

## Food at the Edge of the World: Gastronomy marketing in Tórshavn (Faroe Islands)

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# FOOD AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD:

## Gastronomy marketing in Tórshavn (Faroe Islands)

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**ABSTRACT:** While relationships between food and tourism have been extensively investigated in recent decades, the Faroe Islands is a lesser studied food destination. This article analyses the specificities of restaurant scene in the context of food tourism in Tórshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands, based on the official promotion of the dining landscape. The authors specifically discuss how the remote Arctic destination of Tórshavn positions itself as a culinary destination based on concepts of authenticity, exoticism, sustainability and innovation. Results show that the small and isolated capital of Tórshavn balances the exoticism of traditional Faroese food experiences with more generic international flavors and urban spaces. Hence, the case opens interesting perspectives on the negotiations of the local and the global in contemporary food tourism marketing of remote island destinations.

**KEYWORDS:** Arctic tourism, culinary destination, food tourism, regional development

### I. Introduction and context

*As one of the smallest capitals in the world, everything in Tórshavn is easy. Forget traffic-clogged highways, forget crowds of people, forget fighting for a seat on the bus. Here, we live life as it should be lived. With plenty of space and clean, fresh air, there's a real sense of well-being in the Faroese capital. This is the sort of place where people still have time for each other, where people are concerned about each other and where life moves at a civilised pace. (Visit Tórshavn, 2021)*

The Faroe Islands, an autonomous region of the kingdom of Denmark, is an archipelago located in the north-east Atlantic Ocean, halfway between Scotland and Iceland (Figure 1). The Faroe Islands comprise 18 islands with a land area of 1,399 square kilometres, a sea area of 274,000 square kilometres and a population of 54,000 (The Government of the Faroe Islands, 2022). As Prideaux (2008: 171) summarises, “originally settled by Norwegian emigrants during the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Faroes have been administered by Denmark since the 14th century, and in 1948 achieved home rule.” While the Norse are usually referred to as the first to arrive on the islands, other studies indicate that Irish monks settled down three centuries earlier, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Gershon, 2021) or even earlier (Church et al., 2005; 2013). The dominant theory about the origin of the name of the islands

suggests that Faroe Islands (Føroyar) literally meant the ‘Sheep Islands’. The Faroe Islands are also defined by their maritime aspect. Geographically, when people live or visit in the Faroe Islands, “at no time is one more than 5 km (3 miles) away from the ocean which of course has a major influence on the landscape” (Ankre and Nilsson, 2016: 137). The ocean shapes the nature of the Faroe Islands, and, in the context of this research, the ocean particularly emerges as a driver of traditional Faroese food culture (Joensen, 2016).

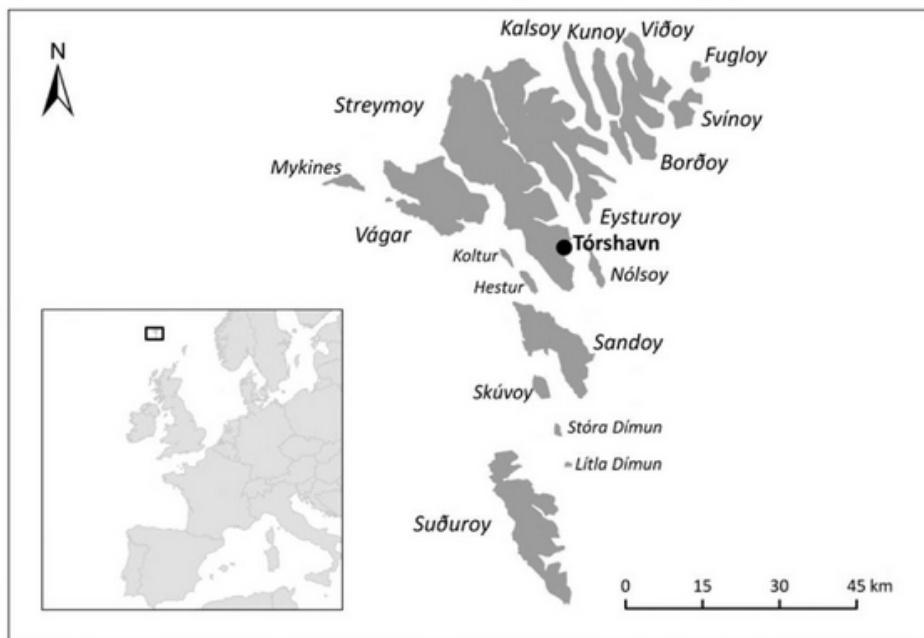


Figure 1 – The Faroe Islands and their location in northwestern Europe (Ankre and Nilsson, 2016: 136).

