

**RESEARCH REPORT**

Received: 12 October 2023. Revised: 25 November 2023. Accepted: 7 December 2023.

## Ukrainian Cuisine in Europe: Problems and Challenges for the Restaurant Business

Anastasiia Blahopoluchna<sup>1</sup> 

© 2023 Author

### Abstract

Ukrainian culture, including gastronomy, is actively promoted abroad. The prism of cooking is also used to promote a positive image of Ukraine, which helps to attract the attention of citizens of different countries, especially during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Moreover, some Ukrainian dishes, such as borsch and dumplings, are now included in international menus. *Purpose*: The aim of the article is to study the current trends in the development of Ukrainian cuisine and the Ukrainian restaurant industry in Europe. *Design / Methodology / Approach*: The following research methods are used in the article: deduction, induction, analysis, synthesis, explanation. *Findings*: Last year, Ukrainians opened about 500 different outlets abroad. Ukrainian cuisine is not very popular in Europe. Many Europeans find Ukrainian dishes too fatty and heavy. In the neighbouring countries, people often do not notice the difference between their cuisine and ours, especially since they are really similar. There are no more regional differences than in Ukraine. But in general, for most Europeans, Ukrainian cuisine is very specific, exotic, alien, and it takes some getting used to. *Originality / Value*: The article considers the popularity and attractiveness of Ukrainian cuisine in European countries. The article analyses the partial reorientation of restaurant establishments that operated in Ukraine but were forced to relocate their facilities to other countries due to the war. *Practical Meaning*: An analysis of the problems that arise during the integration of Ukrainian cuisine in other countries will allow us to develop a clear and correct algorithm of actions for Ukrainians to run a successful restaurant business in Europe. *Further Research*: The author's further scientific research will address the problem of improving the ways of introducing Ukrainian cuisine in other countries of the world, as well as analysing the stages of development of the Ukrainian restaurant business in Europe.

### Keywords

restaurant business, Ukrainian cuisine, European markets.

JEL Classification: L83, Z31.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anastasiia H. Blahopoluchna, *corresponding author*

✉ a.h.blahopoluchna@udpu.edu.ua ☎ +380936530243

Lecturer-trainee at the Department of Technology and Organization of Tourism, Hotel & Restaurant Business, PhD in Food Technology, Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, 2 Sadova Str., Uman, 20300 (Ukraine)

Опубліковано онлайн: 15 грудня 2023.

[https://doi.org/10.31499/2786-7838.ssedj.2023.1\(3-4\).98-103](https://doi.org/10.31499/2786-7838.ssedj.2023.1(3-4).98-103)

## НАУКОВЕ ПОВІДОМЛЕННЯ

Отримано: 12 жовтня 2023. Переглянуто: 25 листопада 2023. Прийнято: 7 грудня 2023.

# Українська кухня у Європі: проблеми та виклики для ресторанного бізнесу

Анастасія Благополучна<sup>1</sup> 

© 2023 Автор

## Анотація

Українська культура, в тому числі й гастрономічна, активно популяризується за кордоном. Через призму кулінарії відбувається також і популяризація позитивного іміджу України, що дозволяє привернути увагу громадян різних країн, особливо під час російсько-української війни. Тим більше, що деякі страви української кухні, зокрема борщ і вареники, увійшли до меню міжнародної кухні. **Мета.** Мета статті полягає у дослідженні сучасних тенденцій розвитку української кухні та ресторанного господарства України в Європі. **Дизайн / методи / підходи.** У статті використовуються такі методи дослідження: дедукція, індукція, аналіз, синтез, пояснення. **Результати.** За минулий рік українці відкрили близько 500 різних точок за кордоном. Українська кухня не надто користується попитом у Європі. Українські страви для багатьох європейців надто жирні та важкі. У країнах ближнього зарубіжжя часто не помічають різниці між своєю кухнею та нашою, тим більше, що вони дійсно схожі. По регіонах відмінностей не більше ніж в Україні. Але загалом для більшості європейців українська кухня дуже специфічна, екзотична, чужина, до неї треба звикати. **Оригінальність / цінність / наукова новизна.** Розглянуто популярність та привабливість української кухні у країнах Європи. Проаналізовано часткове переорієнтування закладів ресторанного господарства, які функціонували в Україні, але через війну змушені були перенести свої потужності в інші країни світу. **Практичне значення.** Аналіз проблем, що виникають під час інтеграції української кухні в інших країнах світу дозволить розробити чіткий і правильний алгоритм дій для ведення українцями успішного ресторанного бізнесу у Європі. **Подальші дослідження.** Подальші наукові розвідки автора стосуватимуться проблеми удосконалення шляхів впровадження української кухні в інших країнах світу, а також аналізу етапів розвитку українського ресторанного бізнесу в країнах Європи.

