

Internationalisation in tourism: Putting culinary tourism of Algarve on the global map

For many of the world's billions of tourists, returning to familiar destinations to enjoy tried and tested recipes, cuisine, gastronomy has become a central part of the tourism experience. In recent years, both destinations and tourism companies are aware of the importance of gastronomy in order to diversify tourism and stimulate local, regional and national economic development. Furthermore, Food Tourism includes in its discourse ethical and sustainable values based on the territory, the landscape, the sea, local culture, local products, authenticity, which is something it has in common with current trends of cultural consumption.

The tourism is on the rise in Algarve region - from 14 million overnight stays in 2014 to an estimated 20 million in 2017. Not only in figures, the tourists are considerably more and more demanding (a sunny beach and a good hotel are no longer the only POI). Claiming the Algarve as a "destination of excellence" for culinary tourism, with culinary and oenological learning programs of three to seven days aimed at visitors seeking this market, is the goal of Algarve Cooking Vacations, project that is under implementation under the CRESC Algarve 2020 in partnership of Algarve Tourist Region, Algarve Tourism Association and the Algarve Tertúlia with a budget of half a million euros (60% co-financing rate). The objective is to tap into the unknown terrain and put the Algarve region on the map of this specific market niche, which has about one million interested tourists and in which Portugal has little presence.

"Two years from now, when the project is completed, I hope the Algarve will appear on the culinary and oenological vacation lists. The motivation of these tourists exists and, if they do not come here, they go to Spain, Italy or other countries. We are talking about one million tourists, very faithful, who travel several times a year," João Amaro, owner of the restaurant Tertúlia Algarve, one of the project partners, told to the INTRA partners during the Study visit in Algarve. The attractiveness of the Algarve region for specific tourist groups with higher purchasing power was already tested with the Algarve Cataplana (cooper cook-wear) project in which the food is prepared in a traditional way. "Cataplana Project was the starting point that gave us confidence, but this is a more ambitious initiative. It is different to have tourists in the region, and present them interesting ways to spend their time by creating programs that suit, in terms of duration, content and price, for people who have specific motivation for their travel," explained the project manager. The first task will be to study the market,



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trends and tourist profile, bringing to Algarve specialists and operators in culinary and oenological tourism, to hold two workshops. "We want to have people who already work in this field, so that when we present our ideas, we receive advice about what we should do," said João Amaro, about a phase that will be completed by the end of 2017. Then, at the beginning of next year, with this background information and together with partners, work will start on structuring programs - including housing, meals, cooking demonstrations, cooking classes, visits to markets and producers, among other options - with the already announced goal of putting the first package available to tourists in the fall of 2018. In the promotion of these programs, the three responsible entities also want to develop an international marketing plan, participate in national and international fairs, implement a website, produce a promotional video and organize familiarization visits with specialized operators.

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Photo: MRA