

# Cook slow, eat fine — consumer attitudes on food quality in new gastronomic trends

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**Abstract:** The introduction and application of new ideas in business plays a key role in the development of the company and is an important factor for competitiveness in the market. Leading hospitality companies, through the application of different kinds of standards, have introduced numerous innovations that have influenced a number of changes in such businesses. The constant pursuit of innovation has led to the emergence of new directions in gastronomy. Preparing food in the most modern appliances and designing menus in almost laboratory-like conditions have become features of fine-dining and molecular gastronomy restaurants. A return to old, forgotten tastes, often termed hedonism, in turn, characterises slow food gastronomy. However, modern generations' dining wishes are being realised in fast-food restaurants. The aim of this study, based on a sample of 580 people, was to provide insight into how familiar Belgrade residents are with new trends in restaurant food preparation, with special emphasis on the importance of food quality.

**Keywords:** gastronomy, food, hospitality, trends, attitudes.

## Introduction

Innovation has a very important role in modern business, and can be defined as the process of applying any new idea to solve a problem, or improve a service process, product or service (Hjalager, 2010; Lee et al., 2016). Živković and Brdar (2018) stated that in modern business, everything can be considered a type of cost, except innovation. Accordingly, profit created is not created by products, services, business, or employees, but by consumers who are willing to pay the right price for a product or service that will satisfy their needs and expectations.

High-quality service is imperative in modern business and is very important for achieving competitiveness in service industries. Quality assurance is the dominant process in all business activities, from industrial to service companies. Careful quality management has become a decisive factor in the success or failure of many organisations. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the quality of services. Gaining and retaining customers is a key factor in marketplace survival (Cho et al., 2020). Service industries are paying more attention to quality management, while manufacturing companies realise that complementary, additional services, such as ordering, delivery and complaint handling, are very important aspects of their business. A process

of continuous innovation helps restaurants make it harder for competitors to imitate potential services and allows such businesses to maintain their uniqueness ahead of others, leading to a long-term competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2016). In modern market conditions and strong competition in all aspects of business, it is necessary to have good knowledge of the specifics of service marketing, so that companies and organisations in the field of service activities can survive and develop in the right way (Veljković, 2009). Modern service consumers are experienced, aware of their needs, demand value for money and have increasingly complex requirements. The basis for meeting their needs is to provide quality services that are constantly improved and innovated, with an emphasis on the need to apply standards when creating services (external and internal — quality management, food safety, corporate social responsibility, etc.) (Živković and Brdar, 2018).

Given that hospitality is a complex service system, innovations in this area can be considered much more complex than in manufacturing sectors (Kyriakopoulos and Moorman, 2004). However, although innovations in hospitality do not necessarily involve a classic change or expansion of the product line, they must primarily be profitable for the business (Čavlek et al., 2010). Innovations in the hospitality industry are generally characterised by anything

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that differs from ordinary business or that is an innovation of business practice (Ottenbacher and Gnoth, 2005; Hjalager, 2010; Trantopoulos *et al.*, 2017; Albers-Garrigós *et al.*, 2018).

Innovations can be divided according to different criteria, but when it comes to innovations in tourism and hospitality, we can use the following divisions: (Hjalager, 2002; Hjalager, 2010)

- product innovation,
- innovations in business operations,
- innovations in the field of information management,
- innovations in the field of management, and,
- institutional innovation.

The most important factors in hospitality are to create an innovative menu and to implement it in the right way. Hospitality managers need to innovate their offer of gastronomic products in response to modern trends in nutrition and create menus that are in line with the current requirements of consumers (Cho *et al.*, 2020). To ensure success in an organisation, the menu needs to be aligned with market changes. Modern trends in gastronomy tend to emphasise the natural taste, composition, texture and structure of food; this is a response to the increased awareness of guests about what they consume every day (Gagić *et al.*, 2014). The main forms of service innovation in the hospitality industry are innovative culinary-scientific techniques (e.g., molecular gastronomy), offering healthy meals, an innovative approach to food presentation, and authenticity as elements of the innovative offer.

