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## COMPARISON OF INCIDENCE OF FAIRGROUND FOOD AND TRADITIONAL REGIONAL FOOD AT CZECH GASTRONOMY EVENTS: A FIELD STUDY

**Abstract:** *This article deals with the culinary events, particularly with the frequency measures for various types of festival stands and festival foods categorized by their types. The main focus is on two opposite categories of stands, i.e., stands dominated by traditional regional food and stands dominated by fairground food. For both categories, frequencies of various dishes types were measured. The field research included 33 gastronomic events where the data were collected. After data processing, the results showed that traditional regional cuisine stands to be balanced in frequency with stands offering fairground dishes. While vegetable, fruit, and fish dishes are absent for both groups, the soups are more present for traditional regional cuisine. Confectionery and bakery products are more frequent for fairground cuisine. Sui generis category of food was the meat-based dishes, especially for the fairground category, with the highest variance in frequency. Due to the relatively low presence of foreign dishes, the traditional Czech culinary events could be considered patriotic. The Czech fairground dishes that can be classified as opposed to traditional regional Czech food are still an essential part of Czech culinary festivals. As the fairground dishes can be regarded as highly sensorially pronounced, the conclusion of this research proposes to find out if the sensory typicality of fairground food is a reason for the occurrence at Czech culinary festivals. This should be done especially from the culinary event participants' point of view.*

**Key words:** *Central European cuisine, culinary culture, festival stands, sensory preferences, tastes of dishes*

**JEL Classification:** L66, L83, Z13

## Introduction

Gastronomy plays a crucial role in the tourism industry as tourists spend almost half of their budget on food (Hipwell, 2007). The term "Culinary tourism" was firstly formulated in 1998 (Horng and Tsai, 2012a). There have been several studies focusing on food tourism, such as gastronomic tourism, wine tourism, and coffee tourism. Thus, food becomes an essential factor in destination marketing strategies (du Rand and Heath, 2006), and official

national tourism organizations in many countries consider national cuisine as a cultural attraction. Food and tourism integration strategies can enhance local economic development (Hall et al., 2004). The basis of gastronomic tourism is a traditional regional product and various gastronomic festivities and attractions that promote these products (Boniface and Cooper, 2005). In the Czech Republic, these are, for example, farmers' markets, city markets, Christmas markets, wine events (Prague Wine Week, Tábor Wine Festival, Mikulov gourmet festival), beer festivals (Czech Beer Festival, Pilsner fest), Raw fest, Gastrofestival Czech Specials, Prague Food Festival, Karlovský gastro festival (Kotíková, Schwartzhoffova, 2008).

The popularity and growth of food-themed events have been well documented. For example, Hall and Sharples (2008) cataloged food and wine festivals around the world and provided cases and examples of events that cater to wine and food tourists. Cavicchi and Santini (2014) attempted to organize various aspects of food and wine events in Europe within a stakeholder framework. Festivals have attracted the most attention, and according to the 2011 Restaurant, Food and Beverage Market Research Handbook (Miller et al., 2011), there are more than 1000 food and wine festivals held annually across the United States. There is a variety of other food events, including markets, fairs, shows, congresses, and competitions. Smith et al. (2010) concluded that food, event novelty, and socialization are pushing motivation factors for attending a culinary event. These factors are internal and initiate a need by individuals to undertake a trip.

A particular way to enjoy gastronomy and support local tourism and economy are the festivals, feasts, and fairgrounds that have their origins in church festivities, religious traditions, and pilgrimages (Ohler, 2002). The phenomenon of pilgrimages occurs in almost all religions in the world. The believer, making the pilgrimage, had in mind the upliftment and purification of his soul (Jeřábek, 1961). The Greeks traveled to Delphi and Jews traveled to Jerusalem every year. Every adult Muslim is obliged to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his life. The greatest fame in the history of the Baroque pilgrimage was related to the re-Catholicization that took place in the 17th century (Kalista, 2001). Pilgrimage places were often located near human dwellings, where pilgrims had the opportunity to attend often than to the previously popular and famous "peregratio majores" (Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago de Compostela). Under the influence of Enlightenment ideas and the industrial revolution, pilgrimages lost their original meaning and became folk festivals without religious connections. Nowadays, these kinds of events are frequently motivated by complementary reasons -other than religion- such as culture, relationships, and entertainment (Vukonic 1996; Shackley 2001).

