to get rid of intestinal worms or with water to lower blood pressure. For magical and prophylactic purposes, to protect the house from the undead, Moldovans placed garlic at doors and windows, while Turks placed a bunch of *Peganum harmala* plants together with garlic. Externally, garlic was applied to warts, skin cancer or boils.

Boiled wheat was and continues to be used to make coliva. Crushed grains were used to make dumplings. More recently, it has been mixed with rice grains. Wheat flour is used to make sweet dough for pies, dumplings, flatbread and tocmăgei. The leavened dough is used to bake bread, pies and învârtita. Bran is used to thicken homemade borscht.

Cereals, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and legumes have been widely used in the treatment of diseases, but also in their prevention.

Among the most commonly used cereals were wheat, corn and barley. Wheat bran was obtained by grinding wheat, a food widely used both in the preparation of sour borscht and in the treatment of several conditions, such as nervousness, diarrhoea, constipation, abdominal and rheumatic pain, impotence, etc. Current research shows the importance of whole grains, including wheat bran, in preventing disease. Bran has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties, regulates digestion, is an emollient, especially for the stomach, liver, and intestines, and is laxative, nutritious, and remineralising. It has also been established that they can inactivate carcinogens and prevent cancer. Boiled wheat has been and continues to be used to make coliva. Crushed grains were used to make dumplings. More recently, it has been mixed with rice grains. Wheat flour is used to make sweet dough for pies, dumplings, flatbreads and tocmăgei. The leavened dough is used to bake bread, pies and învârtita.

Raw corn (in milk) is eaten either roasted on charcoal or boiled. Flour was obtained from roasted corn by grinding it. It was used to make mămăligă, gendră and the most popular dessert – mălaiul (alivanca – in Zăicani, Varatic).

Since ancient times, Moldovans in the Prut-Nistru region have used *polenta* as medicine. Polenta is a mixture of corn flour and salt; sometimes it can have additions such as butter or cheese, depending on the final dish obtained. It was very often used in the diet of farmers and livestock breeders and replaced bread, which in pre-industrial times was obtained in the household by manual processing. For prophylactic purposes, to avoid pellagra, it is sufficient to consume polenta daily with half a litre of milk and an egg.

Recent studies have shown that daily consumption of polenta reduces the risk of mental illness caused by thyroid dysfunction by 60%. Mămăligă also regulates blood glucose levels, which is beneficial for diabetics. It reduces the amount of cholesterol in the blood, thus lowering the risk of atherosclerosis and, implicitly, heart attack. Furthermore, mămăligă revitalises sexual functions, especially in women. Romanian research shows that 9% of women over 65 had very intense ovarian activity, manifested by prolonged sexual activity even after the age of 72. Consuming polenta is also responsible for longevity.

Polenta is also applied externally, in the form of poultices, to treat colds, sore throats and pneumonia. For this purpose, poultices made from hot polenta were applied to the chest or around the neck, "held for 15 minutes, then removed". Hot polenta poultices were used until the end of the 20th century to treat bronchitis,

flu, chronic coughs, renal colic and nephritis, as a quick remedy for adnexitis and cystitis.

For sore throats and colds, place two tablespoons of cornmeal on a hot plate and hold your nose over the smoke produced, stirring continuously. In addition, drink a thin porridge with a piece of butter in it before bedtime. The next day, you will feel infinitely better. Among the people, one of the most effective remedies for pneumonia is the famous Romanian polenta.

Among animal products used as medicinal foods, milk and cheese were commonly used. These could be consumed for prophylactic/therapeutic purposes and mixed with other plant products, or even in their raw state. For example, stomach aches were treated with a drink made from mashed ripe pumpkin mixed with milk. The elders relieved unbearable toothaches with a glass of milk in which 2 tablespoons of stevia were boiled for a few minutes. The very hot mixture was held in the mouth on the side of the affected tooth and changed after it had cooled down partially. Breastfeeding women treated their hard and painful breasts with applications made of cottage cheese and onion. The cheese was mixed with a few cloves of crushed garlic, heated and applied to the forehead, under the shoulder blades and on the upper part of the lungs, after first rubbing the back and chest with oil. After this, the baby was swaddled and kept like this for several hours. Cold cheese was applied to the forehead in cases of sunstroke or hyperthermic shock.

Eggs have played an important role in traditional cuisine, being recommended for the treatment of many diseases, especially in dietary nutrition. It was recommended that young children or sick people eat them raw to boost their vitality, and they were also the most suitable food-medicine in cases of food poisoning. Eggshells were the oldest therapeutic remedy for treating allergic diathesis in children, as well as rickets. This therapeutic remedy was also very effective in treating eyes or wounds. Internally, it was given to children, pregnant women, the elderly, i.e. to all those with calcium deficiency. In powder form, it was added to the food of children whose teeth did not grow on time (I1, Banari Elena, 1940). In cases of diarrhoea or kidney stones, the patient was advised to drink half a teaspoon of eggshell powder with dry wine. The heat of the egg soothes pain, which is why it was used to treat "female" diseases, the respiratory system, etc. When a small child ate too much and had stomach pains, an egg was boiled, cooled, tested in the palm of the hand to make sure it was not too hot, and placed on the child's navel. Eggs were also used in magical treatments.

The correctness of the use of many foods is confirmed today by modern research. An example of this is the Moldovan dietary tradition of consuming mainly plant-based products, which, according to experts, should predominate in the daily diet.

Intuitively or rationally, through observation, people have carefully chosen their food, recognising the enormous role that nutrition plays in health. Moreover, seeing food as an integral part of the human being (due to its internal contact), Moldovans attributed extraordinary power to food, capable of influencing human health and life. At the same time, according to popular beliefs, food could also have a negative influence on the human body if it was "cursed or bewitched" for evil purposes. In order for food to have a therapeutic effect, but also to provide humans with the energy necessary for existence, Moldovans took into account a series of rules of conduct applicable to the acquisition, storage, preparation and consumption of food.

Dimitrie Cantemir, in his "Description of Moldova", recounted the custom of women eating in secret, unseen by anyone. In addition to the fact that it was considered unsightly to see a woman's open mouth or teeth, it was also believed that being seen could easily bring bad luck (Cantemir, 1975, 100). To this day, there is a persistent belief that evil spirits can "contaminate" water and food, which is why it is necessary to make the sign of the cross over food before eating.

Similarly, for prophylactic and therapeutic purposes, the consumption of certain foods was recommended (prescription) or prohibited (prohibition). For example, some fruits were consumed only after they had been blessed and given as alms (cherries on Palm Sunday, pears on St. Anthony's Day, apples and grapes on Probajne, walnuts are given as alms to those who go carolling on New Year's Eve). The idea of prohibiting or prescribing a food exists and functions in all cultures, representing a universal cultural constant.

Here are just a few of the many popular beliefs and recommendations: at Easter or Christmas, eat fish or poultry first, so that you will be as light as a bird and as lively as a fish; a person suffering from heart disease will be cured with the heart of an animal; when someone falls ill with cori, they are given mulled wine to drink. This type of treatment is explained by Candrea, who, quoting the Danish doctor Finsen (1860–1904), supports the effectiveness of red light treatment for various skin diseases, especially smallpox and lupus (chromotherapy), which causes pustules to dry quickly. Dr Lauger was not inspired by Finsen's experiments, arguing that "old women have long treated us with red cloth" (Lauger, 1925, 26). Dietary prescriptions therefore included recommendations for the use of a food for prophylactic or therapeutic purposes, taking into account spatial, temporal and causal coordinates. According to Van Gennep, prohibitions are taboos or "negative rites" which he defines as "an order not to do, not to behave in a certain way" (Gennep, 1996, 20). According to popular belief, violating prohibitions leads to illness or serious disruptions in the natural course of events. According to Claude Riviere's theory, which states that prohibitions refer to different variables: sex, age,

social class, status, different degrees of religious initiation, space, time (Riviere, 2000, 38), we distinguish several types of prohibitions: 1) religious prohibitions or prohibitions (no eating in the morning until the Eucharist, no eating meat during fasting); 2) disciplinary prohibitions (no eating while walking, no eating while talking); 3) temporal prohibitions. These, in turn, are of two types: a) temporary (during pregnancy / pregnant women should not eat meat cut from a skewer, as it will cause the child to have a tongue tie), b) permanent (food prohibitions on certain holidays (on the Christian Orthodox holiday of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, no watermelons or other round fruits or vegetables (reminiscent of the head) or red fruits or vegetables (symbolising blood) are eaten, days and hours when certain foods are prohibited; 4) prohibitions related to space (no eating in church or on the street); 5) prohibitions related to status or ethnicity. These can also be classified into two distinct categories: a) ethnic or religious affiliation prohibited the consumption of dog meat among Orthodox Christians and pork among Muslims; b) the prohibition of consuming food given by strangers; 6) the prohibition of eating anything foreign, disgusting or repulsive.