Since the 2010s, the Faroe Islands has become a regularly visited and promoted tourist destination and a few studies have previously analysed the Faroe Islands from a tourism approach. For example, previous studies have critically investigated its tourism accessibility (Ankre and Nilsson, 2016) or the potential conflicts derived from the relationships between landscape values and tourism development (Plieninger et al., 2018). These happen in a fragile human-in-nature Arctic context where culture is a manifestation of nature (Fusté-Forné, 2022). The current article is placed within the rapidly growing interest in Arctic tourism (Saarinen and Varnajot, 2019) and the emergence of destinations such as the Faroe Islands for international tourism (Reigner et al., 2021).

In this article, we will focus on the Faroe Islands as a food tourism destination. Leer (2020) is the only prior study to shed light on the understanding of food tourism in the Faroe Islands. His study explores the sustainable bridges between food and tourism in the design of culinary experiences in the Faroe Islands, based on the interaction between a *genuine* local offer and a *participative* visitor role. However, there still exists room to delve into the configuration of food tourism scenarios and the promotion of food tourism experiences in the Faroe Islands. This article adds texture to this conversation with a qualitative study of

the destination marketing strategy based on the dining establishments in Tórshavn, and a discussion of how this remote island destination positions itself as a culinary destination. Drawing on the theoretical framework presented in the following section, we use the concepts of authenticity, exoticism, sustainability and innovation to analyse and discuss our data. We aim to highlight the differences in the materials and the specificities of the restaurant scene in Thórshavn as well as the tensions between the different concepts.

## **2. The role of restaurants in shaping a culinary destination**

### *Understanding a restaurant scene*

The development of a restaurant culture is a requisite in the development of a foodie destination (Indrajaya, 2019). Destinations can create an extraordinary appeal based on their unique food (Cohen and Avieli, 2004), which, in turn, can enhance a destination's tourism competitiveness (Knollenberg et al., 2021). While few previous studies have analysed the impact of restaurants in the development of food tourism (Bertan, 2020; Erkuş-Öztürk and Terhorst, 2016), food is a determinant of tourism demand (Duarte et al., 2018; Okumus et al., 2018) and restaurants are a tourism attraction factor (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017; Castillo-Manzano et al., 2020). Food experiences are among the most meaningful traveling memories, especially when they encapsulate a destination's sense of place, as it may happen in restaurants (Skinner et al., 2020). This research pays particular attention to restaurants as 'ambassadors for tourism marketing' (Min and Lee, 2014) in a context where a growing tendency to segmentation in restaurants is observed (Terhorst and Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). In a local globalised world, we find many types of customers and many types of restaurants (Smith, 1983) and this is particularly manifest in urban environments that accommodate a more concentrated and diverse offer of dining experiences.

In relation to the Faroe Islands, the remoteness, the windy climate and the small population has created unique and difficult conditions for developing the restaurant scene. Joensen (2016) states that it was only in the late 19th century – at the time when restaurant scenes in European capitals like London and Paris flourished – when:

*guesthouses began to appear in Tórshavn, and as the 20<sup>th</sup> century begins guesthouses could be found in some of the larger villages beyond Tórshavn. Gradually, Tórshavn began to acquire more and more guesthouses and pensions, where, for instance students at the Maritime School and others could get room and board for limited periods, and those who, for one reason or other, could not eat at home could get a meal. (Joensen , 2016: 51).*

However, eating out in the Faroe Islands “was not at all common until at least the last twenty years or so (mid-1990s), when the number of restaurants and cafés began to grow” (Joensen, 2016, p.51). In relation to restaurant food, Joensen (2016) highlights that the combination of traditional and innovative use of domestic food resources has progressively placed the Faroe Islands on the international food map. The two-starred Michelin restaurant Koks has played a major role (Reed, 2021); however, this article is focused on the restaurant landscape beyond Koks (see, also, Ecott, 2022).

In this article, we want to understand the marketing of the restaurant scene in Thórshavn. As mentioned, it is only recently that the Faroe Islands has been known as a culinary destination. Also, it is only in the last decade that food has been used as a promotion tool.

We focus on how this novel restaurant scene in Thórshavn is promoted to international tourists. Hence, we explore both the general impression as well as the diversity of the restaurants and the differences between them. To account for this diverse environment, we have chosen to develop a theoretical framework which will work as an analytical tool in our analyses of the representations of the food scene. This framework is rooted in four concepts that we argue are used as distinctive buzz words in international food discourses.