However, pilgrimages to holy places have strongly influenced gastronomy and hospitality. Along the roads leading to the sites of pilgrimage, inns and refreshment stalls grew. These became an integral part of the pilgrimage, a regular stop on the path to spiritual knowledge (Royt, 1992). The pilgrim could refresh himself with cakes filled with cottage cheese or

fruit, that differed in each village. Refreshment stalls and pubs have slowly become an ordinary matter. They also appeared in the target holy places (Eichler, 1888).

The culinary image of the Czech households in 1650 during the pilgrimage was characterized by the absence of potatoes that were not yet known, as well as sugar that was still rare and too expensive (sugar beet was not yet discovered). Nevertheless, the festive food was quite varied and tasty. However, it was significantly differentiated according to status and wealth, as the nobility made sure that the day of the pilgrimage was perceived not only as "holy days" but as a "holiday". The people got used to it very quickly. Greased barley porridge with mushrooms and roasted meat, rice soup, wheat, or rye pancakes were served, which were dipped in three types of sauces: spicy onion, currant, and cream with chopped chives. Roast pork, mutton, and duck were most often served as the meat. The sweets were dominated by strawberry porridge full of fruit and drizzled with honey, carrot cream with raisins and roasts, pretzels, and honey cakes (Černá, 2015).

Another type of food connected to the topic of this study can be categorized as fairground food. It can be considered as opposed to traditional Czech food. Current Czech fairground food includes some Czech as well as foreign examples: brynza gnocchi, sausages on beer, goulash, burgers, gyros, falafel, "Stramberk ears" - cone-shaped gingerbread cookies, spit cake "Trdlo", coconut logs, sweet wood, Turkish delight, cotton candy, batter, pretzels, cakes, gingerbread, hot dogs, ribs. It is obvious that fairground dishes can overlap with the foreign dishes' category.

## **Materials and Methods**

The research aims to find out what is the incidence of traditional food and fairground foods at the Czech gastronomy events. In total, 33 gastronomic events throughout the Czech Republic were attended by a team of researchers. These visits took place from January 2019 to February 2020. The data was collected by using a specialized sheet for data collection. The number of visitors estimated by the organizer for each event was used for calculating two statistics. Initially, to count the mean number of visitors for one event (mean = 3000 visitors) and then to calculate the median number of visitors for one event (median = 1000 visitors). From the total 33 events, there were 7 beverage festivals, 11 traditional festivals; typical for a particular region, 9 festivals focused on one specific Czech food product (which varied according to a certain event), and other 6 events (including farmers' markets). Festivals for international cuisine were not visited.

For each event, the number of stands were recorded and divided into the following categories: stands connected with the topic of the event, stands offering traditional or regional food, stands offering fairground food (excluding foreign fairground food), and stands offering foreign food. The data for the number of dishes at each stand was collected

as well and divided into the following categories: meat-based food, vegetable food, fish food, soups, bakery & and confectionery food, and other food. For each dish, place of preparation was registered too, i.e., *in situ* or off the events. It is understandable that some categories may overlap because some of them have been counted more than once.