The most important function of dietary prohibitions and prescriptions seems to be that of introducing distinctions between sacred/profane, initiated/uninitiated. Violating these prohibitions has disruptive effects on the community and the individual. In some cases, both prohibitions and prescriptions are based on rational justifications related to health or practical reasons. Over time, these customs become established traditions that people follow without seeking an explanation each time. Thus, the causality of some prohibitions or prescriptions is easy to decipher, while others remain irrational due to a lack of understanding of the code that led to their creation, rather than because they are truly meaningless.

Another beneficial factor for healthy eating is regularity in meal times. Moldovans in the Prut-Nistru region used to eat three times a day: in the morning, at noon and in the evening. The special attitude towards food is evident in all rules of behaviour and eating: it was recommended that all family members eat together, no one touched the food until it was blessed, and delays at the table, heated discussions, laughter and jokes were not accepted. All of this, of course, had a hygienic and sanitary purpose. The tables at which meals were eaten were usually round and low, so that all family members could sit around them.

Assessing the daily and festive food ration as a whole, we note that, with some exceptions caused by climatic (drought, etc.), economic and social factors, it usually provided the body with all the vitamins and minerals it needed, and the traditional nutritional system is the result of an almost perfect biological, historical and cultural fusion.

In conclusion, we note that the traditional food systems of the population of the Prut-Nistru region and the Turkish people, which include the acquisition of food products, technical preparation methods (daily, festive, seasonal meals), food consumption, table manners – form a system of values aimed at preserving people's health, the main characteristics being fairness, balance, rationality, perfect harmony with the environment (unity with the environment), and continuity.

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Festive Meals in Turkish and Gagauz Cultures

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Holidays are essentially days of celebration, when people rejoice and celebrate. Religious and seasonal holidays are a set of traditions shaped by communities' religious beliefs, lifestyles, and livelihoods, each with its own unique rituals and symbolic meanings. Food occupies an important place within these rituals and symbolic meanings. Cultural elements such as cooking and storage methods, the times of year when food is prepared, the symbolic meanings attributed to food, and table manners and rules elevate food beyond a mere nutritional need. In other words, the cultural meaning of food is intertwined with lifestyles, traditions, and beliefs. Gathering around a table and the function of entertainment have a special significance for holiday and celebration traditions. In other words, food is an integral part of religious holidays and ceremonies, seasonal celebrations, and fertility rituals, alongside daily life and transitional periods; it is one of the first and most important determinants of the relationship communities establish with nature. This relationship has also led to the emergence of certain rituals and holidays associated with celebration and gratitude. Since ancient times, communities have celebrated the joy of reaching a new season, of survival, and of the survival of their crops and animals with these holidays. For this reason, holidays related to nature in particular have mythological roots. The relationship between holidays, celebrations, and food manifests itself in symbolic meanings such as gathering around a table, doing good deeds, and increasing abundance. Looking at the holidays celebrated in Gagauzia and Türkiye, it can be seen that both religious and seasonal holidays share commonalities related to food (a meal, food, or drink). This chapter will discuss the place and meaning of food in the holidays and celebrations in Türkiye and Gagauzia, as well as the similarities between the two cultures.

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The Gagauz Turks refer to their holidays and celebrations as *yortu*. In addition to religious and seasonal yortu, numerous yortu are also held for saints and sacred figures. The Great and Small Easter and Kolada Yortusu, celebrated during the New Year and Easter periods, are religious; on the other hand, Hıdırellez, Kasım Yotusu, Probajni Yortusu, and Canavar Yortuları are some of the seasonal holidays celebrated in the Gagauz region. In Türkiye, Ramadan and Eid al-Adha are religious holidays, while Nowruz, Hıdırellez, Çiğdem Day, and Controlled Mating Period (called *Koç Katımı* in Turkish, it is when rams are released into the flock) are seasonal holidays. Looking at both cultures, it can be said that these holidays and celebrations show many similarities in terms of their relationship with food.

In Türkiye, both Ramadan and Eid al-Adha are days that bring people together in addition to their religious functions, and these holidays, which involve gathering around a table, are also closely linked to food culture. The month of Ramadan, during which fasting takes place, and Eid al-Fitr, celebrated at the end of this month, stand out with foods specific to this month and holiday, as well as rituals associated with these foods. During Ramadan, nothing is eaten or drunk between the morning and evening calls to prayer. It is important for the whole family to eat together at *Iftar*, the evening meal when the call to prayer is heard, sometimes with neighbors and relatives. Similarly, the Eid breakfast on the first day of the holiday, at the end of the thirty-day period, is another important meal that brings the whole family together. The Eid al-Adha, celebrated two months and ten days after Ramadan, is also based on the ritual of sacrificing animals and distributing the meat to neighbors, relatives, and those in need. Preparations for meals during the holidays begin a few days before the holiday. Preparing meals and desserts for the holiday is one of the essential preparations before the holiday. During the holiday, meals are important not only for entertaining guests who come to the house but also for charity. Distributing candy and food to children during cemetery visits on the eve of the holiday or on the holiday itself, and preparing foods such as *pişi* on the eve of the holiday and distributing them to neighbors, are done with the belief that these charitable acts will reach the souls of deceased family members. In some regions, cemetery visits are made collectively, and after prayers are said at the highest point of the cemetery, the halva and bread brought along are eaten together. In some regions, people go to the cemetery on the eve of the holiday, pray, and leave candy on the graves. The reason for leaving sugar is to celebrate the holiday of the deceased, and this sugar is collected by children (Oğuz et al., 2011: 33, 42, 79, 84, 103). It is very important for the whole family to get together during holidays and especially to have holiday breakfasts together. Again, in some regions, a breakfast or dinner table is set up for the entire village or neighborhood, even including surrounding villages, and a "holiday meal" is served, especially by families who are well-off. In some regions, on the first day of Ramadan and Eid al-Adha, in

the morning, and in some regions after noon prayer, meals prepared in the homes of the neighborhood or villagers are brought to village halls or mosque courtyards to be eaten together, followed by holiday celebrations (Oğuz et al., 2011: 13, 33, 48). In short, food is both an essential part of the holiday for hosting guests within the household and serves a social function for the community, meaning it is prepared and eaten together by villagers or neighbors.

When it comes to holiday meals, while they may vary by region, many traditional dishes come to mind, such as soup, stuffed grape leaves, stew, rice, and pastries, but holiday desserts hold a special place. On the holiday, people wake up early, and the men of the house go to the holiday prayer. In some regions, eating dessert before prayers has become a tradition (Oğuz et al., 2011: 12). Eating dessert during holidays and offering sweets/candy is related to the fact that it is a day of celebration. During Ramadan Bayram, children go from house to house collecting sweets, and guests are offered sweets and desserts, which is why this holiday is also known as *Şeker Bayramı (Sugar Bayram)*. Therefore, desserts, especially traditional ones like baklava, are an important part of holiday offerings. During both holidays, desserts are always accompanied by foods like soup, sarma, and börek. During Eid al-Adha, in addition to these dishes, roast meat from the sacrificial animal is an essential part of the holiday meals.

The Gagauz people refer to their religious and traditional holidays as yortu. The term "celebrating a holiday" is used as "observing a yortu." Each of the sacred events and saints' days is celebrated as a yortu, and there are quite a number of them. Among these, the Kolada Yortu and Easter Yortu are given greater importance and are referred to as major yortus. Fasting is observed before these two yortus: the Kolada (New Year) fast and the Easter fast. New Year celebrations coincide with the end of a forty-day fast called the Kolada fast, which is observed before the start of the new year. During the fast, products such as meat, animal fats, milk and dairy products, eggs, and fish are not consumed. Throughout the fast, food must be plant-based. Only on certain days of the fast can fish, milk, and dairy products be consumed (I1, I2). On January 6, the end of this fast, the Feast of Kolada, the birthday of Jesus is celebrated. New Year celebrations begin on January 2, which is called "Ignat Feast." Known among the people as "Chicken Day" and "Poleznik," rituals are performed at home on this feast day with wheat, corn, koliva, and pita to ensure more fertile soil and an increase in the number of domestic animals. Koliva is a sweet dish similar to ashure, made with wheat, walnuts, sugar, and dried grapes; pita is a type of bread similar to flatbread. A coin or ring is placed inside the pita while it is being made, and after it is baked and sliced, it is believed that whoever gets the coin will be lucky that year, and whoever gets the ring will get married that year (Petrović, 2002: 22). On January 2, when New Year preparations begin, the first

guest to arrive at the house is always welcomed and served a meal. It is believed that if the year is fruitful, the person who arrives is lucky, and if it is not fruitful, they are unlucky (Petrovici, 2009: 164). During the kolada gezmesi held on the night of January 6, the hey hey gezmesi performed by young people during the New Year, and the surva gezmesi performed by children on the first day of the New Year (in all of which people go from house to house accompanied by rhymes and songs), those who go around ( ) are offered kovrik, a type of unsweetened, unleavened bread shaped like a bagel (simit, gevrek). The fact that kovrik is made more often on special days has led to it being known as a ritual bread. On New Year's Eve, young girls go to the spring three times to fetch water and use it to make pita bread. They place the pitas on the threshold, and it is believed that whichever order the family dog eats them in, that is the order in which the young girls will marry (Petrovici, 2009: 167).

