

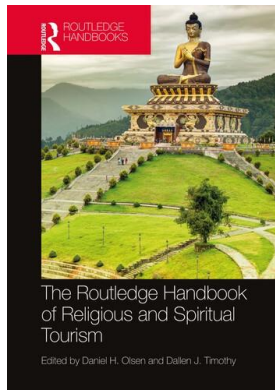
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FOOD AND RELIGION

Tourism perspectives

Silvia Aulet, Carlos Fernandes, and Dallen J. Timothy

Introduction

Eating is essential to sustain life, but beyond satisfying physiological needs, food has close connections to other aspects of life. People's alimentary behaviours are influenced by many sociocultural and economic factors, including religion and nationality. Although it can be a source of tension within a community, food is a social connector; it helps create pleasant experiences, underscores social well-being, and is fodder for familial traditions and memory-making (Carolan 2012; Contreras & Gracia 2005; Gofton 1989; Poulain 2017; Ward, Coveney & Henderson 2010).

Many scholars have drawn clear connections between food and tourism, not only with regard to food services as part of the hospitality system but also gastronomy and cuisine as a crucial part of an area's cultural traditions and its production methods as tourism assets (Hall & Gössling 2016; Hjalager & Richards 2002; Richards 2012). The linkages between food and tourism also provide a foundation for local economic development, regional tourism branding, and a platform for destination marketing, as well as a mechanism for building social solidarity in protecting local culture (Bessièrè 2013; Richards 2012).

Much contemporary discourse about food focuses on sustainability, security, and culinary traditions (Pinstrup-Andersen 2009; Timothy 2016). Part of the latter notion is the expanding work on culinary heritage and the role of food in national or regional identity formation (Frost & Laing 2016; Ramshaw 2016). The World Tourism Organization (2012, 2019) has repeatedly emphasized the importance of culinary heritage and gastronomic traditions in the development of regional tourism and in the formation of regional identity.

As already noted, food is an extremely important part of a region's heritage. It commemorates important happenings and underscores the identity of peoples and places. Gastronomy is celebrated with major cultural events, and food is a core part of every society's celebrations of birth, death, life stages, and faith. In fact, food and religion are inextricably connected in many ways. Indeed, numerous religious and spiritual practices have direct or indirect connections to food. As religion is, like food, a key part of social identity and cultural heritage, the juxtaposition of food, faith, and tourism is important for developing a deeper understanding between religion, human heritage, and religious and spiritual practice. This chapter

examines food as heritage and religious practice within the context of religious and spiritual tourism. It is divided into three sections, namely food and heritage as cultural practice, the role of food in religion, and food, religion, and tourism.

Food, heritage, and culture

Food and eating have important social and cultural dimensions (Bessi re 2013; Jolliffe 2010; Timothy 2016, 2021). Every society and cultural group has its own food preparation techniques, ingredients, and eating traditions that are important and symbolic. The cultural values and social codes where people grow up determine cooking and food consumption practices. Thus, alimentary traditions frequently differ between cultures and enable individuals to express their cultural identity (Gonz lez Turmo 2007; Nunes dos Santos 2007).

Food is a crucible of cultural knowledge and a manifestation of history. A region's history of wealth or poverty, abundance or scarcity, climatic conditions, and humankind's struggles with nature is evident in the culinary traditions that dominate a country or region. Culinary traditions are among the longest-surviving elements of culture. They reinforce social identity, support feelings of nationalism or patriotism and mirror lifestyles, religious beliefs, habits, and customs. They tell tales of colonialism and slavery, Indigeneity and subjugation, survival and death, and triumph and defeat (Timothy 2016). Thus, food consumption behaviours denote an expression of social class and resource availability (Carolan 2012; Poulain 2017). In the words of Timothy and Ron (2013a: 275),

food, cuisine and culinary traditions are among the most foundational elements of culture. While there is a long tradition of identifying many places with their traditional foods, cuisine is becoming an ever more important part of the contemporary cultural heritage of regions and countries.

Gastronomy and cuisine refer to a set of knowledge and practices related to culinary art, recipes, ingredients, techniques, and methods. They entail historical evolution, cultural meanings, and the natural environment from which food sources are obtained and the way in which they are used, as well as the social and cultural aspects that intervene in the relationship. Gastronomy and cuisine are also included as part of intangible heritage—the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and techniques that provide communities, groups, and individuals with a sense of identity and continuity according to the UNESCO Convention of 2011 (World Tourism Organization 2012).

With the globalization of people's tastes, and as people have become increasingly willing to widen their gustatory spaces, there has been a rapid growth in culinary tourism (Everett 2016; Hall & Sharples 2003; Sormaz et al. 2015; Timothy & Ron 2013b). Given that local cuisine is so fully imbued with a place's intangible heritage, tourists can gain a more authentic or holistic cultural experience by partaking of local specialty foods (Okumus, Okumus & McKercher 2007).

The Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament has recognized the importance of food and gastronomy as artistic and cultural expressions and fundamental pillars of family and social relationships (European Parliament 2014). Many of the heritage expressions on UNESCO's Intangible Heritage list are gastronomic traditions and food items. UNESCO's inscription requirements emphasize the importance of food rites, preparation methods, group knowledge, traditions, and symbols related to the act of preparing and eating specific foods (UNESCO 2020). Recognizing the importance of food and gastronomy

in human heritage, including religion, it would be remiss not to examine the relationships between food and religion as well as the ties between food, religion, and tourism.

Food and religion

Food and drink play a pivotal role in religion and often lie at the core of doctrines, dogmas, rituals, and practices. As Anderson (2014: 189) notes, food ‘is central to religion as a symbol, as a subject of prayers, as a maker of sharing and as communion’.

Religion is a defining feature of human cultures and has existed in various forms since prehistoric times. Religion and spirituality are studied from many different angles within the social sciences (Aulet & Sureda 2019), especially from a social phenomenological perspective, which is the focus of this chapter. Religion, faith, and spirituality underscore the human experience and have long provided a moral and ethical compass and social framework for living for most of humankind throughout the Anthropocene (Ron & Timothy 2019; Velasco 1982)

Religion plays several important social roles. From a food or gastronomic perspective, two of these deserve particular mention (Díez de Velasco 1998). First, religious ecology deals with how faith determines people’s interactions with their host ecosystems. Ecological protective measures that minimize anthropic impacts on vital resources are an example, as is certain religion-based taboos against eating specific animal species (Harris 1980; Jenkins et al. 2017). Second, religion provides a framework for human co-existence and behavioural norms within society. This has implications for food and meals, such as the *langar*, or community dining in Sikhism where food is offered to all attendants as a way of showing charity (Kaur 2020; Popli 2010), as well as the rising phenomenon of providing food for the poor as an act of faith-filled service (Denning 2021; Sack 2000).

All religions encompass rites, rituals and spiritual performances that are unique to each one. These procedures demonstrate individual or collective devotion to deity and typically encompass prayers, offerings, and actions that educe transcendent experiences (Gaarder et al. 2009). Rituals vary between religions and even between individual sects within religions, but they almost all share certain common elements, such as communion with deity in sacred places and times and leadership of revered individuals. They also possess high symbolic values and perpetuate the religious narrative, follow prescribed guidelines and actions, and often include music, aromatics, or food (Aulet 2012). Related to this last point, Timothy and Ron (2016: 104) suggest that “food and religion are in many ways inseparable. Food and drink form part of the physical manifestation of beliefs and spiritual traditions, and food is frequently the centre of people’s spiritual universe”. In addition to food’s clear connections to religious rituals, many people’s gustatory choices and behaviours outside of ritualistic circumstances in everyday life are determined by the faith they follow.

The Bible frequently mentions food as a manifestation of miracles, as a gift from God, as a medium of sustenance, as a sign of godly devotion, and as a substance to give to the poor and needy (Ron & Timothy 2013, 2019; Timothy & Ron 2016). The Quran also mentions eating and drinking frequently, with “sustenance being one of the chief signs of God’s existence and concern for which humans should give thanks” (Feeley-Harnik 1995: 567). Muslims are exhorted to be aware of what they eat and to eat according to tradition, for a healthy body corresponds to a healthy soul (Rouse & Hoskins 2004). Sacred scriptures and dogmas in most religions discuss the importance of food—what to eat, what to avoid, how to prepare or eat a meal, the importance of celebratory feasts, and encouraging adherents to feed the needy. Some of these concepts are elaborated on below.

Food prohibitions

Most culinary prohibitions regard the animal kingdom. While Christianity is quite lax on this issue, religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism have stricter codes related to consuming animals. Animals such as pigs, wild boars, dogs, snakes, monkeys, carnivorous animals with claws and tusks, clawed birds of prey, harmful animals (e.g., rats), animals generally considered repulsive (e.g., flies), mules and donkeys, poisonous animals, and some aquatic animals are proscribed for Muslims and deemed *haram* (forbidden) (Ribagorda Calasanz 1999). Animals that are not slaughtered according to Islamic law are also *haram*. Likewise, alcoholic beverages are forbidden (Regenstein et al. 2003; Riaz & Chaudry 2004; Timothy & Ron 2016).

Judaism's *kosher* laws pertain to foods that meet strict requirements for production and consumption. For example, blood cannot be consumed, and meat and milk products cannot be served together in the same dish or even in the same meal. The Torah is quite clear regarding which animals can be consumed and which cannot. Terrestrial animals that have cloven hooves and ruminates (i.e., cows, sheep, goats, and deer) are kosher, while those that do not meet these two conditions are not. The law forbids consuming pigs, rabbits, squirrels, dogs, cats, camels, horses, and so forth. The Torah also lists impure birds and insects that may not be consumed. Kosher marine animals must simultaneously have fins and scales, which preclude shellfish. Logically, all products derived from these animals are also prohibited, except for a curious exception: honey, since it is considered a product of flowers rather than bees (Masoudi 1993; Regenstein & Regenstein 1991; Regenstein et al. 2003; Timothy & Ron 2016).