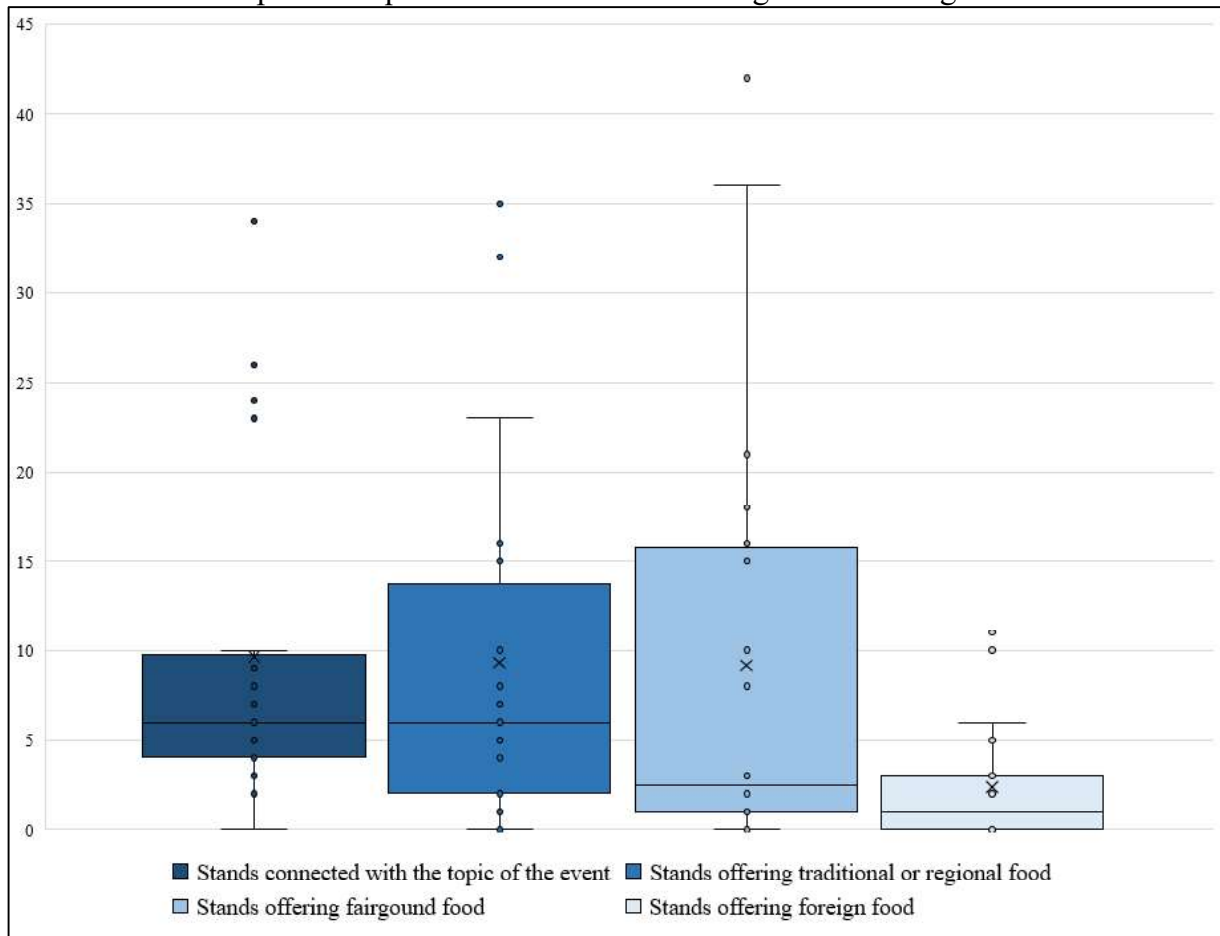
Since the frequencies of particular stands and food varied significantly for visited events, outliers in the frequencies of stands and food were eliminated with the Tukey method with a modified multiplier of IQR which was increased from 1.5 to 2.2. The structure of the data did not enable more detailed statistical grouping. The low number of observations did not enable statistical tests. Therefore, the results are presented as frequencies summarized for all 33 events through box-whisker plots with the visualization of minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, maximum, and arithmetic mean. The graphs, dealing with stands, represent the frequencies of stands summarized for all events. The graphs, dealing with food, represents the frequencies of foods summarized for all events.

## Results

On average, stands with the dominant offer for foreign dishes are the least frequent on Czech gastronomic events. More frequent are the stands which contain most dishes related to the theme of a gastronomic event. Regarding their frequency mean and frequency median, they are equal to the stands that offer traditional or regional cuisine. However, stands with traditional and regional cuisine demonstrate higher third quartile, higher maximum, and greater variance. This means that if there are stands with traditional or regional cuisine at the event, then the number of these stands varies considerably in number.