Kolaç and kovrik are types of bread that are distributed during holidays. Similarly, paça, a dish made from chicken, rooster, and pork, is one of the ceremonial meals of the holidays (Petrovici, 2009: 145). As in Türkiye, it is observed that the Gagauz Turks also visit cemeteries during holidays and have food-related practices. Especially at Easter, those who come to the cemetery bring Easter bread and colored eggs with them and eat there. According to belief, the spirits of the dead are also fed. On Easter day, Easter bread and eggs are distributed to neighbors and relatives. Easter bread and eggs are left on the graves for the souls of the dead (Perçemli, 2011: 184).

Sarma, manca, various pastries made from dough, and foods such as bulgur are among the most important dishes of the feast. A dessert called *sütleş*, similar to Turkish sütlaç, is also made during the holidays (Güleç and Durlu Özkaya, 2022). The Gagauz also have different times for slaughtering animals. The Gagauz may slaughter the sacrifice on the day of the saints whose names they bear; on holidays such as Hıdırellez and Kasım Bayramı; when a baby turns one year old, when the construction of a house is completed, or so that the animals may be healthy (Petrovici, 2009: 185). On the day of the sacrifice, kurban kolacı is made. Kurban kolacı is a type of bread made on sacrifice days and distributed along with the sacrificed meat (I2). Similar to Türkiye, roasting is also seen in Gagauz cuisine and rituals. Unlike in Türkiye, because the Gagauz are Christian, roasting is done with pork as well as lamb and mutton. Kavurma, which is consumed in two forms, called don kaurma and sıcak kaurma, is a ceremonial dish prepared at weddings, celebrations, and feasts (Güleç and Durlu Özkaya, 2022).

In addition to the holidays surrounding New Year celebrations among the Gagauz, there are also holidays surrounding Easter and the rituals associated with them. According to the church calendar, Easter falls between mid-April and early May (Petrovici, 2009: 170). During Easter, a type of Easter bread called

kozanak is baked. On the ninth day of Easter, another holiday called "small Easter" is celebrated. On this day, when the dead are commemorated, lamb meat, liver, bulgur, and rice pudding are cooked. Food such as kozanak, eggs, wine, bulgur, and sugar are taken to the cemetery. After prayers are said, these foods are distributed. While distributing them, the phrase "… for the sake of his/her soul" is added to the name and sent to the souls of the dead. Then the table is set and everyone eats together (Petrovici 2009: 171). At Easter, chicken and eggs are placed on top of the kolaç bread. Eggs are placed on top because they symbolize rebirth and long life. At Easter, a table is always set for guests, whether they are hungry or full (I1). Again, during these holidays, dough dishes such as *piruşka* and *plaçinta*, made with yufka and various ingredients, are prepared (Petrovici, 2009: 138). Paça is a dish prepared both at Christmas and Easter. Christmas paça is made from pork to provide energy during winter after a long fast, while Easter paça is made from rooster (I3). After collective prayers in church on both holidays, communal meals are organized in homes with the participation of relatives and neighbors (Petroviç, 2002: 17).

In addition to religious holidays, the beginning and end of seasons, the start of agricultural production, the revival of nature, and harvest time carry symbolic meanings, especially in communities engaged in agriculture, and these transitions are celebrated with various rituals. The timing of seasonal holidays is based on the folk calendar, which is created according to the cycle of nature and the traditional calendar knowledge of the people. The folk calendar divides the year into "November Days" and "Hızır Days." This calendar considers the year to have two seasons: Summer and Winter. November Days begin on November 8, while Hızır Days begin on May 6 (Oğuz, 2014: 186). Accordingly, celebrations and rituals are observed at the beginning of both Hızır Days and November Days, both in Türkiye and among the Gagauz Turks. These seasonal festivals are days celebrated at turning points shaped by agricultural and livestock activities.

In Türkiye, holidays based on seasonal cycles include Hıdırellez, Nevruz, Çiğdem Day, and May Seventh (named "May Seventh" because celebrations are held on May 7 according to the Rumi calendar). The most well-known of these and the one shared with other Turkic communities is Hıdırellez. Food has a special place in Hıdırellez celebrations. Although it varies from region to region, fasting is observed the day before Hıdırellez, and sacrifices are made on Hıdırellez day. It is believed that the sacrifices made on Hıdırellez will bring abundance and prosperity. One of the most important food-related features of Hıdırellez is communal meals. Setting up tables that bring together every member of the community, preparing meals collectively, baking them in shared ovens, and everyone offering their neighbors and relatives a taste of what they have made shows that a culture of solidarity and gift-giving has developed around food. On Hıdırellez day, there are food-focused

practices believed to bring prosperity and healing. On Hıdırellez morning, the first milk of the sheep is placed at the door. If this milk curdles by evening, it is believed that Hızır touched the milk and that the year will be abundant and prosperous. On Hıdırellez, care is taken to eat green vegetables and white foods such as milk, eggs, and yoghurt. There is a tradition of eating lamb meat or lamb liver. It is believed that eating the first lamb of spring will bring health and healing. On Hıdırellez, it is believed that collecting flowers or herbs from the fields, boiling them, and drinking the water will cure all illnesses, and that washing with this water for forty days will rejuvenate and beautify. On Hıdırellez day, eggs are painted and cracked together to ensure a fruitful and abundant year. Meat pilaf, aşure, meat dishes made from sacrificed animals, and kavurma (fried meat) and helva (sweet) are prepared. In some regions, hedik is made from wheat, which represents fertility, and distributed. On Hıdırellez night, the mouths of food and drink containers are left open so that Hızır will come and bring fertility (Ocak, 1999; Ölçer Özünel et al., 2017: 35, 53, 191).

Hıdırellez, one of the most important seasonal festivals celebrated by the Gagauz, coincides with St. George's Day. As in other regions, Hıdırellez marks the beginning of summer for the Gagauz and heralds a period of revival that lasts until November. Men named Georgiy also celebrate their name day on this day. Sacrificing animals is considered important among the Gagauz people during Hıdırellez. The Gagauz people usually sacrifice a lamb. Prayers are recited before the sacrificial ritual, and the priest reads over the salt and blows on it, then salts the lamb's tongue with this salt. The blood of the sacrificed lamb is not thrown away; instead, crosses are drawn with this blood in various places around the house. It is believed that this protects against evil spirits. The unusable parts and remains of the slaughtered lamb are buried in a pit in the courtyard (Güngör and Argunşah, 1991: 37). On Hıdırellez, the Gagauz prepare banquet tables (the first lamb of spring) and eat together with family, friends, and neighbors (Güleç and Durlu Özkaya, 2022: 470-473). The slaughtered animal is stuffed with bulgur and cooked. This meal is distributed or eaten together. Home-cooked meals such as bulgur pilaf, dolma, and sarma are also prepared (I4, I5). As in Türkiye, it is believed that plants gathered on this day have healing properties (I1).

The beginning of November, when winter starts according to the folk calendar, is celebrated in both Türkiye and Gagauzia. At the beginning of November, Koç Katımı Festivities are held. Rams, which have been kept separate from the sheep and fed and cared for throughout the summer, are painted by the shepherd with special paints and unique patterns and join the flock with festivities accompanied by drums and pipes. Preparations begin early in the morning on the day of the ram joining. The rams that will join the flocks are painted and decorated by the village youth. The women prepare foods such as börek, çörek, yufka, keşkek, and kavurga

at home for the festival. In addition, yoghurt is churned in small pots the day before the ram joining. Once all these preparations are complete, everyone gathers in the village square with their rams. The village elder recites prayers and gives permission, after which the rams join the flocks. The flocks are then entrusted to the shepherd (Oğuz et al., 2020: 180). There are also certain beliefs and prohibitions related to the breeding period. On that day, it is not good to give salt and fire to neighbors from home. Starting two months before lambing, giving neighbors dough starter, salt, fire, or wool combs is considered unlucky, and it is believed that if given, it will harm the animals. Therefore, these prohibitions continue until the lambs are born (Boratav, 2015: 242, 246). The 100th day following the ram mating is also the 100th day of the lambs' descent into the womb, and on the 100th day, the *saya gezme ceremony* is held. The Turkish word "saya" means "hundred." Saya Gezme is held every year fifty days before the sheep lamb, between February 21 and 28. The Saya Gezme ceremony is a nighttime ceremony led by the shepherd. During this ceremony, the 100th day of the sheep's pregnancy is celebrated with the joy of the proverb "We've reached 100 and arrived at the plain." (meaning that the harsh, cold days of winter are over and the fertile spring season has begun). The main purpose of the Saya Gezme tradition is to wish for abundance and fertility (Oğuz, 2014: 187). For the Gagauz, November 8, which is both the Feast of November and St. Dmitriy's Day, marks the end of agricultural work and the beginning of winter. The animals that went up to the highlands on Hıdırellez return in November. Sacrifices are also made on the Feast of November (I1, I6). To restart agricultural activities, one hundred days are counted after the November Festival, and sowing begins again with the saying, "One hundred and ten, go to the head of the field" (Petroviç, 2002: 199). Sacrifices are also made during the November Festival, as in Hıdırellez (Informant-1). This is because animals return from the pastures during the November holiday, and sacrifices are made during this holiday to protect the health of the animals during the winter (Petrovici, 2009: 175). The day before the holiday, people prepare at the church with foods such as homemade bread, wheat, meat, and vegetables (Petroviç, 2002: 20). In addition to the meals prepared for religious holidays during these seasonal celebrations, the Gagauz people also make products such as hot roast meat, pita (pide), gözleme, kıvırma, and bazlama, as is done in Türkiye.