Hinduism does not require a vegetarian diet, although it is recommended because of *ahimsa*—non-violence against all life forms, including animals. Many Hindus interpret holy writ condemning violence as a justification for a vegetarian diet, including the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata's maxim that non-violence is the highest duty and the highest teaching. There is also a common precept that non-vegetarian diets are detrimental to the mind and spirit (Ghassem-Fachandi 2006; Kaza 2005; Subramaniam 2011). However, within Hinduism, there is a great diversity of gustatory traditions that range from strictly vegan diets to vegetarian diets that include ovo-lacto foods, as well as meat and fish-eating traditions. Beef is rarely eaten, as the cow is considered a sacred animal and symbol of life (Khare 1992).

Other religious traditions may have recommendations or restrictions but are not as strict as the ones already mentioned. For example, Buddhism does not have set dietary laws, but adherents are encouraged to follow a vegetarian regimen whenever possible (Khare 1992; Rosen 2011). Monks and some very conservative orders of Buddhism in East Asia are prohibited from eating 'pungent' vegetables, such as onions, leeks, and garlic, and are discouraged from using added flavours, such as salt, chilies, and certain spices (Son & Xu 2013).

Christianity is the least regulated religion with regard to culinaria, although certain Christian denominations do have dietary restrictions. Many protestant sects discourage excessive alcohol consumption. Based on biblical interpretations, Jehovah's Witnesses refrain from consuming blood or blood-based products. They may eat meat as long as the animal is properly bled out. The strictest Seventh-day Adventists follow a vegetarian diet, although some adherents eat meat that is low in fat and 'clean', or meats that are described as kosher in the biblical Book of Leviticus. Most Adventists also refrain from using alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and caffeine. Most members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also adhere to a strict policy of eating meat in moderation, avoiding the consumption of alcohol and hot caffeinated beverages (e.g., tea and coffee), and avoiding tobacco and non-prescribed

narcotics (Timothy & Ron 2016). In some Christian monastic societies, food rules prohibit the eating of four-legged animals (Just 2007).

In short, many religions forbid eating certain foods because the foods are impure (e.g., Judaism and Islam) because people should do no harm to other living creatures (e.g., Hinduism and Buddhism) or because they are unhealthy (e.g., Buddhism and certain Christian sects). Consuming fruits, vegetables, and grains is encouraged by almost all religions, with only a few exceptions with prohibitions against eating certain grains or consuming certain foods at specific times of the year (Timothy & Ron 2016).

Food rituals

Besides regulating the content of food, some religious mores also prescribe how to handle and prepare food. In Islam, *halal* (permissible) animals must be slaughtered ritually according to Islamic law, which dictates that the slaughterer must be a Muslim who knows correct Islamic procedures. Kosher law requires similar rituals. Animals that die naturally cannot be eaten and the ritual slaughter must be carried out in a very specific manner (Popovsky 2010; Regenstein & Regenstein 1991; Regenstein et al. 2003). In Hinduism, there are specific rules for preparing and eating food, such as ritual washings of hands, feet, and mouth before a meal (Khare 1992; Timothy & Ron 2016). Eating is usually done with the fingers of the right hand in Hinduism and Islam (Regenstein et al. 2003).

Hindu traditions consider cooking a sacred rite. Since ancient times, food has been used to venerate gods and comfort the human soul and body. In Indian temple kitchens, food is prepared for deities and devotees. Temple food was traditionally considered to have healing properties. Historically, offerings (*bhog*) to Hindu gods were prepared only with traditional and natural local ingredients (nothing processed or artificial) and could only be cooked or warmed with naturally occurring elements such as coconut husks or logs from certain trees. According to Hindu tradition, food is impregnated with the essence of the fuel sources, which help cleanse suffering when eaten, so only certain types of natural fuels should be used (Appadurai 1981; Contreras 2007; Srinivas 2006).

Religious connections to food are also manifested during festivals and other celebratory times. Certain comestibles are either required or encouraged during pilgrimages, religious services, or on holidays. Religious feasts are an important manifestation of godly adoration and fulfilment of mortal duty. Almost every religion on earth celebrates certain events through formal feasts. Thanksgiving is the largest annual feast in the United States and Canada. Although its origins have been questioned by historians but believed to have originated as a harvest celebration, it became romanticized in American folklore as a sacred holiday—a time to express gratitude to God for bounteous blessings (Baker 2009). Today, although the holiday is becoming increasingly secular, it is celebrated each November (October in Canada), and for many faiths and families, Thanksgiving continues to represent a day of feasting and prayer, as a symbolic representation of gratitude for the blessings of heaven. Throughout Christendom, Christmas and Easter celebrations are marked by large feasts, with themes of hope, renewal, and rebirth. Religious feasts abound in Judaism, Islam, and other major world religions. Jews commemorate seven important historical events each year with feasts. Among the best known of these are Passover, Yom Kippur, and the Feast of the Tabernacles (Sukkot) (Ioannides & Ioannides 2006). Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the month-long fast in Islam and is celebrated with special meals. The annual Eid al-Adha, or Feast of the Sacrifice, commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ismael, in obedience to the will of God. This holiday is also marked with special feasts (Winchester 1999).