## Ключові слова

ресторанний бізнес, українська кухня, європейські ринки.

## Introduction / Вступ

The restaurant industry is a sphere of human activity that has been rapidly developing in recent times, both in Ukraine and in Europe. In the civilized world, the restaurant business is one of the most common types of small businesses. Therefore, there is constant competition among establishments and enterprises to achieve optimal positioning in the market and its most promising segments, as well as to attract new and retain loyal customers.

The Ukrainian national cuisine belongs to the European food system and, at the same time, partially incorporates elements of the cuisines of Asian nations. Ukrainian dishes are known for their diversity and high taste qualities. Ukrainian cuisine boasts hundreds of recipes, including borscht and dumplings, varenyky (stuffed dumplings) and halushky (dumplings made from potatoes or grains),

<sup>1</sup> Анастасія Геннадіївна Благополучна, автор-кореспондент

✉ a.h.blahopoluchna@udpu.edu.ua ☎ +380936530243

викладач-стажист кафедри технологій та організації туризму і готельно-ресторанної справи, доктор філософії з харчових технологій, Уманський державний педагогічний університет імені Павла Тичини, вул. Садова, 2, м. Умань, Черкаська область, 20300 (Україна)

mushroom soup, mushroom sauce, banush (cornmeal porridge), varenyky (dumplings) and sausages, baked goods, and fruit and honey-based beverages, all of which are famous far beyond Ukraine's borders. Many features of Ukrainian cuisine are influenced by the lifestyle of the Ukrainian people, the majority of whom earned their living through strenuous agricultural work. To sustain such demanding labor, people needed hearty, calorie-rich food. Hence, Ukrainian cuisine is characterized by dishes rich in proteins, fats, and carbohydrates.

Each of Ukraine's ethnographic regions has its own distinct culinary characteristics influenced by historical peculiarities and traditions. Some Ukrainian dishes, such as borscht and varenyky (dumplings), have become part of international cuisine menus.

Abroad, Ukrainian culture, including its cuisine, is actively promoted. This promotes a positive image of Ukraine and draws more attention from people in different countries to the military-political situation between Ukraine and Russia. Culinary aspects play a role in this promotion as well, as the culinary heritage of a country can be a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy and international exchange.

## Literature Review / Огляд літератури

Ukrainian cuisine has evolved over many centuries, reflecting not only the historical development of the Ukrainian people, their customs, and tastes but also the social conditions, natural, and climatic features that the Ukrainian population experienced during its historical development. As far back as the Trypillia culture (5–6 thousand years ago), which was adopted by the Eastern Slavs, the population of Right-Bank Ukraine cultivated grain crops such as wheat, barley, and millet (Onyshchenko, 2021).

In the territory of ancient and medieval Europe, two modes of nutrition existed that influenced the subsequent history of Europeans' everyday life: for the Greeks and Romans, a plant-based diet was characteristic (wheat, olives, grapes), while the so-called "barbarians" preferred a meat-based model (wild game, pork from forest pastures, beef, fish). This created a contrast between two types of economies: the cultivation of land for agriculture and the appropriation of the "gifts" of wild, untamed, primitive nature. Since agriculture was a sign of higher food production culture for the Romans, meat became the main value in the culture of Northern Europe. The confrontation and later interaction of these two modes of nutrition laid the groundwork for the development of European folk cuisine (Bondar, & Golikova, 2022, p. 130).