When examining the festivals celebrated in both cultures, similarities can be observed, particularly in traditional celebrations tied to the folk calendar, where the purpose and timing of the celebrations are similar. Many examples, such as celebrating the arrival of spring according to the folk calendar, performing certain rituals at the beginning of winter, and carrying out certain practices to ensure the fertility of animals and crops, are related to the fact that the basic economic activities of both communities are based on agriculture and animal husbandry.

Common beliefs and lifestyles have given rise to shared rituals and practices. The meals served during both religious and seasonal holidays serve important functions such as hosting guests, gathering around a table, sharing happiness, meeting and socializing, strengthening bonds of friendship, neighborliness, and kinship, enjoying time together, visiting the deceased or sick, and helping one another. It can be said that community members come together to eat and embrace these functions. This shows that the relationship between holidays and food has various social functions and also provides an opportunity for socialization.

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Cultural Spaces in Gastronomic Tourism: The Examples of Türkiye And Moldova

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Gastronomic tourism is a type of tourism that combines food and culture. Tourists traveling for the purpose of eating and drinking, while also recognizing and prioritizing the traditional culinary culture of the region they are visiting, suggests that gastronomic tourism is a subcategory of cultural tourism. However, today, trips motivated primarily by eating and drinking, such as tasting food and beverages, observing production processes or participating in them, learning about traditional culinary culture, participating in food and beverage-related events, and visiting local or national businesses known for their food or beverages, define the boundaries of gastronomic tourism. In addition to tasting food and beverages, learning about the region's traditional culinary culture, participating in its cultural context, and visiting institutions or organizations such as food and beverage museums are also among the different applications of this type of tourism. These different areas also show that gastronomic tourism is open to multifaceted evaluation. While narratives related to food, history, and culture come first, it can be said that applications that contribute to the promotion of traditional foods and the development of the region, such as advertising and marketing, as well as food and beverage-related festivals or events, also come to the fore. On the other hand, gastronomic tourism also highlights the importance of individuals such as cooks, chefs, or masters, the schools or individuals who train them, and places such as establishments where traditional dishes are prepared or served. Venues contribute significantly to the creation, promotion, and preservation of traditional culinary culture. This study will first highlight the role of traditional culinary culture in gastronomic tourism and then examine the impact of cultural

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venues on gastronomic tourism. Subsequently, it will focus on the practices of venues where traditional culinary culture is presented, experienced, or taught, such as gastronomy museums, intangible cultural heritage museums, ecomuseums, gastronomy houses, training centers, or local businesses. In this context, the research will include cultural spaces visited during field research conducted in Türkiye between September 20 and September 28, 2021, and in Moldova between May 22 and May 29, 2022, where traditional culinary culture is exhibited. Based on data obtained from interviews with chefs, masters, or staff at these venues, as well as with visitors and local people, an assessment will be made regarding the sustainability of both traditional culinary culture and gastronomic tourism. Finally, applications that can be implemented in Türkiye and Moldova in the context of cultural venues for gastronomic tourism will be evaluated. Depending on the needs of the countries, it will be recommended to establish businesses, workshops, and gastronomy museums that are open to production and training or to create gastronomy routes.

Gastronomic Tourism

A region's traditional culinary culture encompasses not only traditional foods and beverages, but also cooking techniques, presentation styles, table settings, special holiday preparations, kitchen tools and utensils, seasonal storage methods, and even the oral cultural products generated during these processes. From this perspective, it showcases both the variety of food and beverages and attracts tourists with its unique context. The article titled "What is food tourism?" also mentions that it represents different perspectives within the host-guest structure of tourism and states that gastronomic tourism is related to the place of food in the host's culture (Ellis et al., 2018: 252-253). This approach directly links gastronomic tourism to traditional culinary culture. Today, the increasing number of tourists who travel with the motivation to eat and drink, who are curious about traditional culinary cultures and who want to experience them shows that gastronomic tourism, also known as culinary tourism, food tourism, tasting tourism, gourmet tourism, or flavor tourism, is on the rise. Research also indicates that gastronomic tourism has become well established within contemporary tourism management and has begun to form the basis of many policies and industry strategies and agendas (including the Common Agricultural Policy, the European Region of Gastronomy network, and UNESCO's Gastronomy Cities program) (De Jong et al., 2018: 132). The inclusion of Gastronomy in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network also draws attention to a creative food tourism industry, targeting food assets such as food and culinary culture and food heritage. It is expected that in a destination with this title, the local community will be more aware of the opportunity to use and develop their food culture and heritage as a tourism product that will be

reflected in the food tourism experience (Park et al., 2023: 573). This rise, on the other hand, is bringing different application examples to life and opening up new approaches to this type of tourism for discussion.

Gastronomic tourism, which initially encompassed only trips made for the purpose of eating, now offers content that takes into account the cultural context and production processes. Elena Ignatov and Stephan Smith have noted that regionally produced food and beverages can provide an experience when used to tell a story or convey certain aspects of the culture of the visited region. In addition, they noted that it also provides information about the people, culture, traditions, and identity of the place visited (Ignatov & Smith, 2006: 238). Barbara Santich stated that gastronomic tourism increasingly emphasizes production and allows visitors to experience the realities of production (Santich, 2004: 21). With its new areas, gastronomic tourism is being rethought in terms of experience, creativity, storytelling, and production, and is being evaluated with cultural characteristics taken into account.

The places associated with this approach are integrated with food in two ways. The first is the region where the food originates. The geographical location of the region, its climate conditions, the products grown there, and even the cultivation methods ensure the production of traditional food. This relationship, which forms the basis of gastronomic tourism, also points to the importance of spatial sustainability. It also creates opportunities for tourists to observe the production stages and participate in these processes. Colin Michael Hall and Liz Sharples have highlighted the spatial fixity of the product as one of the critical factors in food tourism. They stated that tourists must visit production sites in order to consume local products and become food tourists, and emphasized that food tourism is, in essence, the consumption and production of the local area (Hall and Sharples 2004: 5-6). The second part of this integration encompasses cultural spaces that are directly open to or produced for traditional food enthusiasts. Öcal Oğuz states that individuals with different cultural attitudes in other cultural spaces can easily integrate into the culture being preserved in these places, which maintain their characteristic and effectiveness as cultural spaces, and behave as if they belong to this space, even if only temporarily (Oğuz, 2007: 32). Gastronomy museums, traditional cuisine sections of intangible cultural heritage museums and ecomuseums, gastronomy houses, or local businesses where traditional culinary culture is presented, experienced, or taught can be given as examples of these cultural spaces. Within the scope of this field research, the Ankara Museum of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which operates as part of the Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University Turkish Folklore Application and Research Center, the Afyonkarahisar Gastronomy House, the Afyonkarahisar Gastronomy Museum, the Gaziantep

Pistachio Museum, Gaziantep Museum Academy, Gaziantep Culinary Arts Center, Gaziantep Emine Göğüş Culinary Museum, Gaziantep Gastronomy and Agricultural Education Center, Hatay Gastronomy House and from Moldova, Eco-Resort Butuceni, Hanul Lui Hanganu, Casa Parinteasca, Vinuri de Komrat, Gagauz Sofrası, and Shashlychnaya.

Gastronomy Museums

Gastronomy museums are among the foremost venues providing information and promoting traditional culinary culture. Nina Levent and Irina Mihalache have stated that museums respond to the public's current interest in food by integrating food displays, programs, and eating into their practices. They also point out that these new museum practices are increasingly convincing more and more visitors that food is worthy of serious museological interest (Levent & Mihalache, 2017: 3). In these museums, referred to as gastronomy or culinary museums, a wide variety of elements are typically displayed through reenactments, ranging from the region's culinary diversity to its beverage culture, from table settings to kitchen tools and utensils, from the preparation stages of dishes to the oral cultural products used at the table, or from special occasion dining customs to the region's seasonal food preparations. Additionally, museums that focus on a single topic and provide information about the history, production, and use of foods and beverages such as chocolate, nuts, tea, ice cream, and olive oil are also considered gastronomy museums. Yağmur Savaşkan has stated that gastronomy museums are important agents of gastronomic tourism (Savaşkan, 2021: 62). İpek İtır Can and Hilal Ağcakaya also mention that these museums offer the opportunity to observe local foods and beverages together, examine recipes, and carry significant gastronomy tourism potential for gastro-tourists—people who travel to taste new flavors (Can & Ağcakaya, 2019: 793). The museums in Gaziantep, which joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of Gastronomy in 2016, and Afyonkarahisar, which joined in 2019, can be examined in this context.