Whereas ritual feasting is encouraged on certain days of the year, moderation is generally encouraged at other times. Moderation is a core religious principle related to eating that deals with both health and self-control. Buddhism and Hinduism call for austerity and moderation. Muhammad instructed Muslims not to “kill your hearts (soul) by eating a lot and drinking a lot, since the heart is like a land of agriculture that if you pour a lot of water on it, it will be damaged” (quoted in Di Marzo 2016: n.p.). To exercise self-restraint, monastic communities of several religious traditions encourage moderation as well (Guzmán Parejo 2018; Just 2007; Thera 1994).

Connected to the larger phenomenon of moderation, fasting is a common practice in many faiths. Abstinence and fasting have a clear spiritual purpose: to promote self-discipline, to symbolize penance, and to facilitate spiritual communion with a higher power. Timothy and Ron (2016) note that in most religions, fasting can be done whenever one feels the need, but there are some prescriptions or requirements. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is the standard for all Muslims and one of the basic pillars of Islam, which has both ascetic and social connotations. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. According to the Quran, fasting is required during Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca, as well as in everyday life when needed as a sign of penance for wrongdoing (Grimm 2002; Mujtaba 2016; Vajda 2017).

In Judaism, fasting on Yom Kippur and Tish B'av is prescribed. Buddhist monks do not eat after the midday meal, and in other Asian religions, including Jainism and Hinduism, certain fasts are observed at certain times (Neusner & Sonn 1999; Smit 2014; Timothy & Ron 2016; Vajda 2017). In some sects of Christianity, Lent is considered a period devoted to fasting, abstinence, and penitence. However, fasting practices differ by denomination. In Catholicism, meat is forbidden on Fridays between Ash Wednesday and Holy Saturday. In the Orthodox churches, meat and milk are forbidden during the whole week of Lent and for several weeks afterwards (Akakios 1996; Grumett & Muers 2010). Other Christian denominations encourage periodic fasting as a means of increasing individual spirituality and drawing closer to God. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints fast for 24 hours (or two meals) on the first Sunday of each month and donate to charity the money not spent on the meals they missed. The purpose of Latter-day Saint fasting is to humble themselves, to supplicate God for blessings, and to show devotion.

In most traditional societies, food was a link between humans and gods and formed the basis for ritual offerings (Timothy & Ron 2013a). For example, the religion of pre-contact Hawaii was a complex belief system wherein almost the entire material world was imbued with sacred and symbolic qualities (Abbott 1992). The gods were believed to inhabit natural features (e.g., volcanoes), which were considered sacred to Native Hawaiians (Handy & Handy 1972). Animals were also deified and used as food offerings in ritual sacrifices in temples dedicated to nature gods. Pigs, the most valued food in Polynesia, were considered especially sacred and highly valued by the gods, as were coconuts, bananas, chickens, and certain fish—often red ones—because red was a sacred colour (Titcomb 1972). Food offerings were literally intended to feed the gods, as a means of increasing their power (O'Connor 2008). Death-day celebrations around the tombs of saints included huge feasts of sacred food attended by as many as a hundred people (Feeley-Harnik 1995). Today, food offerings continue to be a salient part of people's lived religious life. Daily food donations to deity are a common practice in many religious cultures throughout the world and are a routine practice in daily life. Beyond actions at home, however, people participate in food-related rituals and activities during holidays or other travel opportunities. This is especially true during pilgrimages.

Food, religion, and tourism

Increased research attention has been devoted to the crossover between food, religion, and tourism in recent years (Aulet, Mundet & Vidal 2017; Aulet, Vidal & Crous 2015; Hall & Prayag 2020; Lee & Wall 2020; Ron & Timothy 2013, 2019; Son & Xu 2013; Timothy & Ron 2016). As previously noted, religion and gastronomy are inextricably connected with one another, and both are important (and inseparable) elements of cultural heritage. When tourism is brought into the mix, additional perspectives are manifested. Ron and Timothy (2013) conceptualized a typology of relationships between food and religious tourism (see Figure 30.1). As this typology suggests, there are many ways in which the relationships between food, religion, and tourism intersect (Ron & Timothy 2013: 236–237), some of which were noted in the previous section. The first relationship entails godly offerings. During official pilgrimages and even on informal visits to temples, shrines, or other sacred sites, many of the faithful ‘sacrifice’ food items as a sign of devotion. Such actions may be seen as more altruistic or auspicious during journeys away from home. Second, bestowing money or food to the needy is an important part of many pilgrimages. The meat of sacrificial animals is often donated to the poor during holidays and feasts, and other food items (e.g., fruit and bread) are donated to organizations to help feed the disadvantaged in the destination. The third relationship is the role of religiously proscribed food items and preparation methods. These come to bear on religious adherents’ travel experiences, whether they travel for religious purposes or on holiday. Fourth, there are also prescribed foods that should be consumed during pilgrimages or other types of travel, such as certain sacraments and sacrificial animals. The ways in which food and eating can unite the faithful in a sense of solidarity is the fifth relationship. Solidarity between fellow travellers can be enhanced through meal-time socialization, even when the meal is not religious in nature. Sixth, foodies, or serious culinary tourists, have been likened to ‘secular pilgrims’ who travel to seek personal fulfilment by immersing themselves in the cultural foodscapes of the destination, just as other