The historical sources from the times of Ancient Rus indicate a much lesser conflict between grain-based and meat-based dietary experiences in the territory of Ukraine. The Greco-Roman model of nutrition quickly and smoothly penetrated this region through Byzantium, facilitated by fertile soils, proximity, and favorable weather conditions in ancient Ukraine. Meanwhile, its natural resources were rich in wild plants, game, and fish, which constituted a significant portion of the local diet until the 18th century.

Until the 19th century, meadows and forests were used for grazing pigs, large and small cattle, which were also an integral part of the diet. It can be assumed that both European dietary patterns peacefully coexisted in Ukrainian lands from the Middle Ages to modern times. In the 17th–19th centuries, due to socio-economic changes in the living environment of Ukrainian peasants (the annexation of Ukraine to the Russian Empire led to the rapid serfdom of a significant part of the population) and changes in the structure of the natural-geographical environment, the Ukrainian way of eating tended to favor a plant-based model. Only recently has there been a return to a balanced plant-meat-dairy diet (Bondar, & Golikova, 2022, p. 130).

Until the 17th century, Ukraine preserved all the garden plants that were grown in classical medieval times: garlic, onions, cucumbers, beets, cabbage, carrots, turnips, parsley, celery, parsnips, radishes, and lettuce. In the late 18th century, potatoes were introduced, and in the 18th century, they were known as "earth apples" in the Zaporizhzhia region (Simochko, & Boyko, 2022, p. 267).

In the 19th century, potatoes gained significant popularity in Ukraine, becoming a staple in both first and second courses, as well as a side dish for fish and meat dishes. Potatoes earned the nickname "the second bread" in Ukraine and were widely consumed, with almost all first courses prepared with potatoes, replacing traditional vegetables like parsnip and turnip (Volkova, 2015).

Starting from the late Middle Ages, Ukrainian cuisine gradually developed two distinct trends, the combination of which in the 17th and 18th centuries created a clear understanding of national gastronomy for contemporaries. One of these variations was the "common" or "peasant cuisine," often

associated with dishes like borscht, varenyky (dumplings), and salo. This cuisine was shared by peasants, Cossacks, nobility, and clergy, with variations in richness being the main distinction between their meals.

Indeed, Ukrainian cuisine encompassed another facet known as the “aristocratic cuisine,” which was influenced by both Eastern and Western culinary traditions and was primarily prevalent at the courts of Rus’ princes and the ecclesiastical elite. This cuisine emerged from the fashionable trends of the royal court of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which itself had been influenced by Italian and later French culture, as well as Eastern patriarchs with Ottoman influences. During those times, a chef’s skill in not only preparing complex dishes but also presenting them elegantly at the table was sometimes valued even more than other culinary talents (Ostapienko, & Ivanova, 2020, p. 180).

Ukrainian cuisine, in general, is incredibly diverse, with one of its key features being the wide variety of ingredients used. The most iconic example of this diversity is borscht, which is considered one of the culinary achievements of the world. Its popularity extends far beyond Ukraine’s borders, making it a renowned dish with a broad spectrum of consumption worldwide.

In Ukrainian cuisine, many ingredients undergo complex thermal processing – they are first fried or boiled, and then stewed or baked. This is the most distinctive feature of Ukrainian culinary technology. The complex thermal treatment helps preserve the aroma of the dishes and gives them juiciness. A large number of dishes (such as krucheniki, zavyvanky, stuffed poultry and vegetables, spicy salo, and meat with garlic) are prepared in seasoned and stuffed forms (D’Antuono, & Bignami, 2012, p. 3; Fedosova, 2012, p. 874).

### **Problem Statement / Постановка завдання**

Due to the war in Ukraine, many people were forced to leave their homes and move to other countries. Restaurant owners are relocating their establishments and attempting to integrate into Europe. The aim of this article is to explore the modern trends in the development of Ukrainian cuisine and the restaurant industry of Ukraine in Europe.

### **Materials and Methods / Матеріали та методи**

The article employs various research methods, including deduction, induction, analysis, synthesis, and explanation to investigate the subject matter.