## Contemporary trends in gastronomy – literature review

Molecular gastronomy (molecular cuisine) is a trend in line with new trends in human nutrition. Molecular gastronomy can be described as a fusion of science and classic cuisine, i.e., the use of certain devices that give food peculiar organoleptic properties (Vega and Ubbink, 2008). This (2009) defines it as “a branch of science that studies the physico-chemical transformations of edible materials during cooking and sensory phenomena associated with their consumption”. When culinary art merged with science, a completely new, rather revolutionary culinary trend emerged, which lately has become a means of expression for master chefs, but it also entices guests who are ready to try something new and unusual. Kitchens have been turned into laboratories, where the magic happens with the help of liquid nitrogen, deionised water, helium, calcium

compounds, homogenisers, lasers and injections, which in short means — chemical construction with the aim of changing the structure of the food (Rao *et al.*, 2003; Ottenbacher and Harrington, 2009; Slavich *et al.*, 2019; Miličević, 2020).

Molecular gastronomy has not only produced innovations in the way food is prepared by restaurants. In fact, food preparation under the principles of molecular gastronomy changes the entire restaurant and the hierarchy in the kitchen (Blanck, 2007; Cousins *et al.*, 2010). Implementation of molecular gastronomy shows the restaurant is actually ready for innovation and specific changes in order to achieve authenticity and competitive advantages (Blanck, 2007; Cousins *et al.*, 2010). Molecular gastronomy at first glance can be characterised as a relatively expensive endeavour. At restaurant level, it can cost significantly more than traditional cuisine at the same restaurant, for practical reasons of the non-existence of hierarchy in the situation where there are as many chefs as there are dishes. From the restaurant side, it should be pointed out that molecular gastronomy requires some investment in infrastructure, because the dining experience lasts for several hours. Everything is opposed to classic restaurant operation (Rodgers, 2011; Božić and Durović, 2019).

A menu based on healthful acceptable meals embraces the “healthy food” concept, i.e., the concept of nutritious meals in which no additives or unwanted supplements are introduced *via* foods of plant or animal origin. In restaurants with this approach, the menu can be based just on the fact that classic white wheat flour is not used. As Gagić (2014) stated, the introduction of whole grains as a raw material for bakery products is seen as an innovative step that will meet the needs of the market segment that sees this type of carbohydrate food as a better choice compared to the previously used refined flour. Today, it is very desirable to have integral flour bakery products on the menu, but the use of white, refined sugar in desserts is also under scrutiny. Simply, the healthy food concept is to avoid excessive use of salt, flour and sugar. Desserts in these restaurants utilise various substitutes for white sugar, such as sweeteners and other more acceptable foods, that give the dish some sweetness (Gagić, 2014).

Fine dining restaurants offer very high standards in all aspects of their business. Their products are defined by fresh ingredients of exceptional quality (Ninemeier, 2005). Also, chefs with particular culinary skills are necessary, because the dishes are prepared using special devices that allow chefs to prepare them in an experimental way, combining different

flavours and textures of food. A particularly important technique in food preparation is *sous vide*, a technique that focuses on meeting demanding guests' expectations of minimally processed, safe, nutritious food that has a visual appeal, smell, taste, and texture comparable to fresh food (Kilibarda *et al.*, 2018). However, in addition to the food itself, great emphasis is placed on the selection of dinnerware and utensils to be used, on the service itself, and on the wines that will be served with a particular dish (Tsaour *et al.*, 2015). When it comes to the interior design of this type of restaurant, it is elegant, exclusive, and exudes a refined atmosphere (Rozekhi *et al.*, 2016).

