



Gastronomy and cultural heritage guidebook





Gastronomy as part of the intangible national & European heritage





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Do you know what intangible cultural heritage is?

Gastronomic heritage is an indispensable part of the intangible cultural heritage – both national and European. It plays an important role in the preservation of the identity of a region, nation and society.

Gastronomy serves as a significant component of intangible cultural heritage, including traditions, practices, and knowledge passed down through generations. At local, national and European levels, gastronomy plays an important role in shaping cultural identities and preserving heritage. In this section of the guide, we will explore how gastronomy contributes to intangible heritage, showing its importance in preserving cultural identity and encouraging conversations between different cultures.

Gastronomy in our Heritage

Ever noticed how food brings us back to our roots? Gastronomy isn't just about cooking; it's a bridge to our ancestors' wisdom and stories.

From the choice of ingredients to the rituals surrounding food preparation and consumption, gastronomy embodies cultural values, beliefs, and social customs.

Moreover, within gastronomy, there is a wealth of traditional knowledge passed down orally from one generation to another. From indigenous culinary traditions to artisanal techniques, preserving this valuable knowledge is essential for cultural continuity and sustainability. Gastronomy belongs to our heritage.

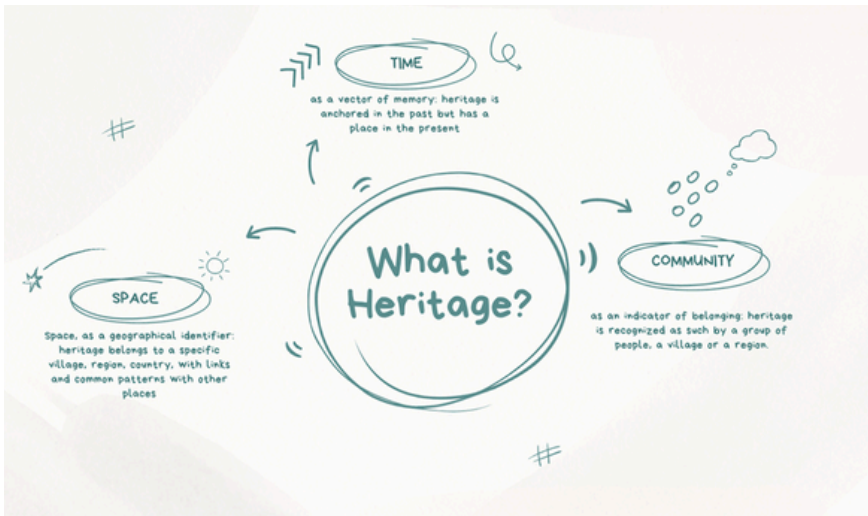
Three elements contribute to identify what is part of our heritage:

1. Time, as a vector of memory: heritage is anchored in the past but has a place in the present;
2. Space, as a geographical identifier: heritage belongs to a specific village, region, country, with links and common patterns with other places;
3. Community, as an indicator of belonging: heritage is recognized as such by a group of people, a village or a region.



Do you know what intangible cultural heritage is?

Gastronomy in our Heritage



Our Culinary intangible heritage is characterized by its relationship to these three key elements:

Gastronomic traditions serve as a vessel of memory, bridging the past and present by preserving culinary practices and recipes (Time). Culinary intangible heritage is closely tied to specific geographical locations, reflecting the unique culinary identities of communities and regions while also sharing connections with similar gastronomic traditions worldwide (Space). Culinary heritage fosters a sense of belonging and identity among communities (Community).



Do you know what intangible cultural heritage is?

Lets define intangible heritage!

Understanding the concept of intangible heritage completely is key to effectively communicating this notion to your visitors.

Unlike tangible heritage, which includes physical objects, buildings, items such as fountains, bridges and mills or even sites, intangible heritage encompasses know-how, rituals, music, dance, stories, and other cultural expressions that shape our collective identity.

The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in the “Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” (2003) defines intangible cultural heritage as:

“The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated there with – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus fostering respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”



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Do you know what intangible cultural heritage is?

Intangible heritage is the living expression!

Intangible heritage, including gastronomy, is the living expression of our cultural identity. It consists of traditions, knowledge, and practices passed down orally, experientially, and through social customs.