We built on Johnston and Bauman (2010) who argue that the concepts of *authenticity* and *exoticism* work as distinctive markers of good taste in foodie discourse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This should be seen as a part of a broader shift in food discourses from a celebration of French gastronomy, which has been manifested for centuries, to the adaption among many foodies of a more cosmopolitan openness to a range of cuisines and food styles. We believe these concepts, which we will develop below, are still relevant, but we do also feel that they could be supplemented by two additional concepts that have been important in the last decade, namely sustainability and innovation (Lee et al., 2017). The latter are central to the new Nordic cuisine which was initiated in 2004 when the *New Nordic Food Manifesto* was signed by chefs from all the Nordic countries, notably the Faroese Leif Sørensen who was one of the leading chefs in the Faroe Islands at the time. After signing the *Manifesto*, he went from cooking French and Italian cuisine to a style of cooking based on local ingredients without becoming 100% dogmatic and open to occasionally using tomatoes and other imported ingredients (New Nordic Food, 2014).

The new Nordic movement sparked a culinary development in the region, notably with a significant increase in Michelin starred restaurants and international recognition (Beaugé, 2013, Müller and Leer 2018). In this sense, numerous Nordic restaurants appear on the prestigious San Pellegrino-list and the Michelin guide have made a Nordic edition. As highlighted earlier, the Faroe Islands also got a Michelin restaurant, the much celebrated Koks.

#### *Authenticity and exoticism*

Johnston and Bauman (2010) add to an ongoing discussion of how to rethink taste, democratisation and distinction in contemporary food culture. This discussion originates in Bourdieu's (1979) argument that taste is cultivated, classed and expresses social position; and that the formality and refinement that characterised bourgeois taste, worked as a distinctive mark of elitism. This position has been challenged and nuanced (Maffesoli, 1988; Warde, 1997). Among sociologies of tastes, some scholars have argued elite taste generally has changed from snobbism to a more omnivorous palate (Peterson and Kern, 1996). In relation to food, this could, for instance, be detected in the relative decline of French gastronomy (Steinberger, 2009) that has prepared the terrain for new trends like a broader interest in ethnic cuisines (Ray, 2016), the casualisation of fine dining (Pearlman 2015), slow food (Siniscalchi and Counihan, 2014), the upscaling of food previously considered as junk or working-class fare (Leer and Hoff-Jørgensen, 2022) and new culinary destinations like the Nordic region (Beaugé, 2013). However, rather than consider this development a democratisation, Johnston and Bauman (2010) demonstrate that it is rather a reconfiguration of taste as distinction. They show, on the basis of extensive empirical analyses, that the concepts of authenticity and exoticism work as new markers of distinctions in this more cosmopolitan and, on the surface, more casual universe of contemporary foodies and taste makers.

As Johnston and Baumann (2010) acknowledge, authenticity is a rather allusive concept used in multiple ways. To make the concept more concrete and applicable, they highlight five dimensions: 1) geographic specificity 2) simplicity 3) personal connection 4) history and tradition 5) ethnic connection. As they suggest, foods classed as authentic are often opposed to complex, modern and urban lifestyles and are perceived to offer an alternative to such high-paced lifestyles (2010: 85). The concept of exoticism is less easy to grasp and is often at play in combination with authenticity. However, in the relation to Western-dominated foodie discourse, it usually refers to undiscovered cuisines, and even unusual and transgressive food practices:

*exoticism is an important strategy for validating foods in an omnivorous culinary discourse. The search for socially and geographically distant and norm-breaking foods allow foodies to signal distinction without offending democratic sensibilities through overt snobbery.* (Johnston and Baumann, 2010: 122).

At the same time, the authors seem to suggest that there are often negotiations about exoticism and *how exotic* people and food cultures should be: “interestingly, strong exoticism, based on the prominent forms of social and geographic distance, is less frequent in foodie discourse than the weak form of exoticism associated with food and people who are only somewhat socially and geographically distant from American foodies” (2010: 113).

In relation to the Faroe Islands, there is a great potential for its food to be described as authentic according to the five characteristics highlighted above. The island has a highly specific geography which has shaped a unique food culture and history. The food is traditionally also rather simple and many of cooking practices are passed on from generation to generation in this relatively homogenous ethnic population. At the same time, the unique climate and the islands’ isolation have also generated a quite particular food culture with flavors that might appear exotic to many outsiders due to the singularly strong tastes, notably the traditions of fermenting fish and meat. While in some cases exoticism is used about food culture outside of the European and US context, and thus also reproducing a neocolonial mind-set, European countries can also be represented as exotic, ‘strange’ and/or less modern, for instance in British representations of the Italian cuisine (Leer and Kjær, 2015). Additionally, Andreassen (2014) argues that in the New Nordic movement’s discourses a distinction is made between the wild Nordic nature and the modern cooking, and thus also between metropolises like Copenhagen, where the *Manifesto* was written, and marginal areas like the Faroe Islands and Greenland. This “rings a colonial echo” (2014: 448) due to Denmark’s role as history as a coloniser of the areas. Hence, exoticism also applies to the North, as has also been argued in other domains with the concept of *Arcticism* as a reconceptualisation of Said’s orientalism in a Nordic context (Ryall et al., 2010).