Nonetheless, the most significant fluctuation in the frequency of stands is recorded for those in which fairground dishes are dominant. Although they are on an equal average to the previous two categories, their median is much lower. The above-mentioned results can be summarized as follows: at the Czech gastronomic events, there are on average 10 stands with an offer that is focused on the event, 10 stands with traditional or regional cuisine, and 10 stands with fairground food. However, it is the stands with fairground meals that fluctuate the most in frequency at individual events - in large part of the events, they occur only in the number of about two stands, while in a noticeable part of events, they occur in the number of 15 stands. This fact is responsible for pulling up the mean of this category. The occurrence of stands with traditional and regional dishes is consistent at events and does not differ much in frequency within individual events. As mentioned above, most consistent are the stands with the offer that corresponds to the focus of the event - at individual festivals; they do not differ in number. (See Graph 1).

Graph 1: Frequencies of Stands According to their Categories



Source: own processing

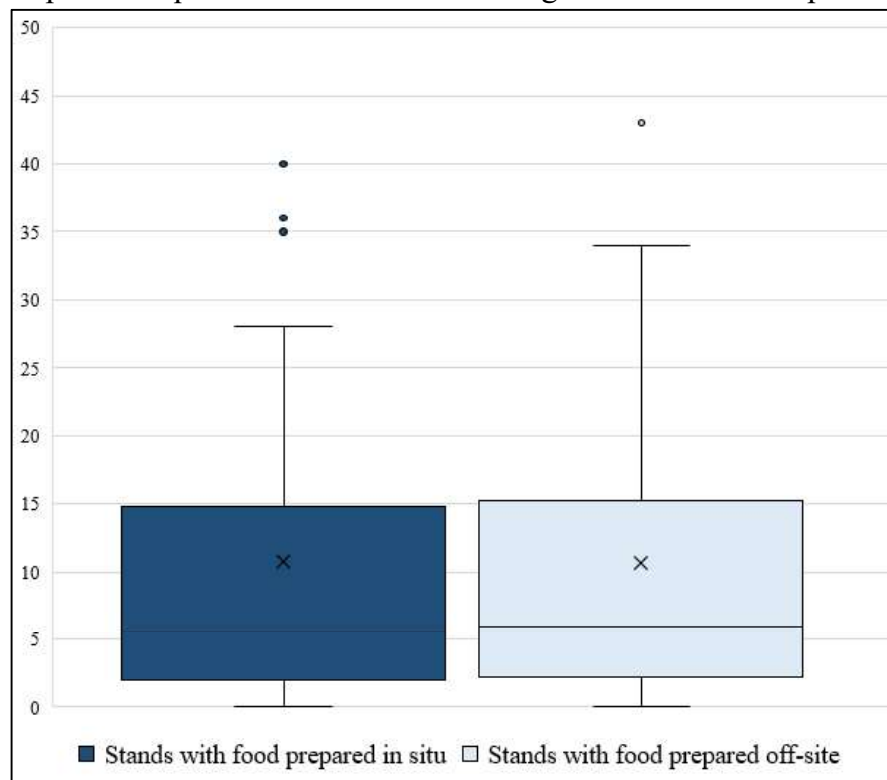
Note: the values represent minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, maximum and mean (cross); outliers exceeding the modified multiplier of 2.2 are not included

The results show the method of production is entirely comparable. The median and mean are the same for meals produced *in situ* as well as for meals produced off-site. On average, there are approximately 10 stands on the market where food is prepared at the place of sale, and 10 stands where chefs prepare meals before arriving at the gastronomic festival. (See Graph 2).

A closer look at the frequency of traditional regional and regional foods shows that vegetable, fruit, and fish dishes reach only a minimal mean number at Czech gastronomic festivals. On average, significantly more frequent are meat-based traditional regional dishes (on average 1.5 such dishes at gastronomic festivals), traditional regional soups (on average 1.5 such dishes at gastronomic festivals), and bakery and confectionery products (on average 1.4 such dishes at gastronomic festivals). In half of the examined events, however, traditional meat-based dishes did not appear at all; on the contrary, in the remaining half, they appeared in a significant incidence in the number of 3.75 food types and also reached a

higher maximum. A larger interquartile range and a zero median value mark the extreme frequencies for traditional meat-based dishes at Czech gastronomic events, i.e., they do not occur at all at