The example of Chestnut: legendary fruit part of human culture and practices since ages!

Legend: A lot of legends and expressions are linked to chestnuts. In French popular speech, 'châtaigne' (chestnut) means a punch or an electric shock. In Greece, toponymy reveals the importance of chestnut orchards: there are many villages called Kastania (Chestnuts). Similarly, in Corsica, many villages are named 'castagnetu' (chestnut orchard).

Festive events: Chestnuts were part of various traditions and rituals, such as offering them at weddings or during funeral ceremonies. In the south of France, Spain, and Italy, grilled chestnuts were included in the traditional meal for All Saints' Day.

Know-how: Traditional cultivation methods, drying techniques, and the production of chestnut-derived products are deeply rooted in the expertise of farmers and craftsmen, forming an integral part of cultural heritage.

Gastronomy: Often referred to as the 'bread of the poor' and revered as the fruit that rescued communities from famine, sweet chestnuts served as the primary source of carbohydrates until the 19th century in various European regions where they thrive. They have since become an enduring part of culinary traditions and are used in various forms, including grilled, boiled, or in processed products such as sweet chestnut flour, creams, whole peeled chestnuts, 'marrons glacés' (candied chestnuts), honey, and biscuits. They are integral to culinary practices and have recently gained popularity in gluten-free diets.

Intangible heritage serves as a bridge between our past, present, and future generations. It enriches our lives with meaning and connection, fostering a deeper appreciation for our cultural heritage. It is our responsibility to preserve and transmit these cultural treasures for future enjoyment and understanding. Sharing our heritage is also a way to communicate with visitors, since it expresses a part of ourselves without words and languages, and it can create a bridge to other cultures and individualities. By sharing with visitors these important aspects of our culture, we ensure their continued vitality and relevance in our society.

Last but not least, the gastronomic heritage is an inexhaustible source of knowledge about the food preparation and processing; the indigenous ingredients; the various preservation techniques; the specific ways of foods combination, etc. The gastronomic heritage is a "treasury box" that is not only holding the traditions and past knowledge. It is also a source of inspiration for new culinary creations, recipes and gastronomic innovations for current tourists and future generations.



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Do you know what intangible cultural heritage is?

European gastronomic heritage: A delicious walk through centuries

The gastronomic heritage of Europe is a vibrant mosaic of flavors, tastes, techniques and traditions that spans millennia. Its evolution tells a fascinating story starting from the ancient civilizations and evolving to the sophisticated haute cuisine of the modern era. The current European gastronomic landscape is a true testament to the continent's rich history, diverse cultures and unique terroirs.

The genesis of European cuisine can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. The Greeks "invented" the balance of the five fundamental tastes and introduced wine-making, a tradition deeply incorporated in all European cultures today. The Romans, with their vast empire, brought a world of flavors to the European table, incl. methods for food preservation, like smoking and salting. They were the ones to create and introduce sophisticated dishes using exotic spices and ingredients from their far-away territories.

The Middle Ages were mainly marked by the development of more regional cuisines and the strong influence of the Christian church and its doctrine. The imposed meat-free days led to the introduction of fish and vegetables. Meanwhile, the Crusades opened a new culinary gateway to the Middle East, introducing European cuisine to herbs and spices like saffron, cinnamon and cloves.

The Renaissance, often referred to as the period of European culture rebirth, had a significant impact also on the cuisine. The discovery of the New World introduced tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and other ingredients that would become essentials in European kitchens in the coming centuries. This period also stimulated the emergence of professional chefs and the first cookbooks, transforming cooking from a domestic chore into a respected form of art.

The Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries brought new changes to European cuisine. The mechanization in the farms increased the food production, while the development of new preservation techniques prolonged food's shelf life. Improved transportation made it possible to import and export food, resulting in a greater variety of ingredients in the existing diet. The advent of restaurants and the professionalization of chefs played a significant role in developing modern European cuisine.

Today, European cuisine continues to evolve, **blending tradition with innovation**. The slow food and farm-to-table movements emphasize local, seasonal ingredients, celebrating the unique flavors of each region. The evolution of European cuisine is a fascinating culinary odyssey that mirrors the continent's history and cultural diversity and creates a vast gastronomic heritage that should be preserved and further developed in the centuries to come.