We recognise that the concepts of authenticity and exoticism remain central to contemporary food discourses. However, we feel that these need to be supplemented by other concepts that have also been central in the revitalisation of Nordic cuisine as the ‘new’ Nordic cuisine (Jönsson, 2013; Skårup, 2013). Here we particularly want to introduce the concepts of innovation and sustainability. Concerning the latter, it is a term that is very much in vogue in most current food discourses and increasingly so over the last decade (Leer, 2020). Sustainability is also mentioned in the *New Nordic Food Manifesto* both in relation to sound food production, biodiversity and animal welfare. In the same document, we also find much on food innovation (for instance “develop potentially new applications of traditional Nordic food products” and “combine the best in Nordic cookery and culinary

traditions with impulses from abroad”). It has also been argued that rather than a return to tradition food cultures and meal composition, which in Denmark meant centering the meal on a substantial dish composed of meat or fish served with gravy and potatoes (Jensen, 2015), the new Nordic cuisine focused on radical innovation (Micheelsen et al., 2013; Leer, 2016). As the results of this article also show, although old techniques and traditions are used as inspiration, innovation is also a central goal of food storytelling as a process to award a tourism value to food.

### 3. Methodology

This study is based on a narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008) of the printed promotional materials available at the tourism office of the city of Tórshavn. Previous research has analysed the narrative attached to printed promotional materials as a source of tourism marketing (Avraham and Daugherty, 2012). In particular, printed promotional materials are a relevant tourism marketing medium (Andsager and Drzewiecka, 2002). They are at the disposal of travelers free of charge at the destination (Brito and Pratas, 2015; Molina and Esteban, 2006; Pritchard and Morgan, 1995). Printed promotional materials, such as brochures, are useful to analyse travel marketing which highlights the *extraordinary features* of destinations (Edelheim, 2007). A narrative analysis has the objective of understanding the construction of a specific reality (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009; Pauly, 1991), in this case, the features of gastronomy marketing focused on the Tórshavn’s restaurant scene as a specific manifestation of societal culture. This is in line with Edelheim (2007), who identifies printed promotional materials as drivers of the image of a destination (see also Silver, 1993) and the connections between tourism and society. The analysis of printed promotional materials leads to the identification of the characteristics of a ‘place’ (Van Dijk, 1988) through language and visuals (Barthes, 1977) as a source of the narrative process (Jenkins, 2003). While we acknowledge that digital media is increasing taking the dominant role in tourism marketing (see for example Bassano et al., 2019), print media are still used by destination marketing organisations to a large extent, notably in terms of maps and overviews, like in the present case where we consider a specific space such as the city of Tórshavn.

With the objective to analyse the symbolic construction of Tórshavn food tourism landscapes, a visit to the tourism office in Tórshavn was made to compile the most recent brochures as of October 2021. Four publications were available and all of them were included in the analysis: the *Tórshavn City Map Pocket Guide*, the *Tourist Map of Tórshavn*, *Dining and nightlife*, and the *Official Tourist Guide of the Faroe Islands*. The objective is to provide a general understanding of the dining scene which is detached from what each restaurant wants to promote as part of its individual marketing strategy. This study aims to understand the collective picture of the destination and how it creates a restaurant scene as a unique destination attribute. How does Tórshavn position itself in the Arctic food scene and as part of the New Nordic cuisine in the context of an island identity? In addition, a conversation was held with a representative of Visit Tórshavn and the National Museum of the Faroe Islands was visited to learn about its food culture. Also, the data collection was complemented with a visual auto-ethnographic study which consisted of the process of touring the city (see also Fusté-Forné, 2020). Since “visual autoethnography emerges as a fusion of observation and first-hand experience” (Scarles, 2010: 909), the visit served to capture the place’s “rhythms” (Cerrone, 2016) and to visually document the availability of its restaurant experiences to provide a more robust understanding of the results through empirical materials.