The Gaziantep Emine Göğüş Culinary Museum, opened in 2008, displays regional foods and beverages, cooking techniques, winter preparation practices, spices used in cooking, and special occasion meals. The museum also collaborates with the Culinary Arts Education Center, known as Musem Academy, located in the same courtyard. The Pistachio Museum, which opened in 2018 and attracts attention with its pistachio-shaped architecture, focuses on pistachio cultivation and harvesting, their use at the table, and their place in Gaziantep cuisine through mechatronic sculptures. It is stated that this museum, which tells the story of pistachios known as Antep pistachios, is a popular destination for visitors to the city in the context of gastronomic tourism (I16). The Afyonkarahisar Gastronomy Museum, which opened in 2021, features wax figure displays (I14). This museum

consists of the Poppy Seed Room, which displays products made from poppy seeds and the stages of their production; the Daily Life Room, where traditional dishes served during transitional periods are presented on a floor table; the Neighborhood Bakery; potato-filled village bread baked in the oven; the Regional Cuisine Room; kitchen tools and utensils; the Lokum Room, where the making of Turkish delight is demonstrated; and the Sucuk Room. The exhibitions and seasonal events in these museums provide opportunities for both city residents to continue their traditional culinary culture and tourists to learn about this culture. Kübranur Soruç also emphasizes that gastronomy museums are one of the important areas in sustaining culinary culture and passing it on to future generations (Soruç, 2021: 22).

In Moldova, there is no gastronomy museum, but these presentations are covered by complex structures that combine traditional cuisine sections of museums, local businesses, or different facilities and applications such as hotels, restaurants, and museums. Jeou-Shyan Horng and Chen-Tsang Tsai have pointed out that culinary tourism destinations need to make the best use of the heterogeneity within their own resources, including facilities, activities, events, and organizations (Horng & Tsai, 2012: 52). The examples in Moldova also effectively reflect this diversity. For example, the Casa Parinteaska museum complex, which reflects traditional architecture, continues its activities with its guesthouse and handicraft museum. It also offers Moldova's traditional cuisine to visitors through its restaurant and demonstrates the preparation stages through organized training sessions. On the other hand, it also continues its activities in researching and collecting recipes (I5). Gagauz Sofrası, on the other hand, is described as an ethno-village and ethno-tourist complex, offering a context where visitors can feel like residents of the village and experience Gagauz culture and rural life (I8). The facility includes a hotel with modern or traditionally furnished rooms, an ethnographic museum that also narrates Gagauz culinary culture, a wine cellar, a traditional Gagauz cuisine restaurant, and a wedding hall where traditional weddings are held. The facility serves traditional Gagauz dishes and demonstrates rituals such as the salt and bread offering during guest reception, while also organizing educational sessions on traditional cuisine.

Traditional Culinary Culture in Museums of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Ecomuseums

Among other types of museums where traditional culinary culture is exhibited and kept alive are museums of intangible cultural heritage and ecomuseums. The Kitchen section of the Ankara Museum of Intangible Cultural Heritage, affiliated with the Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University Turkish Folklore Application and Research Center, explains winter preparations and storage culture, establishes the

relationship between cuisine and oral culture, and provides information about the food and beverages inscribed by Türkiye on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity or List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. In addition, workshops held periodically at the museum enable participants to engage in hands-on activities and bring together different generations, thereby supporting cultural transmission. In ecomuseums, which use a specific area as a museum space and actively involve the local community, traditional culinary culture is preserved through exhibitions, educational activities, and the sale of products. The Eco Resort Butuceni, which does not define itself as an ecomuseum but operates in a similar manner in terms of its structure, operation, staff, and content, can also be examined in this context. The facility, which consists of a restaurant, hotel, zoo and traditional culinary culture and education areas, offers a context where weaving and traditional children's games are kept alive and traditional architecture, agriculture and livestock culture are conveyed. Workshops on baking bread using a traditional oven, preparing traditional pastries, and making cookies are held, and various food and beverage workshops related to traditional culinary culture are organized for children. It is stated that only traditional foods and beverages are served in the restaurant section of the facility and in the workshops, and that these are prepared in the same way as they were learned from grandparents (I2).

Museums displaying traditional foods and beverages create an expectation among tourists that these foods will be cooked traditionally and served for tasting within the museum or in its restaurants without any alterations. This expectation requires strict adherence to traditional culinary culture and the use of traditional recipes. Furthermore, private businesses that prepare traditional cuisine take care to safeguard the original form of the cuisine they offer locally. This approach also contributes to the sustainability of venues related to traditional culinary culture. Sangkyun Kim, Eerang Park and Min Xu point out that for a food museum restaurant to differentiate itself from other general and even local specialty restaurants, the local or regional cuisine, recipes, and dishes served in the restaurant should be authentic, representing the original taste, texture, and appearance, rather than combining adaptations (2020: 8). For example, at Eco Resort Butuceni, traditional dishes are still prepared in the same way as they were in the past (I1), and at the Casa Parinteaska Museum, recipes for dishes passed down from ancestors are collected and strictly adhered to (I5). At Hanganus Guesthouse, it is stated that Moldovan dishes not on the menu can be prepared upon request by tourists, but no changes are made to these dishes and traditional recipes are used (I3). It is stated that cities included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of Gastronomy, as in the example of Gaziantep, pay more attention to preserving traditional culinary culture and preparing dishes according to tradition in their institutions or businesses (I15).

It is even emphasized that the preparation of traditional cuisines should be the same everywhere (I13).

Gastronomy House and Traditional Culinary Arts Center

Establishments such as Gastronomy Houses and Traditional Culinary Arts Centers, which showcase examples of traditional culinary culture, take care to preserve the original forms of food and beverages, just like museums. For example, the menu of the Hatay Gastronomy House, which opened in 2019, features dishes from Hatay, and it continues its work on researching the recipes of traditional dishes, preparing them in accordance with the original recipes, and adding them to the menu. In addition, it ensures the training of new chefs through its Culinary Schools (I18). The Afyonkarahisar Gastronomy House, which opened in 2021, offers traditional dishes from the province of Afyonkarahisar in an original way (I14). The Gaziantep Culinary Arts Center, which began operating in 2017, continues its activities with the aim of promoting flavors unique to Gaziantep and is operated to introduce local products to the local population and tourists. Emphasizing "From the Hands of Masters," the center also works to train professional staff (I17). On the other hand, it can be said that private businesses are open to creating new products using local ingredients. At the Şehr'i Frig facility, a local business in Afyonkarahisar, new products are being designed using poppy seeds native to the region, and poppy seed baklava, poppy seed ogmaç soup, and poppy seed cream called Haşhaşella are being made (I12). In this context, it can be said that, in terms of gastronomic tourism, local businesses are more open to producing new foods and beverages using products specific to the region, but museums and gastronomic houses in particular aim to produce foods and beverages in the form of traditional culinary culture.

It can be said that the most important factor enabling production to continue in this way in places associated with traditional culinary culture, such as gastronomy museums offering restaurant services, gastronomy houses, training centers, or local businesses, is the chefs, cooks, or masters. These individuals are also among the main attractions for tourists in the context of gastronomic tourism, drawing them in as much as traditional dishes. There are examples of tours planned specifically for cooks, chefs, or masters. These individuals are trained through the formal education system, vocational courses, master-apprentice relationships, or traditional education received from their families. For example, Galina, the cook at Hanganus Guesthouse in Moldova, where traditional dishes are prepared, cooks using the knowledge and methods she learned from her mother and grandmothers (I4). Mrs. Maria and Mrs. Tatiana, chefs at Shashlychnaya Restaurant, also cook their dishes the way they learned from their mothers (I 10, I11). Elizayada Papuva, chef at Vinuri de Comrat, which also serves traditional dishes, studied gastronomy for three years in Chisinau and took courses on traditional cuisine (I7). Kira Dragni, who cooks at

Gagauz Sofrası, learned her trade by starting work at an early age (I9). Cuma Kaplan, who also works as a chef at the Culinary Arts Center in Türkiye, and Hamza Kalkan, President of the Professional Chefs Association, were trained through the master-apprentice relationship (I17, I14). Nevzat Kalkan, who works as a chef in Şehr-i Frig, was also trained through a master-apprentice relationship and has trained twelve apprentices himself (I19). Mr. Süleyman Demirel, who works as a kitchen chef at the Hatay Gastronomy House, graduated from the Culinary Arts department and has also received training in traditional cuisine (I18). Mrs. Neslihan Yıldırım, Professional Culinary Training Chef at Musem Academy, learned her profession from her father and later developed her skills through professional training (I20). In places where the traditional culinary cultures of Türkiye and Moldova are kept alive, there are cooks, chefs, or masters who continue to cook in establishments either through the education they received in schools, through vocational courses or master-apprentice relationships, or through what they learned from their families. These individuals also ensure the training of new cooks, chefs, or masters.