Graph 2: Frequencies of Stands According to the Place of Preparation



Source: own processing

Note: the values represent minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, maximum and mean (cross); outliers exceeding the modified multiplier of 2.2 are not included

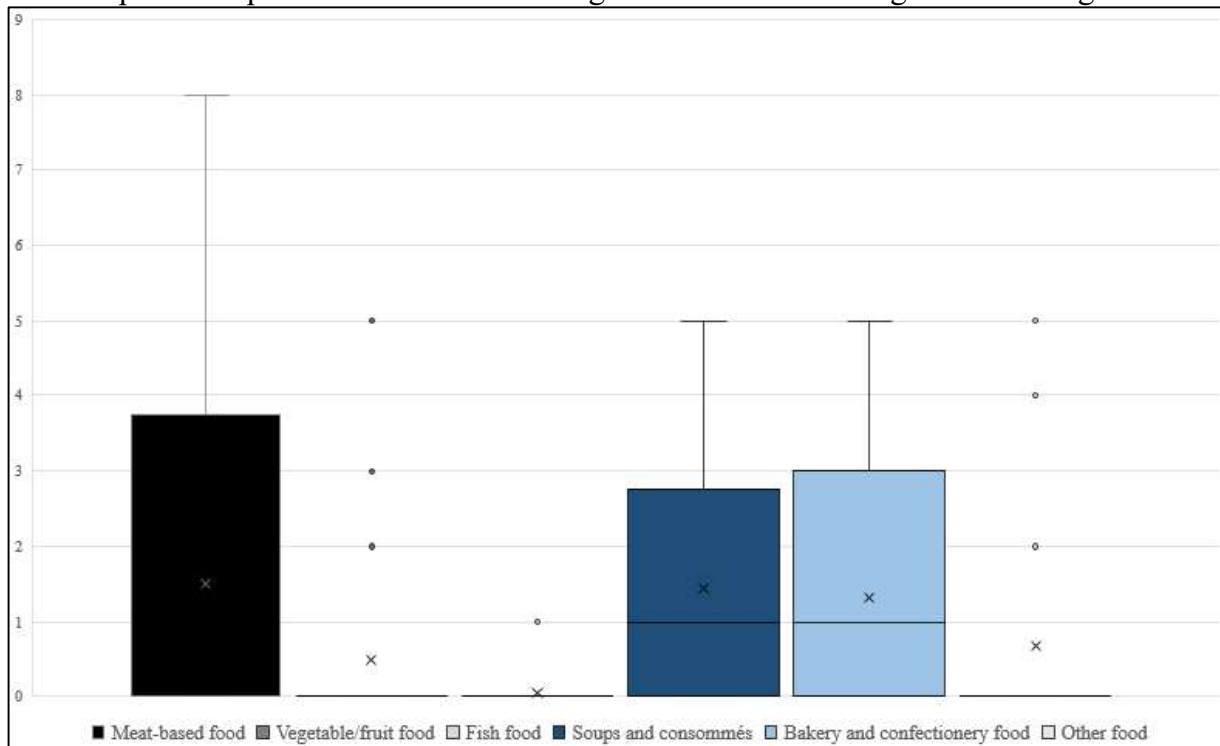
some events or on the contrary they are very highly numerous in comparison with other traditional regional dishes. In contrast, traditional soups and traditional bakery and confectionery dishes are more consistent in number. In the half of gastronomic festivals, there is at least one traditional soup and one traditional vegetable/fruit dish. In the other half of the events, these dishes consistently exceed at least one type of food. As will be mentioned below, the number of traditional regional dishes at Czech events can be assessed as relatively low - compared to fairground dishes. In particular, the absence of traditional vegetable/fruit dishes as well as traditional fish dishes is striking. (See Graph 3). For an example of traditional regional food on Czech event, see Picture 1 and Picture 2 in appendices.

A closer look at the fairground dishes shows a major difference in incidence compared to the traditional regional dishes. As with traditional regional dishes, fairground vegetable/fruit dishes and fairground fish dishes have very low incidences. However, the main advantage of traditional regional festivals is the occurrence of soups and broths.



Although traditional regional soups are represented only in small numbers, they still outnumber the fairground soups by far, which are essentially absent at Czech culinary events. In contrast, bakery and confectionery fairground dishes are more frequent (on average 2.5 meals per event) than the traditional regional bakery and confectionery products (on average 1.4 meals per event).