#### 4. Results and discussion

##### *An approach to the culinary scene of the Faroe Islands through Tórshavn*

The analysis of the official, printed tourism promotional materials showed that there is a rich variety of gastronomy options in Tórshavn that evokes the presence of the food antagonies observed in the theoretical framework (see Warde, 1997) and discussed in this section. First, the *Official Tourist Guide of the Faroe Islands* includes a section about ‘Taste the Faroe Islands’ that invites visitors to “experience the unforgettable taste of some of the world’s finest fresh produce”. The guide reveals the authenticity attached to Faroese food and highlights that:

*the high quality of many Faroese ingredients is due, in large part, to the slow growing conditions that prevail so far north. A cold climate allows vegetation to draw every last nutrient from the soil before being consumed by the islands’ sheep. This helps to produce particularly flavoursome organic meat. Traditionally, most of the sheep meat is air-dried to become the Faroese delicacy, skerpikjöt. Faroese cod, for example, is renowned across the world for its succulent texture.*

In this sense, Faroese cod is especially famous for the *bankatoskur*, which is the large cod from the Faroe Bank between the Faroe Islands and Iceland. It is also a traditional practice to air-dry fish as a form of preservation that adds unique fermented flavors to the fish. As these examples demonstrate, remote places such as the Faroe Islands are highly dependent upon the environment which thus refers to the availability of foods from sea and land, and the quality of these foods, but also to the particular climate which plays a vital role in shaping the aroma and taste of Faroese vernacular food. In this sense, one of the most relevant examples of traditional Faroese food culture, as also outlined by Joensen (2016), is fermentation.

These narratives of traditional Faroese foodways return frequently in our data. The *Official Tourist Guide of the Faroe Islands* tells us that:

*centuries ago, the key to surviving the harsh winter in the Faroe Islands was, to put it simply, to have enough to eat. In order to make food last through the long, dark winter months, many meats were air-dried or salted. It was a common sight to see lamb [not a whole lamb, but the (dressed) carcass] or [plucked] seabirds hung in a slatted, wooden shed to catch the best of the wind – a practice that is still common to this day. The meat was then eaten with boiled potatoes and turnips with the addition, now and then, of wild herbs and grasses.*

Fermentation processes allow the preservation of food, which is critical in places with extreme weather conditions. Here, the Faroese term for fermented is *ræst*, which is a manifestation of Faroese culinary identity and of traditional techniques. The strong flavors of the fermented food may indeed be exotic for visitors from distant cultures. According to The Government of the Faroe Islands (2021):

*one of the distinct flavours that the Faroese have named ræst, comes from drying either meat or fish outdoors, where an aging and fermenting process will take place. Whether the taste is acquired or not, however, is up to nature [and*



*how the person in charge takes care of the meat/fish while it is hanging] to decide, as warmer temperatures will spoil the meat, too much cold will prevent the fermenting process from occurring, and too much wind will render it tasteless.*

Nature continues shaping the Faroese food culture in an extreme way where the understanding of nature as a source of food supply is also a prerequisite of food tourism experiences (see Berno, Laurin & Maltezakis, 2014).

In addition, nowadays:

*a number of Faroese restaurants are active participants in the successful initiative known as New Nordic Food – an innovative approach to traditional foods combined with a strong focus on health and ethical production methods. Top quality Faroese ingredients fit perfectly in this philosophy. (The Government of the Faroe Islands, 2021).*

The discourse explains that:

*here, in the world's smallest capital, you'll find world class sushi, famous far and wide, for its taste and quality. There is traditional home cooking, too, given a modern spin, alongside top-notch gourmet cuisine of the very highest standards that delights both the eye and the palate. In short, think a symphony of tastes, sounds, smells and colours – all, of course, inspired by Faroese nature and traditions. (The Government of the Faroe Islands, 2021).*

The top-notch gourmet cuisine is exemplified by Koks, the first and only Faroese restaurant awarded by the Michelin Guide. Koks is a two-starred Michelin restaurant located in the countryside that uses exclusive Faroese ingredients, notably seafood and shellfish, to generate a gourmet experience based on Faroese tradition as well as an evident new Nordic influence (Figure 2). The culinary discourse of Koks is a dialogue between tradition and innovation which has also travelled to other places such as Copenhagen, Singapore and, nowadays, Greenland. In this sense, one of the drivers of the Koks menu is *ræst*. According to official Faroese sources *ræst*:

*has become an authentic expression of the past as well as it is the Faroese contribution to the palate of the international culinary scene. This unmistakable flavour is the cornerstone of the Faroese kitchen, the combination of natural phenomena peculiar to the Faroes and the deft skill of many generations. (The Government of the Faroe Islands, 2021).*

This is combined in high-class gastronomic experiences that revolve around the tensions between local and global. Although inspired by Faroese tradition it is evident that the gourmet tasting menu, with many small dishes, is far from the more solid and unsophisticated meal culture centered around meat, potato and gravy model. This is general to new Nordic restaurants in that they seem removed from mainstream, everyday national food cultures (Jensen, 2015). In this sense, while this article analyses the promotional material, it is also important to highlight that *ræst* was not what people were eating in everyday life in the past, rather it was a type of food used for special occasions while most people were eating fresh fish as part of their daily food habits.