Gastronomy heritage and benefits for the local community

As mentioned by J. S Mulcahy (2019), “Anthropologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1968) have emphasized that eating is not only a basic physical need, but also, and perhaps primarily, a marker of social and cultural belonging.”

Gastronomy is part of the community’s identify

The Sunday family lunch in Napoli, the “Greek coffee” at the village square, the French champagne to celebrate events... food heritage encompasses common social practices and strengthens the feeling of belonging. In this sense, it strengthens community cohesion, as food festivals and celebrations can demonstrate.

Gastronomic heritage is also important for ensuring the sustainability of the local community or region. As the traditional recipes are based on the local production cycle and use of locally-sourced & seasonal ingredients, they encourage a more sustainable approach to food preparation. Together with the knowledge of food and culinary skills, local food productions are regarded by the communities as their collective legacy.

It is also an entry to define the brand and image of a territory that may be useful to promote local productions and tourism.



foto credit: Pexels



Gastronomy heritage and benefits for the local community

Gastronomy promotes intercultural dialogue

Food has always been a common way for people from different cultures to connect. It can unite people, help them understand each other, and create connections between different communities. In our globalized world, where it's essential to communicate across cultures, food plays an important role in encouraging cultural exchange and appreciation.

Sharing a meal with locals when traveling is the best way to meet their culture and "live like locals". Such experience promotes tolerance and respect for cultural diversity and enriches our collective experience.

That's why gastronomy can also help refugees integrate into a new country. The Refugee Food Festival is a traveling project led by citizens and founded by the association Food Sweet Food, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The festival's idea is for restaurants to open their kitchens to refugee chefs, allowing them to share delicious and unifying moments.



photo: Pexels by Askar Abayev



Gastronomy heritage and benefits for the local community

Gastronomy heritage supports local sustainable economy

Preserving the gastronomic heritage is an essential factor for ensuring and supporting the local economy.

In many regions, gastronomy is used to promote sustainable farming, preserve traditional food practices, and support local communities. It is no wonder that gastronomy serves as a means for attracting tourists and represents a territorial capital that brings great social, ecological and economic benefits. Many tourism localities and hospitality facilities have recognized the importance of gastronomic potential for tourism development and have started to promote and offer their own authentic and traditional products (see the case studies).

Basing tourism on local food means preserving the cultural and natural heritage that supports it.

- It helps preserve traditional recipes and culinary practices to be inherited from one generation to the next, therefore maintaining a unique cultural identity of each area.
- These recipes are based on local products, which will in turn be preserved. Doing that, these are local plants and animal species that will be preserved for the good of biodiversity.



Gastronomy heritage and benefits for the local community

Gastronomy heritage supports local sustainable economy

Attracting tourists means additional potential clients and source of revenue. Gastronomy tourism encourages the development of local food industries. It will not only create job opportunities in the tourism sector (restaurants, hotels, etc.), but will also benefit local farmers, local product manufacturers (preserves, sweets, wine, etc.) and distributors (food shops, markets, etc.).

During the 8th edition of the UN Tourism World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism in San Sebastian, Spain, the UNWTO decided to highlight gastronomy tourism's role in the preservation of local territories and the promotion of sustainable practices. Joxe Mari Aizega, General Director of Basque Culinary Center stated that "Territory, innovation and creativity are key to successfully moving towards a new scenario in which to promote a model of responsible gastronomy tourism focused on caring for people and the environment. It is essential to promote sustainable practices (...)."

Following this approach, the Greek Ministry of Tourism wants to develop agro-tourism and gastronomic tourism as an essential part of its strategy. Its main action is the development of an agri-food-gastronomy-tourism interface network to function as a thematic Destination Management Organization (DMO). To increase the visibility of Greece as a gastronomic tourist destination, it foresees the mapping of the existing gastronomy tourism products and services provided (such as, agrotourism units, wineries, olive oil mills, catering businesses), gastronomic experiences (such as, organization of thematic itineraries, local interactive workshops, visits to local producers of agricultural products and wine, etc.) and gastronomic experiences (such as, organization of thematic routes, local interactive workshops, visits to local producers of agricultural products and wine, etc. etc.), as well as the digital visualisation of the above.