Graph 3: Frequencies of Traditional/Regional Foods According to their Categories



Source: own processing

Note: the values represent minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, maximum and mean (cross); outliers exceeding the modified multiplier of 2.2 are not included

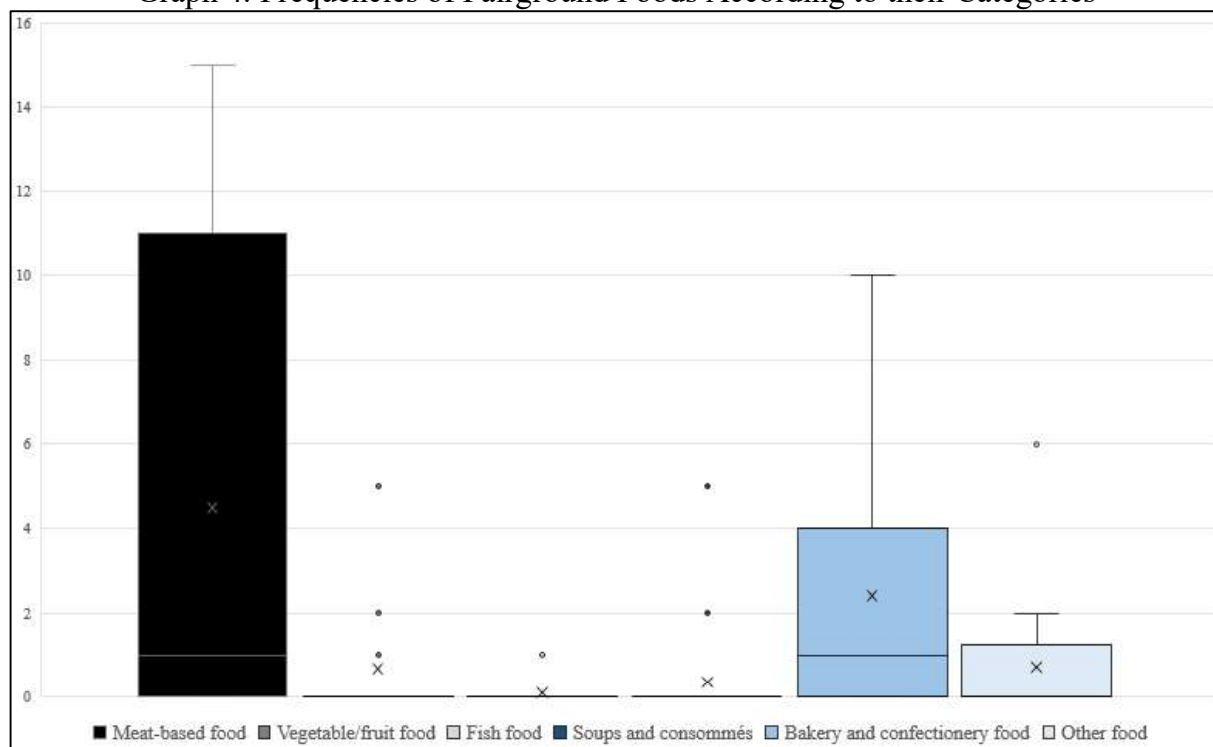
For the meat-based fairground dishes, the occurrence is even extreme compared to traditional regional meat-based dishes. Fairground meat-based dishes occur in 4.5 food types on average. Nonetheless, as with the traditional regional meat-based foods, fairground meat-based dishes are represented in half of the events only in one type. Surprisingly, for the second half of the events, they can reach up to a relatively high number of types, i.e., 11 different foods for 25 % of the events. For an example of fairground food on Czech event, see Picture 3 in appendices.

## Discussion & Conclusion

The preparation of meals *in situ* and off-site (outside the point of sale) is completely balanced. What can be described as a positive is that there are not many stands with a predominantly foreign offer at typical Czech events, where one can expect Czech foods.