Figure 2 - Seafood and shellfish served at Koks restaurant (Francesc Fusté-Forné, 2021).

#### *A taste of Tórshavn*

The *Official Tourist Guide of the Faroe Islands* has a section that focuses on the capital, Tórshavn, which is located on the southern part of the Streymoy Island:

*One of the most special locations in town is the harbourfront at Vágsbotnur with its picture-postcard-perfect old warehouses, painted in a melée of bright summer colours, and slew of agreeable cafés, restaurants and pubs.*

The environment, not only the food, also plays a relevant role in the construction of the restaurantscape of Tórshavn. In particular, the marketing storytelling states that “you’ll find everything from top-quality steaks and freshly prepared Japanese sushi to superb gourmet dishes with Faroese ingredients and some of the freshest fish you will ever taste, all within easy walking distance”. Here we notice that the marketing material does not want to exclusively brand the capital as a reflection of Faroese food traditions, but also a cosmopolitan and diverse including both Japanese food as well as the “boomer-friendly” steak house for those less inclined to a pescatarian diet. Hence, the exoticism of both Faroese and Japanese cuisine is balanced in the initial description with the standard repertoire of Western dining out food, typified by the steak. However, the exoticism is more manifest if we scrutinise the materials devoted to Tórshavn, such as the *Tourist Map of Tórshavn*, advertised as “your guide to the sights”. It describes Tórshavn as the town at the edge of the world, which makes visitors, at least those from more distant cultures, travellers to an ‘exotic’ destination. As mentioned in the opening quote of this article, the city’s tininess and its closeness to nature and somewhat wild climate is constructed as foreign to the reader who is implied as someone with a more urban and high-paced lifestyle antithetical to that of Thórshavn where “people still have time for each other”. So although the material highlights the exotic nature of the edge of the world and nearness of natural forces, this small island atmosphere is at the same time articulated as essentially more humane and what most people nostalgically long for.

In the context of the Faroe Islands, the publication says that:

*windswept, cloudy, and cool... the Faroe Islands are ideal for fermenting meat and fish – an umami paradise, but some foreigners tend to think our food is an acquired taste. So here's our... acquired taste survival guide.*

The culinary choices are based on the ocean, the mountainous fields and *ræst* and they are promoted according to the type of food experience the visitors search for:

*Tuck in. You'll be fine*  
*Turrur fiskur: Dried fish*  
*Havhestaungi: Fulmar*  
*Fesk grind: Whale meat*

*If you dare. You might be rewarded*  
*Spik: Whale blubber*  
*Turr grind: Dried whale meat*  
*Ræst kjót: Fermented lamb*

*We love it, but you might die*  
*Skerpikjót: Fermented and air-dried leg of lamb*  
*Ræstur fiskur: Fermented and air-dried fish*  
*Garnatálg: Fermented and air-dried intestinal fat*

While these examples show different culinary options, the first author of this article observed that some of them are not easy to find in the restaurant scene of Tórshavn. While dried fish or fermented lamb are available in restaurant menus, traditional fermented dishes are strong and their flavour is softened to meet a larger variety of customer palates not used to the traditional aroma – as it may be found in a Faroese home. This brings an antagonism between authenticity and exoticism. While *ræst* is a relevant part of Faroese food culture, for many people, especially visitors whose home culture is distant to Faroese culture, *ræst* would be rather exotic. This, as identified above, also raises the question of the audiences for these restaurants, which primarily aim at international visitors. In addition to the examples of dishes, the *Tórshavn City Map Pocket Guide* offers a specific Food and Drink section with a list of the restaurants on offer in the city. Also, an advertisement promotes 'Private boat tours', mostly available in summer, which combine sightseeing and 'catch your own dinner' as a participative activity (see, also, Leer, 2020). However, the clearest picture of the culinary scene of Tórshavn is delivered by the booklet *Dining and nightlife*. The gastronomy experiences are divided into six types which shows the diversity of the gastronomic product development: fine dining, home dining, casual dining, family dining, fast food and take away, and café.

#### *The construction of the dining landscape in Tórshavn*

Fine dining includes a total of fourteen restaurants that showcase the most meaningful examples of Faroese food culture that illustrate Faroese culinary history. For example, Áarstova (Figure 3), is described as having:

*been transformed into snug, little restaurant located right in the heart of the city and is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of the best restaurants in the*

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*Faroe Islands. The impeccable service at Áarstova is matched by the exquisite food and wine menu, which includes succulent Faroese lamb.*

Also, Barbara Fish House, which represents “a journey back to 16<sup>th</sup> century Tórshavn. Enjoying expertly prepared dishes made from fresh Faroese fish inside one of the oldest buildings in the city makes a visit to Barbara an unforgettable experience for tourists and locals alike”.