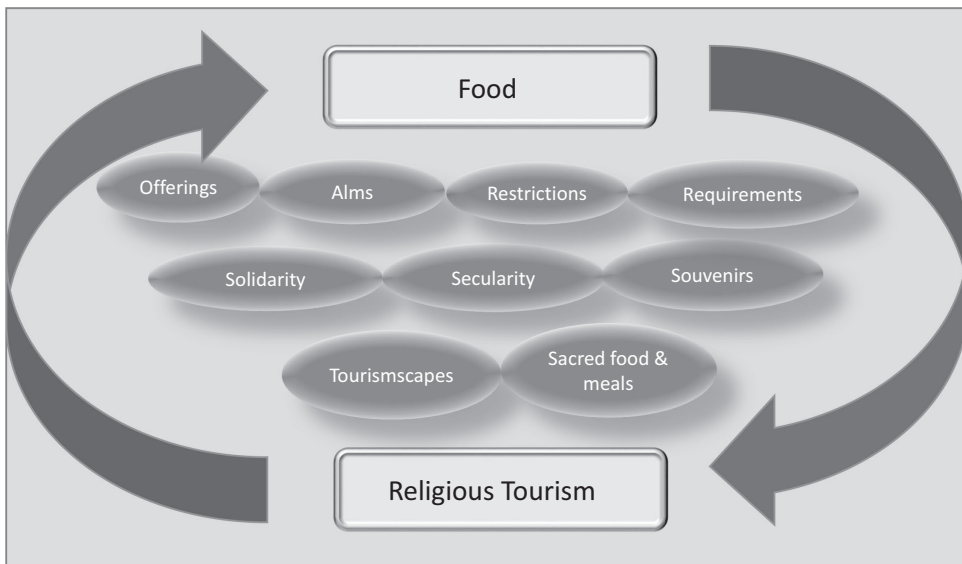


Figure 30.1 Relationships between religion and food in the tourism/pilgrimage context
 Source: adapted from Ron and Timothy (2013).

secular pilgrims might do in other visitor contexts. For some travellers, culinary immersion may be a spiritual experience. The seventh association is the emergence, production, and consumption of religious food souvenirs. The eighth connection is the development of religious food-oriented tourism landscapes, which is common in several sacred localities, such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth. There, stimulated by mass religious tourism in the Holy Land, biblical foodscapes have emerged, emphasizing the importance of aliment in the Old and New Testaments. Examples include restaurant names, menus, signs, souvenirs, and the prevalence of biblically themed eateries and meal services. Finally, related to the previous point, sacred meals and food items are a salient part of many people's pilgrimage journeys. Eating a re-created 'Last Supper' in Israel, or a snack of manna or milk and honey with dates in Egypt or Israel, enhances one's Holy Land experience and may draw one closer to God.

Owing to space constraints, not all of these relationships between religion, tourism, and food will be reviewed in this chapter. Instead, we focus on religious food as a cultural attraction, sacred meals as a pilgrimage event, monastic and temple food, food-based souvenirs, and the religious requirements in hospitality services to illustrate some of the tourism connections between religion and culinaria.

Religious food as cultural attraction

In most cases, pilgrims, as well as certain other religious tourists, can be compared to 'serious cultural tourists', who systematically pursue an interest—in this case, learning about and experiencing heritage destinations (McKercher 2002; Stebbins 1996; Timothy 2021). The primary goal of pilgrims is to encounter the sacred, develop themselves spiritually, or demonstrate penance and humility. For most pilgrims, the journey is very sacred and serious as they visit holy heritage locales and have inspiring and transcendent spiritual experiences. Meanwhile, other elements of cultural heritage enter the pilgrimage and spiritual tourism equation to enhance the travel experience even further. For 'serious religious tourists', or pilgrims, the focus of their pilgrimage is the main religious attractions—the spiritual centre or shrine—and the cultural landscapes that surround them. Part of this cultural milieu includes traditional foods and local dishes, many of which have been modified or created through religious heritage traditions, as will be discussed below.