Education is considered to influence people's experience and shape their values, beliefs, attitudes, interests, activities and lifestyles. Some research shows that with increasing education level, consumers become better acquainted with food and drink and the level of restaurant service (Tsaour and Lo, 2020). Some authors argue that high-income groups are more likely to visit fine dining restaurants because of the quality, comfort, prestige and personalised service observed in full-service restaurants (Hyun and Kang, 2014; Cao *et al.*, 2019). High-income groups have more disposable income, and probably some amount of their higher disposable income is spent in search of hedonistic pleasure, among which is counted fine dining (Ali Eliwa, 2006; Sahni and Mohsin, 2017).

Fast-food can be defined as a sector of the food industry that is characterised by fast preparation of food and beverages, and rapid service, for immediate sale to the customer (Ninemeier, 2005). Although fast-food restaurants differ from each other in some aspects, they do have something in common — a limited menu and a process focused on one product (pizza, burger, etc.) (Barjaktarović, 2015). All aspects of working in fast-food restaurants are highly standardised, which leads to large production volumes. Variable operating costs constitute a large part of the selling price of the product, so must be accurately calculated. This type of restaurant is intended for markets with relatively low average consumption frequencies in restaurants. In a competitive market, fast-food restaurants need to focus on improving the quality of their services in order to compete and survive (Namin, 2017).

Slow food is a global organisation officially founded in 1989 in Paris after the signing of the Slow Food Manifesto, although the idea and movement itself emerged in Rome three years earlier after demonstrations against the opening of a McDonald's restaurant on the Spanish Steps, one of the city's landmarks (Hendrix and Lagendijk, 2020). The organisation was created to prevent the extinction of local food-related

cultures and traditions, to oppose a fast-paced lifestyle and to raise people's awareness of the value of food. This is exactly what the Statute of Slow Food says — slow food acts to protect the right to enjoyment of both humane rhythms of life and a harmonious relationship between people and nature (Altuna *et al.*, 2017). It has developed into a global movement in which millions of people are involved, working to provide everyone with access to good, clean and fair food. This concept promotes the idea that food is related to many other aspects of life, including culture, politics and agriculture. Also, the slow food movement believes food choices can collectively influence how food is grown, produced and distributed, and that the world changes as a result (Siniscalchi, 2014).

Slow food is an environment in which all people can have access to and enjoy food that is healthy and acceptable for them, for those who produce the food, and that is good for the earth. The approach to this concept is based on three interrelated principles: good, clean and fair (Slowfood, 2015). The principle "good" applies to quality, tasty and healthy food. "Clean" refers to production that does not harm the environment, while the principle "fair" refers to affordable prices for consumers and fair conditions for payment to producers (Simonetti, 2012; Siniscalchi, 2014; Hendrix and Lagendijk, 2020). Every member of the slow food organisation around the world spreads the philosophy of this movement through the events and activities they organise in their communities. These events include food tastings, touring local producers and farms, and conferences and festivals (Andrews, 2008).

Slow food restaurants have a different concept from other restaurants. The waiter has a menu and introduces the guests to the selection, making it more immediate for them. These types of restaurants can offer all major food groups — meat, fish, fruits, and vegetables, but the food is exclusively local and locally prepared. Specifically, slow food restaurants intend that people have a hedonistic approach to food and simply enjoy it, but the goal is also to raise guests' awareness of food perception and where their food comes from (Payandeh *et al.*, 2020).

National cuisine or gastronomy is a branch of general gastronomy and refers to the set of all the characteristics related to nutrition, food culture and food preparation methods in a location, all conditioned by the ethnic being of the people themselves (Vukić, 2012). However, Baltic *et al.* (2018) state the term "national cuisine" can only be used conditionally because there is no truly homogeneous national cuisine. National cuisines have developed throughout history and are related to the culture of the people who inhabited

specific territories, and thus, they reflect the material culture of the people. Authenticity, as an element of an innovative offer, affects the overall ambience of the product and can greatly improve the way national cuisine restaurants do business (*Le et al.*, 2019).

This study aimed to find out about the attitudes of residents in Belgrade, Serbia, towards modern trends in the restaurant business.