Figure 3 - External view of Áarstova restaurant (Francesc Fusté-Forné, 2021).

As explained above, fermentation is an identity marker of traditional Faroese food culture and this taste identity is particularly explored at Ræst restaurant, which is described as:

*proud to be the only restaurant in the world, outside Japan, that serves nothing but fermented dishes. Drawing on the centuries-old Faroese tradition of fermentation (fermented dishes were once commonplace to help feed hungry mouths through the long, dark winter months when fresh produce was scarce), Ræst offers any visitor to the Faroes the unique opportunity of sampling some of the Faroes' oldest and best-loved dishes.*

Here, the exoticism is most explicit and used to display uniqueness while still claiming strong bonds to an authentic Faroese food identity.

In addition to traditional Faroese dining experiences, which emerge as a source of authenticity, other restaurants evoke the Italian style, such as Skeiva Pakkhús and Toscana; the French style, such as Hallartún; and the Japanese style, such as Etika (Figure 4), which also has the typical Faroese turf roof (as observed in Figures 3 and 7). These restaurants are positioned between authenticity and innovation. Etika, for example, is promoted as:

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*the only sushi restaurant in the Faroe Islands and serves some of the world's finest sushi by combining the freshest of Faroese fish with Japanese cuisine and a generous dose of creativity. In addition to classic sushi, the menu also features grilled fish, seafood, beef and lamb.*

Contrary to Ræst restaurant, this description does not distinguish itself via claims of authenticity; rather, its uniqueness lays in the innovative idea of making sushi based on fresh Faroese fish and presenting itself as the only place in the world you can get taste that combination.

In the Dining and nightlife section there is also a section on home dining. These home dinner options are also strongly committed with the relationships between authenticity and sustainability, and the notion of 'from farm to table'. It particularly showcases three experiences: a dining with farmers who "offer our guests a hard-to-find insight into Faroese culture whilst enjoying spectacular views of Hestfjødur and five homecooked courses"; a BBKass Supper Club where visitors are invited "into our own home to sample a real Faroese homecooked meal"; and the project Heimabliðni (Faroese word for home hospitality which is a new version of an old word: *heimabliður* (or *innibliður*), meaning hospitable), which however is not in Tórshavn.



Figure 4 - Etika restaurant ((Francesc Fusté-Forné, 2021).

In the subsequent section of the material, eight restaurants are promoted as offering of casual dining and four as family dining options. Fast food and take away options are also a relevant segment of the culinary offering of Tórshavn, with thirteen places listed. Visitors can find a diverse landscape of both local and global options. For example, ready-to-eat food such as burgers, pizzas, and fish and chips evoke the global ingredient and global fast-food chains like Burger King are present. While the differences between fast-food places – a global chain like Burger King or a local establishment where fish and chips is



served– most of these places are located in the centre of Tórshavn, such as Eta (Figure 5), and they define the profile of the city food tourism establishments which, however, provide a combination of local and global ingredients brought to a specific location in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean.



Figure 5 - Eta restaurant in Tórshavn downtown ((Francesc Fusté-Forné, 2021).

Finally, it is also interesting to mention the section that highlights the eleven cafés. Some of the most prominent are Brell Café, Kafé Kaspar and Paname, which seem to represent different kinds of cafés in the city. First, Brell asserts that:

*quality and sustainability, we at Brell Café pride ourselves on roasting our coffee beans in the café. We follow the Third Wave Coffee philosophy from producer to cup. And we use a variety of hand brewing methods to provide you with the very best coffee.*

Brell Café also offers a selection of local and international foods to buy, such as cheeses (Figure 6). It clearly echoes the ideals of contemporary, globalised hipster food culture, where sustainability and craft production goes hand in hand (Leer 2021; Ojeco, 2017; Parasecoli and Halawa 2021). These often include a relatively similar type of signature foods and drinks, including artisanal pizza, craft beer and ‘third-wave’ coffee (Halawa and Parasecoli, 2019). Second, Kafé Kaspar has a large offer of “brunch, bagels, salad, warm dishes and a wide range of sweet treats” and it may also fit within casual or family dining. The local source of many of the ingredients used is presented in a framework of establishments which evoke a global contemporary food culture which is more mainstream than the hipsteriness of Café Brell.



Figure 6 - International cheeses sold at Brell Café ((Francesc Fusté-Forné, 2021).



Figure 7 - Paname Café (Francesc Fusté-Forné, 2021).