Preserving and promoting our gastronomic heritage

In the modern era, however, maintaining and developing culinary traditions is an important challenge, considering globalization, modernization, and lifestyle changes that can threaten the continuity of these traditions. Thus, recording recipes, cooking techniques, stories behind food and historical information related to culinary and gastronomic traditions are essential steps for preserving this heritage.

A European recognition

Over the last years, cultural heritage has gained importance at EU policy level. Already in 2014, the European Parliament recognized the cultural and educational aspects of gastronomy. In its European Gastronomic Heritage Report (European Parliament 2014), the E.P. emphasizes the importance of identifying, cataloging, transmitting, and disseminating the cultural richness of European gastronomy. Additionally, it advocates for the establishment of a European observatory for gastronomy that would celebrate and preserve culinary traditions while fostering intercultural understanding across European borders.

Most recently, the link between food, culture, heritage and tourism was recognised in the European Commission's Communication on tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond.

Gastronomy at the European level serves as a unifying force, reflecting the continent's rich cultural diversity.

The standardization and industrialisation of food chains has resulted in the decline of small farms, rural employment, and regional processing facilities, jeopardising our gastronomic heritage.

Empowering and encouraging local communities to preserve and protect their regional gastronomic traditions can help them feel that they play an important part in the preservation of their cultural heritage. Teaching the younger generation about the traditional values and cooking techniques is also an important step in ensuring that the gastronomic heritage will be preserved and passed along.



Preserving and promoting our gastronomic heritage

A European recognition

Several initiatives have been developed in Europe to preserve Gastronomic Heritage

- **The International Association for the Protection of Gastronomic Heritage** was born in 2021 with the aim of taking the appropriate and necessary measures for the preservation of the traditional gastronomic culture of every country, community, or geographical area. The instrument to assess and certify Protected Gastronomic Heritage it's the homonym Institute that has as well established an international network to broaden their footprint worldwide.

Check in the link below for more information (in Spanish): <https://patrimoniogastronomicoprotegido.org/>

- **The European Region of Gastronomy**

This event fosters collaboration among European cities and regions, promoting gastronomic heritage as a driver of sustainable development and cultural tourism.

The European Region of Gastronomy is an esteemed title awarded annually to one or more cities or regions in Europe. This important recognition is given by the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts, and Tourism (IGCAT).

The award is a collaborative effort, and the regions that receive it join a World Platform of awarded and candidate Regions of Gastronomy.



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Preserving and promoting our gastronomic heritage

A European recognition

Main goals of the European Region: of Gastronomy program

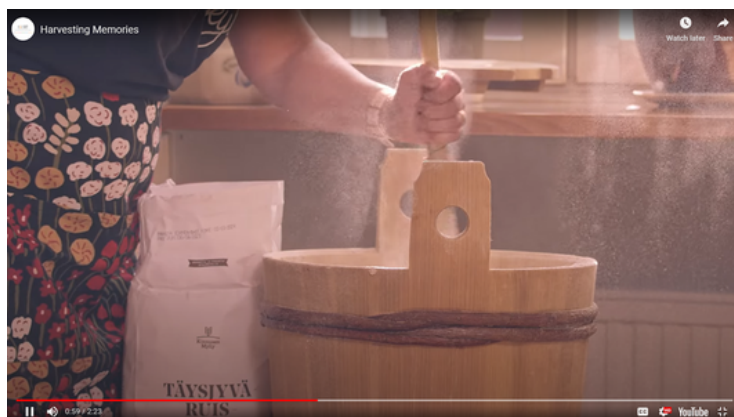




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Preserving and promoting our gastronomic heritage

A European recognition



Food Film Menu 2023 - IGCAT - International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism



Preserving and promoting our gastronomic heritage

Good practices to preserve and promote gastronomic heritage

- **Increase your knowledge on your own Gastronomic heritage**

Get in touch with local cooks! You can contact chefs, grandmothers, and food artisans to organize to your visitors hands-on cooking workshops. Participants can learn traditional techniques, such as fermenting, pickling, or baking bread. These workshops not only teach practical skills but also foster a sense of continuity with the past.