Materials and Methods

The research was conducted using an anonymous survey in the period from January 30, 2020 to March 31, 2020 on a sample of 580 respondents in Belgrade, Serbia. A questionnaire containing 22 questions was developed. The questionnaire consisted of five parts: the first part referred to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and included six questions. The second part included questions related to the habits of the respondents as consumers in relation to restaurants. In this part, four closed-ended questions were asked, with

the possibility of choosing one or more answers. The third part of the questionnaire dealt with the attitudes of consumers towards restaurants, i.e., what is of great importance to them when they choose and visit restaurants. This part included five questions in the form of a modified Likert scale (5 points, where 1 stands for I don’t care at all and 5 stands for “of crucial importance”). The fourth part of the questionnaire included seven closed-ended questions, with answers limited to only one per question. This part was based on modern trends in the restaurant industry and included opinions and knowledge questions on some recent trends in the hospitality industry.

Results and Discussion

The first part of the questionnaire dealt with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, and these data are shown in Table 1.

The second part of the questionnaire related to the habits of the respondents as guests in relation to restaurants. Table 2 shows the answers to the questions

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics		No. of respondents (percentage)
Sex	Male	264 (45.5%)
	Female	316 (54.5%)
Age	18–25	368 (63.5%)
	26–35	132 (22.8%)
	36–45	40 (6.9%)
	46–55	20 (3.45%)
	55+	20 (3.45%)
Education	High school	164 (28.3%)
	Undergraduate degree	312 (53.8%)
	Higher degree	104 (17.9%)
Marital status	Married	80 (13.8%)
	In relationship	260 (44.8%)
	Single	240 (41.4%)
Employment Status	Employed	280 (48.3%)
	Self-employed	64 (11%)
	Student	204 (35.2%)
	Unemployed	32 (5.5%)
Monthly Income	Up to 30,000 RSD	148 (25.5%)
	30,000–50,000 RSD	96 (16.6%)
	50,000–80,000 RSD	168 (29%)
	80,000–120,000 RSD	80 (13.8%)
	Over 120,000 RSD	88 (15.2%)

**Table 2.** Restaurant visits, type of restaurant and expense per visit

<i>Frequency of visits</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Daily	118	20.35%
Once a week	134	23.10%
<b>Several times a week</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>41.72%</b>
Once a month	46	7.93%
A couple of times a year	32	5.52%
Once a year / never	8	1.38%
<i>Restaurant type</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>Fast-food restaurants</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>44.8%</b>
International cuisine	136	23.4%
Local cuisine	166	28.6%
Eat exclusively at home	32	5.5%
Canteen	24	4.1%
<b>Fine dining restaurants</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
<i>Amount of money spent per visit</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Up to 1,000 dinars (up to 10 \$ or 10 €)	184	31.7%
<b>Between 1,000 and 2,500 dinars (10–25 \$ or 10–25 €)</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>39.3%</b>
Between 2,500 and 5,000 dinars (\$ 25–50 or € 25–50)	124	21.4%
Over 5,000 dinars (more than 50 \$ or 50 €)	44	7.6%

on how often the respondents visit restaurants, which restaurant types they visit the most frequently, and how much they typically spend during their visit. The most common answers are marked in bold.

The results in Table 2 show the large numbers of respondents visited restaurants several times a week (41.72%), followed by those who go to restaurants once a week (23.10%) or every day (20.35%). The largest number of respondents visited fast-food restaurants (260; 44.8%). *Dave et al.* (2009) suggested that public education on fast-food's unhealthiness may not affect fast-food consumption, while the frequency of fast-food intake is significantly associated with perceptions of fast-food's suitability and the respondent's aversion to cooking, but not with the perceived unhealthiness of fast-food. If consumption is taken into account, these results are confirmed by the current study, having in mind that the largest number of respondents spent between 1000 and 2500 dinars (39.3%), followed by those who spend up to 1000 dinars (31.7%) per restaurant visit. It follows, therefore, that the majority of respondents eat unhealthily at fast-food restaurants, but this could be explained by lifestyles, i.e., the fact that employed people spend most of their time outside their homes and, therefore, look for the simplest ways to consume food. Another reason could be a complicated