Training, Workshops and Courses

On the other hand, these venues also facilitate encounters between representatives of tradition and tourists through daily training sessions, workshops, or seasonal courses. These practices give foreign tourists the opportunity to learn about and experience the culture, while supporting local tourists or the people living in the region to keep their cultures alive. These practices highlight the production and cultural context aspects of gastronomic tourism. Greg Richards also points out that tourists are increasingly eager to learn and increase their cultural capital by creating it rather than just consuming it. He states that gastronomic holidays are an important aspect of the creative tourism sector that has emerged for this reason, because in this type of tourism, tourists can learn how to cook, learn about the ingredients used and how they are grown, and understand how culinary traditions came about (Richards, 2003: 16-17). Mrs. Maria D. Alvarez, on the other hand, drew attention to urban dwellers in this regard, noting that cultural tourism products should no longer be produced and marketed solely for tourists, but should also be considered in a broader context that includes improving the quality of life in the city (Alvarez, 2010: 172). In Moldova and Türkiye, educational programs, workshops or courses are planned in museums or restaurants showcasing traditional culinary culture, with local and foreign tourists or the local community participating in these activities.

For example, in Moldova, educational programs on traditional culinary culture at the Casa Parintească Museum attract participants not only from tourists but also from neighboring villages. Furthermore, people from these villages who participate in the educational programs can turn what they learn into a business by preparing

and selling the dishes they learn to make (I6). Traditional culinary education is provided regularly at the Gagauz Sofrası, and school groups, Gagauz people living in other cities or countries, and tourists participate in these educational programs (I8). Traditional culinary training is also organized for visitors at the Hanganus Guesthouse, and it is stated that these training sessions are a feature of the facility (I3). In Türkiye, training is provided by museums, gastronomy houses, and centers established solely for the purpose of providing culinary training, such as the Musem Academy, which works in conjunction with the culinary museum. For example, Musem Academy offers professional training in cooking and pastry making, as well as courses on traditional Gaziantep cuisine, including soups, main dishes, salads, appetizers, sauces, and desserts. These courses attract both individuals seeking to specialize in the field and the local community (I20). The Ankara Museum of Intangible Cultural Heritage also organizes workshops such as the Winter Preparations Workshop, where seasonal preparations such as pickling, cutting linguine, and drying peppers are carried out, and the Traditional Sherbet Making Workshop, where sherbet made from pomegranate, basil, and cinnamon is prepared. These workshops are mostly attended by people from Ankara or young people living in Ankara.

In conclusion, it can be said that cultural spaces that enable the production and continuation of traditional culinary culture are as important as food and beverages in gastronomic tourism. These spaces include kitchens, dining areas, or natural areas where winter preparations can be made and stored, and where communities can come together to practice traditional culinary culture. Cultural spaces opened to or created for traditional food enthusiasts should also be considered in this context. These spaces serve tourists through local or national businesses, organized food festivals or events, sales areas, food and beverage museums, gastronomy houses and education or workshop centers. Today, the disappearance of natural areas due to rapid urbanization and the inability of younger generations to learn this culture from their families make these spaces functional for the local community as well as tourists. Intangible cultural heritage museums, eco-museums, and gastronomy houses or local businesses, especially gastronomy museums, can be considered in this regard through the training and participatory activities they organize. In Türkiye, the Gaziantep Emine Göğüş Culinary Museum, the Culinary Arts Education Center, the Pistachio Museum, the Afyonkarahisar Gastronomy Museum and the Gastronomy Houses are institutions and organizations that display, safeguard or transmit traditional culinary culture for both tourists and the local community. In Moldova, there is no dedicated gastronomy museum, but this need is met by museums with traditional cuisine sections, local businesses, or complex structures combining different facilities and practices such as hotels, restaurants, and museums, such as Casa Parinteaska and Gagauz Sofrası.

In Türkiye and Moldova, these cultural spaces ensure the authentic safeguarding of traditional foods and beverages and support the safeguarding of ingredients, traditional production methods, and diversity. Museums or restaurants showcasing traditional culinary culture in both countries organize training sessions, workshops, or courses, which local and foreign tourists or local residents can participate in. Training programs also create opportunities for training new cooks, chefs, or masters. In terms of businesses, the production of new foods and beverages using products specific to the region is also possible. In addition to these applications, as exemplified by the Gaziantep Gastronomy and Agricultural Education Center in Türkiye, increasing the number of gastronomy museums, houses, and education centers, as well as facilities that allow visitors to observe production processes, participate in these processes, receive training, or safeguard regional product diversity and create gastronomy routes can contribute to both the safeguarding of traditional culinary diversity and the development of gastronomy tourism. In Moldova, opening gastronomy museums and houses, in addition to museum examples in complex structures and local businesses, can increase the number and quality of cultural spaces related to traditional culinary culture, revitalize gastronomy tourism and support tourist mobility.

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Informants

I1: Natalia Gradinaru, 43 years old, Scientific Secretary of the Institute of Cultural Heritage, Moldova.

I2: Stella Hanım, 37 years old, Head Chef at Eco Resort Butuceni, Butuceni.

I3: Emilya Hanganus, 60 years old, Hanganus Guesthouse Manager and Head Chef, Lalova Village.

I4: Galina, 60 years old, Hanganus Chef, Lalova Village.

I5: Tatiana Popa, 81 years old, Founder of the Casa Parinteaska Museum, Moldova.

I6: Tatyana Hanım, Retired Kindergarten Teacher, Palanka.

I7: Elizayada Papuva, 50 years old, Chef, Komrat.

I8: Anna Statova, 59 years old, Owner of Gagauz Sofrası, Kongaz.

I9: Kira Dragni, 48 years old, Chef at Gagauz Sofrası, Komrat.

I10: Mrs. Maria, 62 years old, Chef at Shashlychnaya Restaurant, Avdarma.

I11: Tatiana Kazmalı, 65 years old, Chef at Shashlychnaya Restaurant, Avdarma.

I12: Süleyman Aşkın, 40 years old, Deputy General Manager of Şehr'i Frig Facility, Afyon.

I13: Fatih Bıyıklı, 32 years old, Lecturer and Project and Gastronomy Advisor to the Mayor, Afyon.

I14: Hamza Kalkan, 40 years old, Chef, President of the Professional Chefs Association, Afyon.

I15: Mehmet Ünlü, 52 years old, Agricultural Engineer and Food Branch Manager, Gaziantep.

I16: Mustafa Kalkan, 37 years old, Pistachio Museum Guide, Gaziantep.

I17: Cuma Kaplan, 34 years old, Head Chef at the Culinary Arts Center, Gaziantep.

I18: Süleyman Demirel, 29 years old, Head Chef at the Hatay Gastronomy House, Hatay.

I19: Nevzat Kalkan, 34 years old, Chef at Şehr'i Frig, Afyon.

I20: Neslihan Yıldırım, 44 years old, Professional Cooking Instructor Chef at Musem Academy, Gaziantep.

The Shared Culinary Culture of Türkiye and Moldova and the Perspective of the Creative Cities Network

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The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), which provides cities with the opportunity to channel their own talents and energies, is a global program that raises awareness worldwide, promotes transformation, and supports innovative approaches. Awareness-raising activities carried out under the UNESCO Creative Cities Network are implemented through various means at both the local and international levels with the aim of safeguarding cultural heritage, supporting creative industries, and increasing cultural participation in society. Launched by UNESCO in 2004, this program brings together cities from various countries with different incomes, capacities, wealth, and populations. These cities are designated in one of the following fields: literature, film, music, crafts and folk art, design, gastronomy, and media arts. With the latest additions in 2023, there are now 350 cities worldwide: 52 in literature, 49 in design, 56 in gastronomy, 26 in film, 75 in music, 66 in crafts and folk art, and 26 in media arts.[1] There are 8 cities from Türkiye registered in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Three of these are in the field of gastronomy, two in music, two in crafts and folk art, and one in design (URL-1). Cities have recorded the most elements in the field of gastronomy, following music, crafts, and folk arts. The fact that eating and drinking are basic necessities and therefore exist and are rich in almost every culture; and the aspects of being a gastronomy city, such as supporting local products and production, reflecting cultural richness, revitalizing urban areas, and providing tourism and brand value, have led cities to express their desire to join the Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy. Considering the reasons for including gastronomy as an area of the Creative Cities Network, it can be said that the program's focus on the

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1 The data in this study are based on field research conducted between 2021 and 2023 and the author's observations. Numerical data may be updated over time.

role of cultural and creative industries in the sustainable development of cities is effective. The culinary techniques, ingredient selection, and presentation methods encompassed by gastronomy -through which restaurants, chefs, and cooks leverage their creativity to provide dining experiences- are revitalizing the city's economy. The interviewee emphasizes that combining traditional cuisine with innovation fosters culinary culture: "As long as it doesn't lose its core value, I believe innovative products will help us advance more quickly in the gastronomy industry and this isn't just something we're doing; it's happening in Gaziantep too. We discuss this among ourselves… We're also in favor of incorporating some innovation." (I7).