Poulain (2017) suggests that the act of eating is an essential part of a journey that provides first-hand contact with autochthonous cultures and people, who in many cases share the faith of the visitors. This is an important part of the cultural and solidarity experience of religious tourism, just as it is in other tourism contexts (Okumus & Cetin 2018). In Cerutti and Piva's (2016) study, the majority of visitors to the Sacred Mount of Oropa, Italy, were attracted foremost by the Marian sanctuary there, but 23% of their study participants also noted the appeal of the local gastronomic heritage, including the local dish *polenta concia*, in positively enriching their sacred journeys.

Sacred meals as pilgrimage event

A related concept is the consumption of religious meals as spiritual or religious experience. One of the best examples of this is when religious tourists and pilgrims to Israel exhibit an emerging curiosity and fascination about ancient biblical food and their desire to partake of authentic New Testament-era meals. Similarly, representations of Biblical cuisine have appeared more prominently in the tourism landscapes of Jerusalem and other parts of Israel, also as an important part of the pilgrimage experience by reinforcing the scriptural

association with food. As food-based religious tourists place importance on authentic ancient comestibles, local establishments reconstruct the Last Supper and serve food which would have been eaten in New Testament times. To walk literally where Jesus walked, or to eat the food he ate, are powerful motives for Christians to travel to Israel. Thus, the more objectively authentic an experience can be for Christian pilgrims, the closer they feel to Jesus and the more faith promoting their experience will be. Authentic Biblical food is an important part of this experience for many tourists and pilgrims and may draw them closer to deity (Ron & Timothy 2013, 2019).

Outside the Holy Land, historic meals of religious importance can be found in other Christian destinations. For example, the municipality of Manresa, near Barcelona, collaborated with other agencies and foundations to develop a pilgrimage food focus on the Camino Ignaciano, the trail of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, which starts at his birthplace in Spain's Basque Country and ends in Manresa where he experienced many miracles and much learning before leaving Spain for the Holy Land (Abad Galzacorta & Guereño Ómil 2016; Compañía de Jesús 2020). St. Ignatius considered food to be a gift from God which helped people on their spiritual pathways and drew them closer to Christ (Dalmau 2018). In line with St. Ignacio's thinking, historical research was undertaken to discover common food items in the region during the sixteenth century. Culinary items were discovered and are offered to pilgrims on arrival in Manresa, making their experience deeper and more authentic. For example, one of the main dishes is the 'Pilgrim's Broth', 'a light and purifying broth, one hundred percent vegetable and made with homemade products, ideal for everyone that arrives at Manresa following the path of Saint Ignatius' (Fundacio Alicia 2018: 5). These sorts of sacred meals, as with those in the Holy Land, accentuate the pilgrimage experience and can heal the soul.

Monastic and temple food

A study by Aulet, Mundet and Vidal (2017) examines the culinary legacies of monasteries. Because monks and nuns traditionally lived isolated lives, were self-sufficient, and prepared humble meals for their fellow devotees, certain foods developed with specific recipes and dining customs. In the Medieval Ages, European monasteries grew their own food to meet the needs of their monastic community, but they also attended to the needs of pilgrims. Through their simplicity, self-reliant agriculture, and unique culinary traditions, many monasteries developed practices of making jam and sweets to use up any surplus fruit and vegetables or to give as gifts. Today, many of these products, as well as baked goods and other agricultural products, are still a key source of funding for those monasteries (Aulet 2012).

Monasteries have also traditionally played an important role in the production of wine and oil, as both were used for rituals and religious rites. Still today in Europe, many monasteries continue to produce wine and oil. Some of them have become attractions in enotourism (wine tourism) and several participate as visitor nodes on long-distance wine routes. One example is the Abbey of Saint Hildegard, in Germany, where one sister formally studied enology and now manages wine production (Beltrán Peralta 2018). The Cistercian Abbey of Santa Maria de la Oliva in Navarra, Spain, is another example. It is one of the last monasteries in Spain still producing its own wine (Aulet et al. 2017).

Montserrat Monastery in Catalonia, Spain, is a prominent example of monastery food that has become part of the attraction of this famous international destination. The Black Madonna of Montserrat is the patron saint of Catalonia and is guarded by a monk community. The site receives around three million visitors per year (including local, national and international visitors) (Aulet et al. 2019). Historically, certain foods were prepared by

the monks at Montserrat, and these culinary items have become important attractions for pilgrims and other religious and cultural tourists. Popular among domestic visitors are three food products: *Aromes de Montserrat*, *coca* and *mató* (Abadia de Montserrat 2015). *Aromes de Montserrat* is a distilled herbal liqueur made with a traditional monastery recipe. Historically, Montserrat's monks used to collect herbs from the mountain to prepare the liqueur. It is no longer prepared in the monastery, but its historic origins are still celebrated locally, and it continues to be produced by a local company using the original recipe. *Coca* is a sweet cake, which is a popular snack in Catalonia. These cakes are still produced in the monastery's bakery using the original monk recipe. *Mató* is a fresh, soft Catalanian cheese which is normally eaten with honey as dessert. Although it did not necessarily originate in the monastery, it is closely associated with it today. The cheese is produced in nearby villages and sold in street stalls outside the monastery. In the nineteenth century, many of the families in the villages around Montserrat lived on wine production, but a phylloxera grapevine infestation destroyed many vineyards, ruining the livelihoods of many locals. As a result of this tragedy, Montserrat's monks authorized villagers to sell their other farm products, including cheese, to visitors and pilgrims. This tradition continues today and is seen as an important part of local heritage and lore (Mulet 2019).