personal economic situation, impelling our respondents to find cheaper solutions to eating out. Also, *Mill* (2007) stated that people mostly visit fast-food restaurants, where customers order food at the counter, or full-service restaurants that have lower prices. The convenience of fast service and suitable location are the main sales factors for both types of restaurants, which to some extent shows increased consumer concerns about value-for-money in difficult economic times, but also boosts the popularity of this type of business. *Statista* (2020) showed that on average, people visit fast-food restaurants once or several times a week, with the younger population recording more frequent visits, and that full-service restaurants are visited several times per year by people of all generations. According to *Eurostat* (2017), households in the European Union (EU) spend an average of 8.8% of total spending on restaurants and hotels, which is about €1,400 per capita in the EU, which would be about €12 per month. According to *Henderson* (2019), the per capita average expenditure in restaurants in the United States in 2019 was about \$128, i.e., about \$12 monthly. With this in mind, it can be said that although Serbia lags behind the European Union and the United States in terms of living standards, the pattern of people's behaviour with respect to restaurants is probably quite similar.

Table 3. Crucial factors for restaurant selection

Factors	No of respondents	Percentage
Price	87	15.0%
<b>Food quality</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>36.6%</b>
Service	43	7.4%
<b>Price-quality ratio</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
<b>Food safety</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>19.3%</b>
Diversity and innovation of the offer	29	5.0%

Factors of crucial importance to the respondents in order to decide to visit a restaurant were examined, and the results are shown in Table 3.

The largest number of respondents (36.6%) stated the quality of food is of crucial importance to them. Another important factor is food safety (19.3%), followed by the price-quality ratio (16.7%). It was somewhat unexpected that price was not revealed as one of the primary factors in decision making, having in mind the price sensitivity of the Serbian population, but also taking into account respondents' answers related to their expenditure per visit in restaurants. Food quality and safety are certainly important, as the respondents showed. Other studies produced somewhat similar results, but at the same time pointed out price as one of the key factors. For example, *Lee and Cranage* (2007) found taste, price and the provision of nutritional information are key factors for restaurant choice in adolescents. On the other hand, *McCall and Linn* (2008) reported that detailed descriptions of dishes on the menu can increase the perception of food quality and can increase the likelihood of a meal being chosen, and also point out that prices will play a smaller role in quality assessment, but should influence the decision as to whether to visit a restaurant. On the other hand, *Cohen and Avieli* (2004) analysed what is crucial for Chinese and (United States) Americans. Chinese people are driven by an experience in which authenticity is important, especially food quality. In contrast, since Americans strive for freedom, prices, correlated with a lifestyle appeal, are important to them. *Jia* (2020) somewhat confirmed that Americans focus more on why and how they eat, while the Chinese primarily care about what they eat. Certainly, our results indicate the need for restaurants to pay more attention to the selection of quality and safe food, as well as to application of food safety standards to provide greater safety and quality guarantees to their consumers. Also, *Djordjevic et al.* (2019) believed that application of modern sensory analysis

methods can ensure food quality and correct food's organoleptic properties in accordance with consumer preferences.

The third part of the current study dealt with the attitudes of consumers to restaurants, i.e., what is of great importance to them when it comes to choosing and visiting restaurants. The answers were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents the statement "Not relevant" and 5 the statement "Crucial".

