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MODERN TRENDS IN PUBLIC CATERING: FROM TRADITIONAL TO SUSTAINABLE
DIMCEA COSMIN¹, CHENDE DRAGOȘ¹, CODREANU GABRIELA¹, MILIN IOANA ANDA¹,
MERCE IULIANA^{1*}

¹ University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timisoara

*Corresponding author's e-mail: iulianamerce@usvt.ro

Abstract: In the current context, marked by growing interest in health, quality, and environmental protection, the public catering sector is undergoing a major transformation. The paper analyzes the main modern trends in the field, highlighting the transition from traditional models of food preparation and service toward sustainable concepts based on the use of local resources, food waste reduction, and the promotion of organic products. It presents the current development directions of the HoReCa sector, emphasizing the role of culinary innovation, digitalization, and changing consumer preferences. The study focuses on balancing the preservation of gastronomic traditions with modern requirements for nutrition and sustainability, offering an integrated perspective on the future of public catering.

• Introduction

Modern public catering is therefore defined by a balance between tradition and innovation, taste and responsibility, profitability and ethics. Operators in this field are challenged to integrate technology, sustainability, and creativity in a way that simultaneously meets both economic and social requirements

In this context, the present paper aims to analyze the main directions of development in contemporary public catering, highlighting the shift from traditional approaches to modern concepts oriented toward health, experience, and sustainability.

The study brings together both theoretical and practical aspects related to balanced nutrition, the circular economy, digitalization, the revalorization of culinary traditions, experiential gastronomy, and the impact of these trends on the hospitality industry

• Material and method

The methodological approach of this paper is primarily descriptive and analytical, based on the synthesis of specialized literature, international reports, and recent studies concerning the modernization of public catering. The research aims to identify and analyze the main trends, challenges, and transition mechanisms that define the evolution of the industry from traditional practices toward sustainable and innovative models. The study follows a qualitative research design, employing the bibliographic method as the main instrument for data collection and analysis. The methodological orientation is exploratory, focusing on interpreting existing data and conceptual models rather than on empirical measurement.

• Results and discussions

The transition from traditional to sustainable food practices does not mean abandoning authentic values, but rather adapting them to contemporary realities. The public catering industry is increasingly becoming a space for innovation, education, and social responsibility.

Comparison of the characteristics of traditional and sustainable food systems

Analysis Criterion	Traditional Food	Sustainable Food
Origin of ingredients	Local or regional products, sometimes seasonal	Local, certified organic, and seasonal products with clear traceability
Preparation methods	Recipes passed down through generations, classic cooking methods	Modern techniques that reduce nutrient loss and energy consumption
Type of packaging	Conventional materials (plastic, aluminum, simple paper)	Biodegradable, compostable, or reusable packaging
Waste management	Waste is rarely reused or recovered	Waste is recycled, composted, or converted into energy
Environmental impact	May cause pollution and food waste	Minimal, through energy efficiency, waste reduction, and support for the local economy
Strategic orientation	Focused on taste and tradition	Focused on responsibility, transparency, and sustainability
Relationship with the consumer	Passive consumer	Informed, engaged consumer with ethical preferences

• Conclusions

Sustainability and the circular economy represent central pillars in the modernization of public catering. Their implementation goes beyond symbolic gestures and involves a profound change in mentality and organization. By optimizing resources, reducing waste, and supporting local producers, businesses in this sector contribute to building a fairer and more environmentally friendly food system.