Gaziantep (2015), Hatay (2017), and Afyonkarahisar (2019) in Türkiye are cities registered in the Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy. Although the Republic of Moldova does not have a city included in the Creative Cities Network program, in 2020, Chișinău joined the Learning Cities Network (URL-2). The similarities between the culinary cultures of Gagauzia and Türkiye demonstrate the potential for Gagauz culinary culture to be included in the Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy. This study examines the role of shared culinary culture elements between Gagauzia and Türkiye in creating the image of a creative city by showing the process of Türkiye's gastronomic cities joining the network, its impact, and subsequent developments. The data used in this paper were obtained from field research conducted between September 19-29, 2021, in Türkiye (Afyonkarahisar, Ankara, Antalya, Gaziantep, Hatay, İstanbul) and between May 22-26, 2022, in Moldova (Avdarma, Beşalma, Çadır-Lunga, Komrat, Kongaz). The main objective of the Creative Cities Network program is to support creativity and encourage international cooperation.

The relationship between creative cities and culture is discussed at the annual meetings of the Creative Cities Network. At the 2015 meeting, it was discussed that member cities should provide case studies, data, and analyses on projects, practices, or policies that emphasize the role of culture in sustainable urban development to UNESCO, and contribute as effectively as possible to the preparation of the Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development. At the annual meeting in Sweden on September 16, 2016, it was stated that the focus would be on developing exchange, interaction, and cooperation among member cities to increase the mobility of artists in the cultural and creative sectors in the coming years and to make creativity an important pillar of sustainable urban development. As can be understood from the agendas of these meetings, Creative Cities are progressing towards building and strengthening their unique identities and developing cooperation, based on the safeguarding of cultural heritage.

The focus on cultural heritage at annual meetings was more pronounced at the 2022 meeting, held after the global coronavirus pandemic. UNESCO has highlighted

the healing role of intangible cultural heritage during the global coronavirus pandemic within the framework of the Creative Cities Network program (URL-3). Inclusion in the Creative Cities Network program for gastronomy requires the use of healthy and natural products, collaboration with chefs and artisans, application of traditional cooking techniques, establishment of workshops, employment opportunities, and clear demonstration of the city's influence on gastronomy development. It also involves highlighting gastronomy's role in the city's historical and cultural growth, organizing events such as festivals and congresses, and transmiting knowledge and skills through various types of education. The answers to these criteria, as Cheng Xiaomin states, describe what a gastronomy city is; they do not explain how to build one (2017: 55-67). This study examines best practices from Türkiye's creative cities in the field of gastronomy; it focuses on the role that the richness of Gagauz culture and shared culinary elements with Türkiye will play in shaping the image of a gastronomy city. Looking at the criteria, it is seen that one of the most effective activities in promoting the city and developing tourism is gastronomy festivals. The "Wine Festival" is held in Gagauz Yeri during the first two weeks of November. People from every village in Gagauzia participate in this festival, bringing food and drinks with them. Attracting as many participants as Hıdırellez and held for at least 15 years, the Wine Festival is celebrated between November 4 and 8, as this is the period when fresh wines are made in Gagauzia. Not only drinks but also food is promoted here. In addition to the wine factories, people living in the villages where the festival takes place prepare dishes unique to their region at home and bring them to the festival. For example, if it is held in Avdarma, the people usually prepare and bring Avdarma lamb and serve it to the participants (I11).

In 2003, a commission was established by a decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to officially designate and celebrate "National Wine Day." Thanks to the work of this commission, January 13 is celebrated as National Wine Day every year (I4). The first Ethno-Gastronomy Festival, held in 2012, takes place every September in Moldova to promote pumpkin, traditional foods, and farmers. The organization and continuation of celebrations related to gastronomy, such as the Strawberry Festival (I11), the Ethno-Gastronomy Festival, and the Apple Festival, are important evaluation factors for the Creative Cities Network. The Gastro Afyon International Tourism and Flavor Festival, held in Afyonkarahisar, Türkiye, since 2018, has been registered with the Creative Cities Network. Its impact on strengthening both national and international cooperation and the city's visibility in the field of gastronomy has been decisive in the city's registration with the Creative Cities Network.

According to Hamza Kalkan, after Afyonkarahisar received the Creative City title, the festival's network of participants expanded, and invitations were sent

to 35 cities from different countries registered in the network to participate in the next festival (I7). Other Creative Cities include Hatay with the Künefe Festival (July 21-23), Payas Caravanserai Festival (September 1), Iskenderun Fish Sandwich Festival (March 28), International Erzin Citrus Festival (November), Erzin Olive and Olive Oil Festival (October 15-16), Hatay Water Flea Festival (October 14-16), Akçalı Egg Festival (March 30), Local Products Fair (April 18-23), Kırıkhan Liver Festival (May 14), and Dörtyol Food Festival are held periodically. Additionally, the Regional Meze Competition (2013, 2017), Golden Hat Competition (fish-themed, 2016), Local Desserts Competition (2017), and Local Soups Competition (2017) are organized (UNESCO Creative Cities Network 2017 Call For Applications, 2017: 7-8). In Hatay, experts from different countries come together at the Expo, which is held with the themes of culture, gastronomy, history, endemic and medicinal aromatic plants. There are two Expo areas in Hatay, one in the center of Antakya and one in İskenderun. In these areas, experts from outside Türkiye introduce their cities' cuisines. Within these areas, chef training and experience areas are created as part of the gastronomy village and gastronomy academy (I6). As Gözde Tekin states, an image is not only a cultural or historical person, place, object, music, or food, but can also be a festival, celebration, holiday, or show that is synonymous with the city (2020: 155). In this context, the Wine Festivals hold significant potential for developing the city's image of Gagauz Yeri.

In Gagauz culture, wine is an important part of daily life, transitional periods, and rituals. "The day before Ispas (the day of Jesus' ascension to heaven), people visit graves, pour water or wine on the grave, and leave food" (Iusıumbeli, 2008: 238). Wine is stored in wooden barrels and in the cool room of the house called "maaza," which is also used for dried meat, cheese, oil, pickles, and fruit-like foods (Yoloğlu, 1996). In addition, the world's largest wine cellars, Mileştii Mici and Cricova, are located in Moldova (I4). The best wines in Gagauzia are produced from vineyards in the south of Comrat, known as the "black earth" (Erden et al. 1999). According to Ana-Maria Pancu and Hava Selçuk, Gagauzia is known for its wine production and wine quality, and this success has been proven by various awards on international platforms (2023: 210). The cellars where wine is produced and stored are not used solely for commercial purposes. Even today, every homeowner in Gagauz villages has a cellar, and in the autumn, after the grape harvest, they make their own wine (Pancu and Selçuk, 2023: 219). "Çölmek" or 'çotra' made from wood is used to preserve wines (Petrovici, 2009). The fact that wines are still served in these natural wooden products meets the "use of natural raw materials" criterion for registration in the Creative Cities Network program.

Wine production in Gagauzia continues to exist as a result of grape cultivation using natural production methods. Among the Gagauz, wine is served as a gesture

of hospitality, in times of mutual aid, and during transitional periods such as death and birth (Petrovici, 2009). The Gagauz observe fasting in their religious practices due to their religious beliefs. It is believed that fasting strengthens the human spirit and body. Although every meal of the day is eaten during fasting periods, "yaalı imeklär" (fatty foods) are not eaten. Fatty foods include meat, fish, milk and dairy products, animal fats, and eggs. In addition to these foods, beverages such as wine, raki, and beer are also not consumed (Petrovici, 2009). During fasting, meals cooked with plant-based foods and vegetable oils are eaten. Fasting meals include laana, kartofi, fasülä, pomana kolacı, and koliva. The first week of fasting is called "piinir aftası" (cheese week) (Soroçanu, 2006; I1, I11). After birth, a type of bread called "pita" (honey pita) is baked at the mother's house (Iusiumbeli, 2008). Those who come to the pita bring dishes such as pleçinta, akıtma, cooked chicken, wine, and yogurt to help the new mother get back on her feet more quickly. The father visits the godfather with raki, chocolate, and cake to name the child (Petrovici, 2009). Offering wine to guests shows that they are highly valued. In addition to wine, drinks such as mint and elderflower are preferred (I13). People drink hot wine with black pepper and bay leaves added to it, especially when they have illnesses such as colds, and are treated in this way (I13).

The abundance and context of the places where wines are displayed, stored, or consumed also demonstrate a rich wine culture and a traditional winemaking heritage. The cellar in Cricova is one of the tourist routes for local and foreign tourists who want to visit and export to many countries around the world. Here, production is carried out by hand, not by machines. For example, producers select the grapes one by one by hand; no machines are used at this stage. This place is both a wine production facility where production and storage take place and a tourist attraction (I4). In 2007, there were 1.500,000 bottles of wine in the cellar in Mileştii Mici, which earned it a place in the Guinness Book of Records. Another dish that made it into the record book is Mamaliga. Mamaliga broke the Guinness record with 500 pots (I11). When considering the concept of a city and its image in Moldova, Milestii and Purcari are cities famous for their wine. Wine is produced throughout the Gagauz Region, but the taste, quality, and prices of the wines from these two cities differ (I11).