You can conduct interviews with older community members who hold valuable culinary knowledge. Ask about family recipes, seasonal practices, and food-related customs. Capture these insights in written or audio form

- **Share your Gastronomic heritage with others**

For farmers or small tourism businesses, there are different ways to help visitors understand that gastronomy reflects the unique cultural identity of a city, a region or a country. Several practices are proposed in the table below:



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Preserving and promoting our gastronomic heritage

Action	Expected impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encourage the chef in your restaurant/facility and in local restaurants you collaborate with to <p>- document and share traditional recipes and cooking techniques (even if they keep the secret of the final touch!).</p> <p>- mention in their menu the traditional character of the dishes they propose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">These culinary practices embody cultural values, historical connections, and social customs. By preserving and promoting these gastronomic traditions, communities protect their cultural identity against homogenization and globalization.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">You can organize gastronomic events and festivals that celebrate local specialties. Through food fairs, street food festivals, or themed dinners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">These gatherings allow people to experience the flavors and stories behind the dishes.It also gives opportunity for collaboration among local restaurants, markets, food producers and tourism businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Invite elders and community members to your facility/organization to share their food-related memories and stories.You can record these narratives, transcribe them, and include them in your guidebook, website, social media or other dissemination tool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Elders and community members share valuable insights on local cuisine, preserving traditions and connecting past to present through their experiences. By inviting them to share their food-related experiences, we ensure that these oral traditions remain alive.Highlighting the emotional connections people have with certain foods will help visitor better relate to your cultural identity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">You can also develop guided food trails that take visitors through historical neighborhoods, markets, and cafés/restaurants. Explain to them the cultural significance of each stop, emphasizing how the food served there contributes to the local identity. You can provide practical maps and itineraries for tourists to explore on their own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Guided food trails allow visitors to engage themselves in the local gastronomic scene and learn directly about the culinary heritage.Explaining the cultural significance of each stop gives context to the food, because visitors appreciate not only what's on their plate but also the stories that happened in the surroundings.Such trails can be the opportunity for visitors to buy local products and meet producers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is more exciting than working with youth? You can contact teachers or representatives from schools to organize workshops to teach students about local food traditions, the science of cooking, and the cultural stories behind ingredients. Arrange field trips to food markets, farms, and historical kitchens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You will help schools and educational institutions to integrate gastronomy into their curriculum.And encourage future generation to maintain culinary tradition with deep knowledge on its background.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">An innovative idea to highlight to your visitors the connections between gastronomy and traditional knowledge is through establishing a community garden where traditional ingredients are grown. <p>Engage the local authorities in the development of the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It will help explain the historical context of each plant or herb.Encourage schools and families to participate in maintaining these gardens.Provide produce for local restaurants or food events that are locally organized.

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Case studies

1. Developing a tourism business around an emblematic production:

The "Messianian Story" initiative showcases the commitment of the Bousdoukas family in Korifasio, Messinia to promote and preserve local traditions and diversify their farming activity with agritourism. Built on the family olive grove, a nice place has welcomed visitors since 2019. Visitors have the opportunity to discover the basics of olive oil production and participate in a cooking class. Once prepared, the meal will be cooked in the wood-fired oven and enjoyed together in the lovely courtyard, in the shade of the olive trees! These initiatives not only preserve Messinia's cultural heritage but also contribute to preserving Greece's unique culinary identity against the pressures of modernization, ensuring that the country's gastronomic traditions continue to thrive for future generations.

Check: [Messianian Story – Olive Oil & Gastronomic Experience](#)



Photos: Messinian Story



Case studies

2. Promoting the Gastronomy as a cultural asset of a Country in Greece

In Greece, gastronomy is a key asset of the national tourism sector, able to provide substantial economic and social benefits. It adds significant value to the destination, enhancing its appeal to visitors.

Convinced by this approach, some private and public organisations have developed websites to promote more than the classic 'moussaka' and 'Greek salad'! They want to offer a chance to discover the many distinctive features of the gastronomy of Greek regions and islands. They highlight these specificities, based on the quality of the products used in the dishes, the know-how of the locals, whether or not they are professional cooks, and ancestral culinary traditions.

Here are two examples of websites developed to promote Greek cuisine through a territorial approach, linking food and local communities. They recommend places of gastronomic interest, creating routes to explore for national or international visitors.

The Greek Gastronomy Guide!