Like many of Europe's monasteries, numerous temples in East Asia, particularly in South Korea, have begun opening their doors to commercial activities. Spiritual retreats have become especially popular among New Age spiritualists, as well as Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and adherents to other religions from around the world (Lee & Wall 2020; Son & Xu 2013). Much of the focus of these retreats is educational in nature, including learning about healthy eating, vegetarian diets, detox eating, and meditation (Heintzman 2013; Ouellette et al. 2005). As an extension of this, Buddhist temple food, which is known for its freshness and simplicity, has become far more popular beyond the walls of temples and monasteries, and there are now Buddhist temple food restaurants throughout Asia and even in North America and Europe. Thus, the co-mingling of gastronomy and spirituality is exceptionally evident in this growing new trend (Kim, Lee & Ryu 2018; Moon 2008).

Souvenirs

Souvenirs come in all shapes and sizes, and some are even intangible, such as memories of eating and gustatory flavours. Food souvenirs are becoming increasingly popular in destinations that are known for specific food items (Swanson & Timothy 2012), and in the context of faith travel and general visits to sacred sites, food souvenirs are increasingly considered a source of revenue as well as a memory holder for visitors. Food items that are deemed sacred, or which are connected to people, places and events of faith through a common heritage, such as the monastic wine and oils noted above, play an important commercial role in religious tourism. Most sacred site managers within the world's major religions officially eschew commercialization, even if the destinations where they are located do not (Raj & Griffin 2017; Shackley 2006). Most shrines, churches, temples, and other sacred sites sell small-scale souvenirs such as postcards, booklets, prayer beads, candles, holy water, and icons. Increasingly, however, these sites are selling food items that are either directly related to the religious rituals of the locality or indirectly linked through a heritage connection.

In the Holy Land, food souvenirs are very popular. Olives and olive oil from Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, dates from Egypt and Israel, wine from the village of Cana, unleavened bread from Bethlehem and Nazareth, and spices from Jerusalem's spice markets are popular

take-home souvenirs. These and many others are directly linked to stories and events in the Bible. Timothy and Ron (2016) suggest that religious souvenirs may become ostensibly tastier at home and more meaningful when purchased from a sacred site, as they may be symbolically imbued with 'the spirit' and bring back pleasant memories of a journey.

As noted above, Buddhist temple foods, such as various kimchis in Korea, as well as beer from Belgian and German monasteries, may be more meaningful and valuable when purchased from a sacred site and during liminal times. The monastery of Montserrat has created its own product brand, 'Gastronomia de Montserrat' which, apart from the products already described, also includes locally produced goods such as wine, olive oil, cookies, and chocolate. Bringing home a food souvenir has become a salient part of the pilgrimage ritual at Montserrat.

Religious hospitality requirements

Because culture and religion so frequently determine people's food choices at home and in everyday life, it also determines their culinary experiences while traveling. Although some people may be more lenient with their diets while traveling away from home, most devotees are aware of the need to maintain their religious alimentary practices. According to Minkus-McKenna (2007), some 70% of surveyed Muslim travellers follow their religious food rules strictly and consume only halal food. For some people, the puritanical bonds of home may be considered a limitation to enjoying the full range of culinary experiences while traveling (Cohen & Avieli 2004; Mak et al. 2012; Moira et al. 2017).

Different levels of hygiene, different eating habits, and language communication barriers can be important constraints for religionists who want to understand ingredients and cooking procedures. Thus, choosing a meal in countries where the primary religion(s) differs from the traveller's faith may be risky or difficult (Cohen & Avieli 2004; Mohd Nawawi et al. 2019). The food restrictions of Jews and Muslims have led hospitality services and tourism destinations to cater to these groups' specific religious needs and develop labels and brands such as 'halal tourism' and 'kosher tourism' (Moira et al. 2017; Moufakkir, Reisinger & AlSaleh 2019). This adaptation, which the tourism industry has undergone for the past decade or so, has resulted in Muslims and Jews being able to holiday abroad with an assurance of familiarity, safety, and religious adherence, which enables them to enjoy their experiences better. Although halal tourism goes far beyond food alone, including such things as separate male and female recreation spaces, food and its preparation methods are indeed an important element of the phenomenon (Weidenfeld & Ron 2008).