The significant role of wine production in the development of the city's image in the Gagauz cuisine, and the formation of cultural spaces and rituals, as mentioned in the examples, demonstrates that the region has significant potential to be included in the Creative Cities Network. For example, Ensenada, Mexico, which joined the Creative Cities Network in the field of Gastronomy in 2015, is not only an ideal location for fishing and seafood farming, it is also the largest wine producer in the region, with over 500 brands and 50 wineries producing 90% of the country's wine, which facilitated the city's inclusion in the Creative Cities Network (URL-4).

The Gagauz cuisine is not only a strong example of safeguarding and sustainability in terms of beverages, but it also demonstrates richness in other gastronomic elements. In particular, it features various uses of flour, many types of bread, and strong cultural codes. Uuma Soup, made from flour and water, resembles ovmaç soup in Türkiye (Güleç and Durlu Özkaya, 2022: 477). There is also a flour-based variety of the sauce called manca (I4, I9, I15). The names of bread products in the Gagauz language have been preserved as Turkish bread products (e.g., flour, bread, pastry, grain, booday, bulgur, bulamaç, umaç, akıtma, kabartma, gözlemä, katlama, dizman, pite, kabaklı, döşeme, and gevrek) (Soroçanu, 2020; I8, I10, I14). The extensive use of flour in everyday life has also led to its inclusion in folk rituals. For example, flour is rubbed on the chin and head of a newborn baby to wish for a long life until they grow a beard and white hair (Tanyıldız, 1996: 69-70). One of the oldest desserts is pides made from wheat flour, which are baked in the oven and topped with the foam from boiling grape juice (I11). Nalisniki, kıırma/kıvırma, gevrek, gözlema, and kolaç bread are some of the dishes made with flour. Kolaç is made to bring prosperity and ensure the child's health, hence the name "birth kolacı." There are different types, such as wedding kolacı, baptism kolacı, and funeral kolacı. Unlike other kolaç, wedding kolacı is made by rolling two pieces of dough together to symbolize the bride and groom's families. It is placed on the table of the young couple getting married at the wedding. There is honey on top of the kolac. The bride's mother gives honey to the groom's mouth so that he will not deceive or upset the bride. There is flour in a bowl on top of the kolac. The mother-in-law gives the groom the burnt parts with flour on them. It is believed that flour brings prosperity (I9). Wine is given to the bride and groom at the wedding. The bride and groom keep the glasses from which they drank wine for the rest of their lives (I4). Gagauz cuisine is heavy on meat and dough. Mamaliga, potato, cabbage, and cheese pies are iconic dishes of Gagauz cuisine (I13).

The culinary richness and diversity of cities participating in the Creative Cities Network program, as well as the city's general description and history of cultural and social interaction, are important criteria. The development of Gagauz cuisine, which shares many shared food and beverage elements and cultural interactions with Türkiye, has also been influenced by other cultures outside Türkiye. Interactions with the cuisines of Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine have also contributed to the enrichment of the Gagauz cuisine (I9, I4). In Afyonkarahisar, the process of registering with the Creative Cities Network began with field research, literature review, and listing. After six months of work in Afyonkarahisar, field research was conducted with a committee consisting of hotel chefs, members of non-governmental organizations, and academics to identify gastronomic elements (I7). Similarly, a commission was established in Gaziantep, and the work began with research. Subsequently, a standard recipe for Gaziantep cuisine was developed. At this stage,

despite the production techniques varying from person to person and from home to home, the recipes expressed by the majority in the field research were taken as a basis (I3). These recipes have made their way into restaurant kitchens: "After being named a 'gastronomy city,' we noticed that the dishes our grandmothers and aunts used to make are now being served more frequently in restaurants. Eggplant börek, our pastries, ovmaç soup (which includes poppy seeds), poppy seed baklava we're exploring where and how we can incorporate these items into restaurant menus." (I12). A similar study could be considered for Gagauzia, initiating the process of joining the Creative Cities Network. After Afyonkarahisar, Gaziantep, and Hatay were declared gastronomy cities, their achievements and the problems they encountered could be used to develop the preparatory process for the inclusion of Gagauz cuisine culture in this program.

The application form requires information on topics such as the city's current profile, the opportunities and challenges it faces, how membership will contribute to achieving the city's sustainable development goals, quantitative statistics, and plans, programs, and projects. As understood from this form, the city must meet certain criteria for the application, but the implementation of the activities specified in the form with momentum and the addition of new ones will ensure the city's continued presence in the program while contributing to the city's development. A significant increase in tourism has been observed after Afyonkarahisar, Gaziantep, and Hatay joined the network (I3, I12). Domestic and foreign tourists have had the opportunity to visit these cities and experience their cuisine and cultural elements. In his study titled "A Research on the Personality Traits and Perspectives on Innovation of Gastronomy Entrepreneurs in Gaziantep Province, a Member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network," Metin Eroğlu asked participants the following question: "Has there been an increase in the number of tourists visiting your business in terms of gastronomy after Gaziantep joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network?" Participants responded that 53.9% had seen an increase in tourist numbers, 29.9% were undecided, and 16.1% had not seen an increase (2020: 128-129). After being declared a gastronomy city, it was observed that the public's perspective on gastronomy in Hatay changed positively, the public's enthusiasm for education in this field increased, and their awareness of it as a scientific field and the need to protect it grew (I5).

The visibility of cities in the field of gastronomy ensures the sustainable development of the city. Traces of gastronomic culture can be found in the streets, restaurants, and hotels of Afyonkarahisar, Gaziantep, and Hatay. Cultural spaces and/or the conceptualization of cultural heritage within these spaces strengthen the city's image while also supporting the safeguarding and transmission of traditional culinary knowledge. The Gastronomy House in Hatay, the Gastronomy Kitchen

Center in Gaziantep, and the Gastronomy Mansion in Afyonkarahisar produce food while remaining faithful to the preparation and presentation techniques used by the public in their daily lives. The MUSEM Academy in Gaziantep has become one of the places where traditional knowledge and experience are passed on in the process of training chefs. The "Gagauz Feast" establishment in Komrat is a restaurant where traditional dishes are prepared, a hotel where traditions are experienced alongside the food, and an example of an eco-museum. Its wine cellar and pantry contain wines from all the wineries in Gagauzia. It serves as a gathering place in Gagauz culture where guests are welcomed and important matters are discussed. Visitors have the opportunity to taste wines and engage in conversation here. These businesses have provided employment for the local population and boosted the city's economic development. Businesses interviewed in Afyonkarahisar, Hatay, and Gaziantep produce traditional foods themselves, but due to limited production equipment or lack of suitable space, they source some products from partner businesses, thereby expanding their employment opportunities. For example, due to the lack of adequate equipment for honey and cheese at the Gaziantep Culinary Arts Center, these products are produced at a different company according to the recipes of the chefs affiliated with the center (I2).

In conclusion, it has been observed that wines are prominent among beverages in Gagauz cuisine, while dishes made with flour are particularly rich and varied. The region's culinary culture, shaped by historical and cultural interactions, encompasses many shared flavors, such as grain products, meat dishes, pastries, and fermented foods. This situation enables the Gagauz cuisine to both preserve its unique identity and gain recognition across a broader geographical area. The similarities between the spaces, beliefs, and social practices surrounding this food and drink culture and those in Türkiye suggest that the success achieved by Türkiye in the Creative Cities Network program could also be replicated with Gagauz culture. The commonalities identified in the field research between Turkish and Gagauz cuisine and the richness of Gagauz cuisine demonstrate the potential for the Gagauz Region to be included in the Creative Cities Network. Utilizing this potential could contribute to the cultural, social, and economic development of the city while encouraging the preservation and intergenerational transmission of the shared culinary culture.

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Informants

I1: Anna Statova, 1971, Valkaneş.

I2: Cuma Kaplan, born in 1986, chef at the Culinary Arts Centre, Gaziantep/Merkez.

I3: Doğa Çitçi, 1981, Gaziantep municipality social facilities coordinator and chef.

I4: Evdokiya Soroçanu, 1954, academic, Chişinău.

I5: Fatih Bıyıklı, 1989, academic and municipal council project advisor, Afyonkarahisar.

I6: Fatih Yıldırım, 1993, academic, Hatay.

I7: Hamza Kalkan, born in 1981, chef and president of the Professional Chefs Association, Afyonkarahisar.

I8: Maria Kızıltaş, 1959, housewife, Ankara.

I9: Nadejda Moldovean, 1973, housewife, Antalya.

I10: Nacejda Koçak, 1979, chef, Ankara.

I11: Natalia Gradinaru, 1979, Chișinău.

I12: Nevzat Kalkan, born in 1987, chef, Afyonkarahisar.

I13: Nina Erdemir, born in 1982, housewife, Moldova/Tirșești.

I14: Tatiana Karapınarlı, 1972, Ankara.

I15: Vladimir Moldovean, born in 1974, Antalya.