Reactions to food allergies in restaurants are attributed to a variety of causes, most commonly when food has accidentally come into contact with the allergens or if the consumer is accidentally exposed to food allergens hidden in mixed foods and/or sauces (*Wen and Lee*, 2020). Since there is no cure for food allergy, the only way to prevent an allergic reaction is to avoid contacting, eating and inhaling allergens (*Kwon et al.*, 2020). Therefore, respondents were asked about the importance of allergen labelling in restaurant menus. Nearly half of respondents (47.6%) said allergen labelling in the menu is not important to them at all. It is assumed that people who have a food allergy usually ask restaurant employees about potential allergens in food. Interestingly, *Wen and Lee* (2020) stated that 55% of respondents never or rarely communicated with restaurant employees about their food allergies, while only 11% of respondents did so. Certainly, the communication process can be made much easier if all potential allergens are highlighted in each dish on the restaurant menu.

The next question asked whether the restaurant needs to offer extravagant products (products that are unusual and that you can try only in that place), as well as traditional dishes. The answers showed that opinions are divided and that this exclusivity is not of great importance, so most respondents (64.1%) had a neutral attitude towards extravagant products. The greatest percentage of respondents (37.9%) were also neutral about restaurants offering traditional dishes. On the one hand, fine-dining traditional restaurants have higher prices, which reflected somewhat

by specific dishes of high quality (Lane, 2013; Peters and Remaud, 2020). On the other hand, the characteristics of traditional food are related to guests' food experience, and research showed the taste, recipes, dietary pattern, use of fresh foods and food presentation contribute to this (Oh and Kim, 2020;

Shafieizadeh and Tao, 2020). Customs, food preparation techniques and the type of food consumed are part of the tradition and heritage of traditional cuisines and dishes (Baltic et al., 2018). Because our respondents mostly go to fast-food restaurants, this lack of recognition of the importance of extravagant

**Table 4.** Importance of individual elements of the modern restaurant offer

<b>The importance of allergen labelling</b>			
<i>Importance</i>	<i>No. of answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Not relevant	276	47.6%	2.37
Don't care	103	17.8%	
Neutral	29	5%	
Important	56	9.6%	
Crucial	116	20%	
<b>The importance of extravagant gastronomic products</b>			
<i>Importance</i>	<i>No. of answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Not relevant	42	7.2%	3.06
Don't care	53	9.1%	
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>64.1%</b>	
Important	53	9.1%	
Crucial	60	10.3%	
<b>The importance of traditional gastronomic products</b>			
<i>Importance</i>	<i>No. of answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Not relevant	124	21.4%	2.89
Don't care	76	13.1%	
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>37.9%</b>	
Important	56	9.7%	
Crucial	104	17.9%	
<b>The importance of food safety</b>			
<i>Importance</i>	<i>No. of answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Not relevant	4	0.7%	<b>4.54</b>
Don't care	14	2.4%	
Neutral	37	6.4%	
Important	133	22.9%	
<b>Crucial</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>67.6%</b>	
<b>The importance of balanced nutritional value</b>			
<i>Importance</i>	<i>No. of answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Not relevant	143	24.7%	2.83
Don't care	39	6.7%	
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>45.5%</b>	
Important	38	6.6%	
Crucial	96	16.5%	

**Table 5.** The relation between respondents’ sex and the importance of balanced nutritional values

<i>The importance of balanced nutritional value</i>						
<b>Sex:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Male	18.18%	24.24%	22.73%	21.21%	13.64%	100%
Female	29.11%	12.66%	32.91%	12.66%	12.66%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.14%</b>	<b>17.93%</b>	<b>28.28%</b>	<b>16.55%</b>	<b>13.10%</b>	<b>100%</b>

and traditional dishes in restaurants is not surprising. By implementing a suitable marketing strategy and an appropriate segmentation-targeting-positioning strategy, restaurants could change the neutral attitude of consumers to a positive one and, thus, bring their offer closer to the target groups.