The differences between people who belong to a certain faith traveling to sacred places or on a pilgrimage versus the same people traveling on a relaxing vacation are vast. For the most part, Hindus and Buddhists can find plenty of vegetarian restaurants in pilgrimage locales, Jews can easily locate kosher meals in destinations important in Judaism, and nearly all food services in Muslim countries where pilgrimages typically take place are halal. Hindus, Jews, and Muslims on holiday outside such areas, however, may find it difficult to locate suitable meals (Moufakkir et al. 2019; Timothy & Ron 2016). The Network of Spanish Jewries (*Red de Juderías de España*) was developed in many locations with a former Jewish presence throughout Spain to promote the country's Jewish heritage and identify restaurants, accommodations, other services and cultural offerings (Russo & Romagosa 2010). This network is increasingly popular among Jewish tourists, but although many restaurants in the system claim to offer 'Sephardic' meals, they are not guaranteed to be kosher (Red de Juderías de España 2020).

These unique situations notwithstanding, it is becoming increasingly easy to find halal or kosher foods in urban areas throughout the world. This is because of growing immigrant

populations, increasing local expertise about the need to satisfy foreign tourists, and the fact that more restaurants and packaged foods are being labelled kosher or halal in non-Jewish and non-Muslim majority countries (El-Gohary 2016; Havinga 2010; Mohsin & Ryan 2019).

Conclusion

Although the number of studies about the interface of tourism and gastronomy has grown in recent years, there is still a notable gap in our understanding of the relationships between food, tourism, and religion. The aim of this chapter is to narrow that gap by consolidating much of what is known in this tripartite relationship. However, this review is not exhaustive, and many gaps remain.

Although recent research has shown that in the West there appears to be a secularization in society, indicating a decline in religious adherence. Paradoxically, however, there is a notable increase in interest in visits to religious sites and pilgrimage (Blackwell 2007; Collins-Kreiner 2019; Olsen & Trono 2018), which partly indicates a growing interest in spirituality over religiosity (Liutikas 2017; Ron & Timothy 2019). Concomitantly, there has been a growth in special interest food tourism and gastronomy (de Albuquerque Meneguel et al. 2019; Everett 2016). Trends in food consumption, including among foodie travellers, show an increasing emphasis on healthy diets, local and fresh food, slow food, heritage cuisines, authentic aliment, and greater stress on sustainable agriculture and production (Calicioglu et al. 2019; Libralo et al. 2020; Ramankutty et al. 2018; Schmitt et al. 2017). Much of this aligns with the growth in monastic and temple foods in Europe and Asia. Religious gastronomy and the diverse relationships between faith and food play an important role in these culinary trends.

Besides sharing an increasing interest in contemporary societies, religion and food have traditionally played a role as social connectors. Both of them are a critical part of cultural identity formation, living culture, and heritage meaning-making. McGettigan (2003) explores the relations between cultural tourism and religious sites and proposed a way of seeing the intercourse between religious tourism, spiritual tourism and cultural tourism (Figure 30.2). Such a diagram also applies to the crossover between food and religious tourism/pilgrimage, with spirituality, religiosity, and cultural heritage being interdependent and inseparable with regard to food production, consumption, and use in sacred contexts.

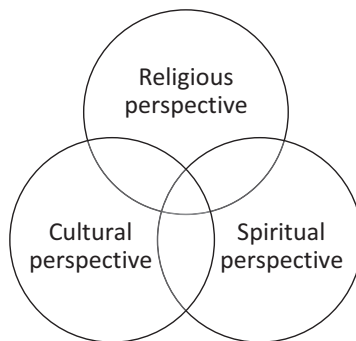


Figure 30.2 Interrelations between religious tourists/pilgrims and food
Source: adapted from McGettigan (2003).

Although many authors have explored the characteristics that distinguish pilgrims from other religious travellers (e.g., Aulet & Vidal 2018; Collins-Kreiner 2010, 2019; Greenia 2014; Fernandes et al. 2003; Reader 2007), this chapter treats them interchangeably in the context of food. Food and gastronomy are indelibly connected with religion. Food is a crucial part of every region's cultural heritage, and religion is one of the clearest manifestations of culture (Figure 30.2). Likewise, in almost every case, food is inseparably connected to religious ritual and practice, prohibitions, and praise. Aliment-related religious dogma and proscriptions are both travel constraints and attractions, although not usually simultaneously for the same people.

More than half of the world's population is religiously constrained by food restrictions at home and during travel. It is incumbent upon destinations that desire to attract large market segments of the Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu communities to understand the culinary needs and restrictions of these lucrative markets.

Food and food-related rituals are tourist attractions, especially when there is a strong element of alimentary heritage involved with monasteries, shrines, and temples, as well as authentic meals and foods that might have been eaten in ancient times. To consume a meal that Jesus, Mohammed, or Buddha might have eaten lends considerable spiritual and cultural appeal to the experience. Food is also often seen as lending added appeal to a pilgrimage, which can help visitors have an enhanced religious experience. Food is an important part of daily faith and its value intensifies during times of pilgrimage or other visits to sacred sites.

Culinary heritage and religion will forever be intertwined. The chapter aims to reconceptualise some of the current thinking in this arena. However, more research is needed to understand the deeper connections among these realities, especially regarding visitors' culinary experiences and how supply can meet religious demand.

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