Czech events can still be described as relatively patriotic. The occurrence of stands with an offer predominantly focused on the event's topic, a traditional regional offer, and a fairground offer is balanced (10 stands per event on average for each). The stands with the offer connected with the focus of the event are relatively consistent in frequencies. Nonetheless, the stands with the traditional regional offer differ in frequencies depending on a particular event. The most extreme is the stands with fairground offerings, which vary greatly for different events in numbers.

Graph 4: Frequencies of Fairground Foods According to their Categories



Source: own processing

Note: the values represent minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, maximum and mean (cross); outliers exceeding the modified multiplier of 2.2 are not included

Despite the relatively high number of stands, there are not always many different types of food on these stalls - the menu is rather limited and is repeated on individual stands. This corresponds to a more detailed look at the frequencies of individual traditional regional foods and fairground foods. For both categories, vegetable/fruit dishes are nearly absent, so are the fish dishes. Traditional regional soups are more common at researched events, whereas fairground confectionery and bakery products are slightly more common. *Sui generis* is the meat-based dish that achieves the greatest variance in frequency, both for traditional regional and fairground dishes. In some events, they are either not represented at all or are relatively often available, i.e., 3.5 types of such traditional regional meat-based dishes for one event. This is especially obvious for fairground dishes. It is no exception if there are up to 11 such meat-based dishes at one event. Meat-based foods, including

traditional regional and fairground dishes are, negligible in some events, while in others, they are dominant compared to other offered dishes.

Over time, food began to represent more than a physical requirement, it became culturally embedded, and "holy days" became enjoyed as "holidays" (Boniface, 2003). Events that are themed with food and beverages have become top-rated attractions around the world (Hall & Sharples, 2008). Based on the literature search, it can be concluded that thicker soups characterize the Czech national cuisine, many types of sauces with stewed meat, often with cream, and roasted meat, cakes, pastries, game meat, mushrooms (Klánová, Pavera, 2012). Especially the inclusion of thicker soups within the Czech national cuisine corresponds with the higher incidence of soups during Czech culinary festivals.

Contemporaneously, the fairground foods consisting of meals offered at festivals, fairgrounds, and folk feasts are predominantly sweet, salt, and fat, greasy. Such dishes have a distinctive taste: consumers have sweets associated with home, well-being, security, sweets evoke pleasant feelings, as sugar increases the level of dopamine (Velíšek, 2002; Grofová, 2007). Animal fats have a delicate velvety taste that is pleasant to humans, fats saturate, and soothe (Fiala, 1999). The salty taste is pronounced and salt in the body acts as an antidepressant (Dlouhý, 2007). Especially the highly frequent presence of sweet or salty fairground confectionery and bakery products corresponds to the basic description of dominating taste in fairground dishes.

Therefore, the relatively balanced incidence of traditional and fairground stands could be explained by human physiology and needs. If the consumer has the opportunity, he/she will deviate from the (dietary) regime we have set ourselves (Fraňková, Dvořáková-Janů, 2003). Therefore, the taste-driven natural preferences of visitors could be one of the possible explanations of the relatively high incidence of fairground stands and fairground foods; nonetheless, this hypothesis needs to be examined in the future. Based on the conclusion, following-up research could include research on the visitors' attitudes to find out about their needs. Subsequently, demand and supply can be compared. Based on this research, it would be possible to provide recommendations for sellers at gastronomic festivals.

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Jiří Zelený does research in agricultural economics, in particular consumer economics, using both qualitative and quantitative methodology. He employs econometrics, sensory evaluation as well as sociological tools.

## Appendices

Picture 1: An example of traditional regional sweet food at Czech culinary events; sweet pies "Frgále" (pies of Slovácko region)



Source: own photograph

Picture 2: The examples of traditional regional food at Czech culinary events. From left to right - "bramboračka" (potato soup), "utopenci" (pickled sausages), "dršťková pomazánka" (tripe spread), "tvarohová pomazánka" (curd cheese spread), "plněné knedlíky uzeným masem a zelí" (filled dumplings with smoked meat and sauerkraut), and "šišky s mákem" (sweet potato dumplings with poppy seeds)



Source: own photograph

Picture 3: The examples of fairground food at Czech culinary events. "Klobása" (bratwurst), and randomly shaped grilled cheeses



Source: own photograph