The online Greek Gastronomy Guide is a delightful journey through the flavors, people, and landscapes of Greece. It was developed by two lovers and experts of Greek Gastronomy, George Pittas and Bilio Tsoukalas.

It celebrates the rich culinary culture of the country, highlighting its unique gastronomic treasures and focusing on the communities behind them.

Local cuisine is presented through:

- Places and Landscapes: the web pages help you explore the diverse regions of Greece, each forming a gastronomic destination.
- Products and Producers: you can learn about local ingredients, artisanal products, and the passionate producers behind them.
- History and Tradition: you will dive into the historical context of Greek food, and discover age-old recipes and culinary customs.
- Events and Rituals: to learn about food-related festivals, rituals, and celebrations.
- Gastronomic Communities: to discover professionals in agriculture, processing, catering, and hospitality composing the "Gastronomic Communities"



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Case studies

2. Promoting the Gastronomy as a cultural asset of a Country in Greece

Visit Greece

Visit Greece has been developed by the Greek National Tourism Organisation, a public body in charge of the promotion of tourism in Greece. The site promotes various destinations, cultural and environmental heritage, and also... gastronomy, as part of it!

The site provides information on:

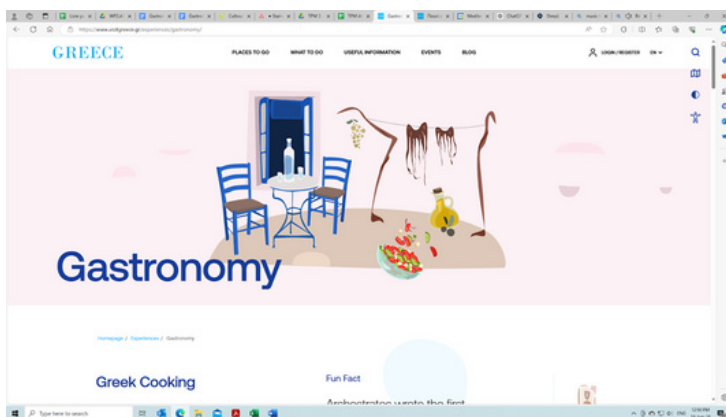
- Traditional cuisine
- Traditional products
- Greek wines, and other drinks

Each information is linked with a specific place of Greece, and is an invitation to visit it.

See more on:

The Greek Gastronomy Guide <https://www.greekgastronomyguide.gr/en/>

Visit Greece, Gastronomy <https://www.visitgreece.gr/experiences/gastronomy/>



Source: www.visitgreece.gr



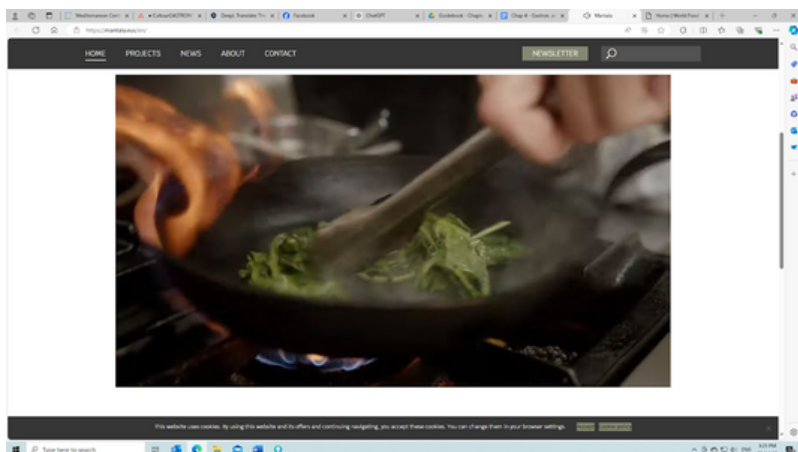
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Case studies

3. In Spain: the Mantala Basque Gastronomy

Mantala Basque Gastronomy is an initiative which aims to promote and develop Basque gastronomy, fostering exchanges of knowledge and co-creation. Mantala is the result of a public – private collaboration backed by Basque Culinary Center and Hazi Fundazioa among others. Its main purpose is to maintain and secure Basque gastronomy position through projects, knowledge and content development as well as research.

Check in the link below for more information: <https://mantala.eus/en/>



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