### **Results and Discussion / Результати та обговорення**

Europe holds the leading positions in the global restaurant business market and is rightfully considered the birthplace of modern food establishments, as well as a legislator of worldwide restaurant business trends. European restaurant business is the most stable in the world, making it an exemplary model for emulation and an experienced “elder brother” in the international restaurant market.

Last year, Ukrainian restaurateurs were full of illusions about opening businesses abroad and made hundreds of attempts to conquer Europe. Overall, Ukrainians opened around 500 different establishments abroad in the past year. Several dozen new venues were opened in the Czech Republic, and about 30 are planned in Georgia. As for other countries, these include Romania (about 15–20), Moldova (about 5), isolated cases in Germany, France, Portugal, and a few interesting venues in Dubai and London. There has never been such a surge in Ukrainian restaurant business abroad before. This is primarily related to migration – both of owners and investors, as well as consumers, who make up a significant portion of the clientele in countries like Poland. At one point, Ukrainians could constitute 80–90% of the audience, but now these numbers have fallen to 20–50% depending on the city and specific establishment. Moreover, many establishments were intentionally created for locals, and their owners did not emphasize their Ukrainian roots (Geist, 2022).

Ukrainian cuisine is not in high demand in Europe. In Poland, it’s easier in this regard: Poles often don’t notice the difference between their cuisine and ours, especially since they are quite similar. Regional differences are no greater than in Ukraine.

In Georgia, there are several popular Ukrainian restaurants. However, overall, Ukrainian cuisine is very specific for most Europeans. We love it, it’s dear to us, but for other countries, it’s exotic,

something they need to get used to. Ukrainian dishes are often considered too heavy and fatty by many Europeans.

Today, Europeans, and the world in general, prefer light and healthy dishes with an appealing presentation. In Europe, regional cuisine, cafes, bakeries, versatile Italian cuisine, various Asian cuisines, fast food, and bars are in demand. Ukrainians tend to succeed in these same directions, except for regional cuisine. Therefore, pizzerias, often with delivery services, become successful ventures.

The demand for this food is high because it's affordable and very tasty. However, out of the 500 establishments that Ukrainians have opened in Europe, the majority are cafes and bakeries. This trend is more popular than shawarma. It's a relatively straightforward and in-demand business. In Europe, the tradition of having coffee several times a day is well-established, and pastries always pair well with coffee. Ukrainians increasingly open bakeries with a local assortment, plus some additions like pizza, casseroles, hot sandwiches, and hot dogs.

In 2016, the travel blog Yonderbound compiled a ranking of the world's tastiest cuisines. Ukrainian cuisine proudly made it to the top ten and was recognized as the third best in Europe. Since then, the popularity of our gastronomic traditions hasn't waned one bit. Furthermore, chefs and restaurateurs are reviving forgotten authentic dishes and astonishing not only the country's guests but also Ukrainians themselves (Dyshkantiuk, Kharenko, & Ivychuk, 2018).

After the war began, renowned European chefs, whose restaurants had Michelin stars, tried to introduce Ukrainian cuisine, rather than French, Italian, or Asian, into their menus. They searched for authentic recipes of our dishes, modernized them slightly, and added them to their menus. This is something that pleases the palates of international restaurant critics today.

Recently, Yevhen Klopotenko's team signed a contract to create a book of Ukrainian recipes in English for the US market. In February 2022, work began on the English version of the Klopotenko website. Additionally, Klopotenko's book with Ukrainian recipes recently appeared in major bookstores in Germany. This way, the chef is promoting Ukrainian cuisine.

## Conclusions / Висновки

In conclusion, the restaurant business is a key component of the food industry and serves as a socio-economic system within regional interindustry clusters, significantly impacting the development of all sectors of the country's food complex. Ukrainian cuisine doesn't enjoy significant popularity in Europe. Ukrainian dishes are often considered too heavy and fatty by many Europeans. In neighboring countries, the differences between their cuisine and ours are often overlooked, as they are indeed quite similar. There are no more regional differences than in Ukraine. However, after the onset of the war, renowned European chefs, whose restaurants had Michelin stars, attempted to introduce Ukrainian cuisine, rather than French, Italian, or Asian, into their menus. They sought authentic recipes of our dishes, made slight modifications, and added them to their menus. This is something that pleases today's global restaurant critics.