Food safety a key area in the restaurant business. Given the concerns of consumers on this issue, various studies indicate that cleanliness, employee appearance, inspection reports, visual appearance and temperature of food, and the overall impression of the restaurant are indicators that the restaurant cares about the safety of employees and guests (Henson *et al.*, 2006; Namkung and Jang, 2007; Ryu and Jang, 2008; Liu and Lee, 2018). The largest percentage of our respondents consider food safety a crucial factor in deciding which restaurant to visit (67.6%), which concurs with other similar studies (Lee *et al.*, 2012; Bai *et al.*, 2019; Levy de Andrade *et al.*, 2019).

Another question in this part of the research asked how important it is for the respondents if the dishes in the restaurant are of balanced nutritional value. The answers showed a relatively small percentage of respondents (16.5%) think this factor is crucial for choosing a restaurant. The largest number of respondents (45.5%) were neutral on this issue. The results obtained seem unusual, having in mind that due to modern lifestyles, people today pay a lot of attention to a healthy diet. Food in restaurants is often perceived as one of the causes of the increase in obesity rates due to its calorie and fat contents. To avoid health problems, consumers have begun to show greater interest in healthy eating, especially

when eating out. It follows that guests will more often choose healthier dishes, will take into account the portion size, and will, therefore, more often go to restaurants that have such an offer (Kang *et al.*, 2020).

The results from Table 5 show us it is more important for men that the restaurant has dishes with balanced nutritional values (total for scores 4 and 5–34.85%), while more women do not pay much attention or have no opinion about the importance of this factor for going to the restaurant (total for scores 1 and 2–41.77%). This data is very interesting, since most research has shown the opposite (Driskell *et al.*, 2006; O’Mahony and Hall, 2007; Larson *et al.*, 2018).

To better analyse the importance of some factors of the contemporary restaurant offer, the Likert scale was used, and the obtained grades were summarised as follows: scores 1 and 2 refer to a negative attitude, 2 and 3 to a neutral attitude, and 4 and 5 to a positive attitude. The scores showed that the respondents did not have a negative attitude towards any of the factors, but rather, most had a neutral attitude. The only positive attitude was expressed regarding food safety (mean of 4.54). Although this does not seem optimistic, it is not worrisome, because neutral attitudes, with adequate business decisions and measures, can be easily turned into positive ones (Živković and Brdar, 2018).

The fourth part of the study was on contemporary trends in the restaurant business and included gathering respondents’ opinions about them as well as specific questions on respondents’ knowledge about some of the trends. The most common answers are marked in bold.

**Table 6.** Desired new restaurants by type

<b>New restaurants by type</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
International cuisine	220	37.9%
Fine dining	184	31.7%
Local cuisine	160	27.6%
Fast-food	16	2.8%

Table 6 shows the respondents' opinions on what type of restaurant should be additionally opened in Belgrade. Respondents believe that it would be good to open new restaurants serving international cuisine (37.9%), while restaurants with a fine dining concept came in second place (31.7%). This indicates that fine dining as one of the modern trends should be recognised as a way to improve the offer of Belgrade restaurants.

Finally, the respondents were asked specific knowledge questions in order to determine to what extent they are familiar with new trends in the hospitality industry. Answers are presented in Table 7. Most of our respondents were of the opinion that the features of tasty, clean, and fair with a hedonistic principle are characteristic of a fine dining restaurant (73.1%). However, these are the characteristics of slow food restaurants, which shows the respondents have not yet fully distinguished the characteristics of these two restaurant business concepts.

The next question (Table 7) shows the three main features of fine dining restaurants according to the respondents. They stated the main features are a higher level of service (89%), exclusive interior (72.4%) and higher food prices (61.4%). This supports the claim that consumers know the characteristics of fine dining restaurants, because our respondents correctly chose three of the six answers offered (fast service, home-made drinks and takeaway food were incorrect). Respondents' knowledge of fine dining may have led them to put this category in second place as the best choice for opening new restaurants in Belgrade.