Figure 7 shows the external view of the Paname café, which is described as:

*located in the historical grass-roofed building in Vaglið square by the Parliament [where] this family-run café offers homemade pastries and bread, organic coffee and tea as well as some great French wines to sample over your platter of charcuterie. The perfect place to start your day with a homemade bun with cheese and rhubarb jam or to round off a long day with a good local beer.*

Here, we seem to be facing a type of café closer to the traditional French café that complements the Tórshavn café landscapes.

## 5. Conclusion

While Tórshavn is the capital of the Faroe Islands and is an urban destination, its location in the north-east North Atlantic Ocean and the environmental dependence of the country makes it a unique destination in the context of Arctic tourism and food tourism. At the same time, it is evident that the isolation and the relatively late emergence of a restaurant scene have generated difficult condition for promoting it as a gastronomic destination. However, with the success of Koks and interest from food tourist in the Nordic region in general, the focus on gastronomy as a marketing tool has risen. The question is then how to establish the culinary identity in the marketing material. A question we have explored in this article.

In our study, we have highlighted that marketing of gastronomy in Tórshavn balances the exoticism of traditional Faroese food experiences with more generic international flavours and types of restaurants. The culinary identity of the Faroese is based on wild foods that mainly, while not exclusively, come from the ocean. The oceanic context of the capital determines the pace of the Faroe Islands and the dining experiences available in Tórshavn. *Ræst* stands out as the most iconic – and exotic for some international palates – example of traditional Faroese food culture with the influence of air, land and water on food. The culinary scene offers also delivers globalised foods in a localised form, as in the case of the sushi place Etika where Japanese techniques are combined with Faroese fish products. All the establishments contribute to the construction of the gastronomy marketing derived from Tórshavn's dining landscape as a specific example of a space where restaurants are also regarded as ambassadors of national cuisines (Terhorst and Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015).

The article shows the presence of food antagonies (Warde, 1997) and how exoticism is negotiated in the different places. For example, tradition and innovation are very different in restaurants such as *Ræst* (based on fermented dishes) and Etika (based on sushi). The idea of a *terroir* used in the restaurant branding is also plural. Traditional restaurants such as *Áarstova* and *Barbara Fish House* provide a strong connection between the dimensions of authenticity and sustainability, while others like *Koks* offer a discourse of innovation – attached to the nature of a Michelin starred restaurant. This diversity of interpretation makes a unique restaurantscape, where restaurants reproduce the Faroese *terroir* in distinct ways. In line with Johnston and Baumann (2010), this shows a geographic specificity – the North Atlantic –, a simplicity attached to the untamed products (for example, seafood) that, in turn, enhances personal connection with the cultural and environmental factors that form the Faroese ethnic food culture, its history and the traditions embedded in production and consumption. The restaurant landscape described in this article is a diverse microcosm that provides an understanding of how *terroir* is negotiated on the “edge of the world”.

It is noticeable that *ræst* stands out as a unique and exotic feature that is dependent on the particular microclimate and territorial conditions for fermenting meat and fish. It also distinguishes the Faroe Islands from other parts of the Nordic region. Various studies have highlighted that the modern branding of the Nordic region as a food destination is focused on freshness, simplicity and purity in tastes (Haraldsdóttir and Gunnarsdóttir 2014, Leer 2016, Neuman and Leer 2018). *Ræst* is the exactly the opposite: fermented, complex and strong in flavors and this is used deliberately in the marketing of some restaurants as a symbol of exoticism. However, the material offers a series of alternatives to the less adventurous.



While this article has analysed the promotional materials available at Visit Tórshavn, combined with a visual auto-ethnographic study, and was enriched by a conversation with the city representative and a visit to the museum, this research offers a limited vision of the ingredients and experiences that shape Tórshavn and the Faroe Islands as an Arctic food tourism destination. As a consequence, the relationship between food and tourism through the restaurant landscape can still be further explored. Future studies could expand the understanding of restaurants within destination attractiveness and visitor satisfaction, menus being the most relevant driver (Min and Lee, 2014). Specifically, new studies may analyse to what extent restaurants do not only promote *terroir* menus but also have a role in the development of destination capital (Batat, 2021). In this sense, *terroir* could also open to discussions more broadly to the new Nordic movement (see Jönsson, 2013; Skårup, 2013) and how it is understood in other destinations. For example, in terms of the international Arctic food scene, it is important to mention that Koks has temporarily moved from the Faroe Islands to the UNESCO World Heritage Ilulissat Icefjord, in Greenland, and future studies should also analyse how this shapes the position of both islands as part of the new Arctic food scene. Further research could also depart from the picture built on this article to delve into the co-creation of social meanings through restaurant experiences, as done by Matson-Barkat and Robert-Demontrond (2018), who identified the co-production of meanings based on sharing, both physically and intellectually, the environment and the food culture while eating out. These features are a source of creating memories and sharing pleasure in a context of learning from the host as a guide.

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