## Author Contributions / Авторський внесок

Conceptualization and Design / концептуалізація та проектування: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Literature Review / огляд літератури: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Methodology and Validation / методологія та обґрунтування: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Formal Analysis / формальний аналіз: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Investigation and Data Collection / розслідування та збір даних: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Data Analysis and Interpretation / аналіз та інтерпретація даних: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Writing – Original Draft Preparation / написання – початковий варіант: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Writing – Review & Editing / написання – рецензування та редагування: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Supervision / нагляд: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Project Administration / адміністрування проекту: A. Vlahopoluchna;  
Funding Acquisition / залучення фінансування: A. Vlahopoluchna.



## References

- Bondar, N., & Golikova, T. (2022). Culinary traditions and eating patterns of various Ukrainian regions. In D. Bogueva, T. Golikova, M. Shamtsyan, I. Jākobsone, & M. Jakobsons (Eds.), *Nutritional and health aspects of traditional and ethnic foods of Eastern Europe* (pp. 265–277). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-811734-7.00004-9>
- D'Antuono, L. F., & Bignami, C. (2012). Perception of typical Ukrainian foods among an Italian population. *Food Quality and Preference*, 25(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2011.12.003>
- Dyshkantiuk, O., Kharenko, D., & Ivychuk, L. (2018). Potensial restorannoho hospodarstva Odeshchyny v rozvytku hastronomichnoho turyzmu [The potential of the restaurant industry in the development of gastronomic tourism in the Odessa region]. *Food Industry Economics*, 10(2), 31–39. <https://doi.org/10.15673/fie.v10i2.958> (in Ukrainian)
- Fedosova, K. S. (2012). Trends and prospects of gastronomic tourism in Ukraine. *Food Science, Engineering and Technologies*, (59), 872–876. [https://uft-plovdiv.bg/site\\_files/file/scienwork/scienworks\\_2012/docs/5-Turizam\\_hranene\\_ketaring/Fedosova\\_D.pdf](https://uft-plovdiv.bg/site_files/file/scienwork/scienworks_2012/docs/5-Turizam_hranene_ketaring/Fedosova_D.pdf)
- Geist, E. (2022). From Khrushchev's kulish to chicken Kyiv: How soviet power redefined Ukrainian cuisine. *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 50(2), 143–161. <https://doi.org/10.30965/18763324-bja10071>
- Onyshchenko, T. O. (2021). Main features of Ukrainian cuisine. *Proceedings of the All-Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Conference of Higher Education Applicants and Young Scientists "Innovatsiini tekhnologii rozvytku u sferi kharchovykh vyrobnytstv, hotelno-restorannoho biznesu, ekonomiky ta pidpriemnytstva: naukovy poshuky molodi"* [Innovative development technologies in the field of food production, hotel and restaurant business, economics and entrepreneurship: scientific research of young people]. Part 2. (p. 255). Kharkiv State University of Food Technology and Trade. <http://surl.li/orxef>
- Ostapienko, M., & Ivanova, M. G. (2020). Michelin star system in the perceptions of Ukrainian chefs. *Yearbook of Varna University of Management*, (13), 178–190. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3755550>
- Simochko, T., & Boyko, N. (2022). Eastern European ethnic food preservation and future sustainable food production. In D. Bogueva, T. Golikova, M. Shamtsyan, I. Jākobsone, & M. Jakobsons (Eds.), *Nutritional and health aspects of traditional and ethnic foods of Eastern Europe* (pp. 265–277). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-811734-7.00013-X>
- Volkova, A. (2015). Naukovo-etnografichne doslidzhennia osoblyvostei tekhnologii strav ukrainskoi natsionalnoi kukhni [Scientific-ethnographic research of peculiarities of technology of dishes of Ukrainian national cuisine]. *Path of Science*, 1(1), 4.1–4.8. <https://pathofscience.org/index.php/ps/article/view/4>