We also investigated whether the respondents were familiar with the *sous vide* method of cooking, and most of them (77.2%) answered correctly that this technique is attributed to molecular and modernised cuisine restaurants. Also, we can conclude that the respondents are familiar with this trend because the largest number of respondents (84.8%) answered that

**Table 7.** Respondents' knowledge of modern restaurant trends

Knowledge of the characteristics of analysed restaurant trends	Correct answer	No. of respondents/ percentage	Trend knowledge (+), trend ignorance (-)
Delicious, clean and fair with a hedonistic principle	slow food restaurant	424 / 73.1% for fine dining	–
Mark three main attributes of fine dining restaurants	/	Higher quality service – 89% (516 respondents). Exclusive interior 72.4% (420 respondents) Higher food prices 61.4% (356 respondents).	+
<i>Sous vide</i> cooking method	molecular and modernised cuisine restaurants	448 / 77.2%	+
Molecular and modernised cuisine restaurants use liquid nitrogen for technological food processing	Correct	492 / 84.8%	+
High level services	molecular and modernised cuisine restaurants	477 / 82.1%	+
Charcoal grill is used mostly in fast-food restaurants	Correct	360 / 62.1%	+

molecular and modernised cuisine restaurants use liquid nitrogen for the technological processing of food, which also was a correct answer. Another question referred to molecular and modernised kitchens having service quality of the highest level, which, again, the largest number (82.1%) of respondents knew.

That charcoal grills are used mostly in fast-food restaurants was also answered correctly by the largest number of respondents (62.1%). This answer was also expected because 44.8% of the respondents said they eat in fast-food restaurants, so they would already be familiar with those foods that are typically charcoal grilled; burgers, kebabs and the like.

Overall, the respondents to this survey were well acquainted with innovations and new trends in the hospitality industry.

## Conclusion

Innovation plays an important role in the business of all hospitality companies. No company can survive in a changing environment without innovating. For hospitality companies to survive in the market for a longer time, they must first and foremost

be able to meet the needs of their current and potential consumers. This can be achieved through implementing innovations that directly affect the quality of services. Nonetheless, quality should not be neglected, regardless of the size and success of any company, as innovation is only one element necessary to achieve competitive advantage and meet the needs of its customers. Our findings indicate that Belgrade residents are well informed about modern hospitality requirements; they know and follow modern trends, they are familiar with the types of food prepared in different types of restaurant, they support the opening and expansion of these restaurants, and visiting these restaurants has built positive attitudes about them, despite limitations in terms of the economic situation in the country and the solvency of the population. However, given today's situation with the coronavirus pandemic, it can be said with certainty that food safety, hygiene, and the safety of employees and guests will influence the emergence of new innovations and solutions that will provide full protection for all. The only question is whether we are ready for that and in what way we will accept all the changes that will occur.

# Kuvajte sporo, jedite fino — Stavovi potrošača o kvalitetu hrane u novim gastronomskim trendovima

Ivana Brdar

*A p s t r a k t:* Uvođenje i primena novih ideja u poslovanju ima ključnu ulogu u razvoju kompanije i predstavlja važan faktor za konkurentnost na tržištu. Vodeće ugostiteljske kompanije su, uz primenu standarda, uvele brojne inovacije u svoje poslovanje što je uticalo na niz promena u poslovanju. Stalna težnja inovacijama dovela je do pojave novih pravaca u gastronomiji. Spremanje hrane u naj-savremenijim aparatima i osmišljavanje jelovnika u skoro laboratorijskim uslovima postali su odlika fine dining restorana. Povratak starim, zaboravljenim ukusima, izraženi hedonizam, pak, odlikuju slow food gastronomiju. Nove generacije i njihove želje dobile su realizaciju u fast-food restoranima. Cilj ovog rada je da se, na osnovu istraživanja koje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 580 ljudi, pruži uvid u to koliko su stanovnici Beograda upoznati sa novim trendovima u pripremi hrane, sa posebnim osvrtom na značaj kvaliteta hrane.

**Ključne reči:** gastronomija, hrana, ugostiteljstvo, trendovi, stavovi.

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