

The background of the slide is a photograph of two lobster rolls. The rolls are made with soft, golden-brown buns and are filled with fresh, pink and white lobster meat. They are arranged on a light-colored wooden cutting board. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# State of the Industry: Food & Beverage Tourism in 2024

[www.WorldFoodTravel.org](http://www.WorldFoodTravel.org)

From the World Food Travel Association,  
**the world's leading authority on food & beverage tourism.**

January 31, 2024

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Welcome.

Last year was a fantastic year for tourism, with the number of visitor arrivals approaching surpassing pre-pandemic highs in some markets. This is great news for businesses of all kinds and the destination marketing organizations that serve them.

While tourism is *doing well* according to most people who we asked, it is not without its problems. And in fact, many of the problems facing tourism today are more severe than ever.

We noticed from the experts we interviewed, that many of the issues and trends they identified were issues and trends affecting societies and communities generally around the globe. In other words, the issues and trends were not necessarily unique to the food and beverage tourism industry. Therefore in our analysis, we analyzed those issues and trends within the context of gastronomy tourism in order to have relevance for our readers like you and our industry.

Read on and gather ideas to navigate your business, organization or destination soundly into 2023 and beyond. We wish you the best with your plans. We are here to help you along your journey whenever needed.

Erik Wolf, Executive Director & Founder  
World Food Travel Association (WFTA)  
Get in touch on WhatsApp or Telegram at +447827582554

NB: Email tends to be unreliable, so we do not recommend email as a good way to get in touch. However, if you do prefer email, please use [help@worldfoodtravel.org](mailto:help@worldfoodtravel.org). We recommend following up via another channel to be sure we received it, and always check your spam folder for our replies.

# SETTING THE STAGE



## METHODOLOGY

For our 2024 report, we returned to our previous methodology, whereby we conducted qualitative research with leading industry experts. The experts we selected to interview were chosen from a list of names nominated by our community at large. This includes our board of directors and ambassadors, as well as our general Association members. Experts were carefully selected to represent a variety of industries and countries around the world.

We sent each expert an open-ended questionnaire and invited them to share their insight and opinions on the state of our industry. Key points were extracted and included in our overall report where appropriate. Evaluating the responses in aggregate also allowed us to identify trending topics that were mentioned by most or all of the experts interviewed.

Our past experience with previous annual reports has proven that qualitative research is much more beneficial and insightful than quantitative research. We wanted to capture the widest variety of concepts and opinions. Our intention was not to try and determine the degree to which a concept or trend was important in our overall analysis.

A list of the experts who we interviewed, along with their company and location, is provided on the following page.



# OUR EXPERTS

The following is a list of just some of the professionals who provided valuable insights that were used in this report. The list is organized alphabetically by contributor's surname first. Some contributors wished to remain anonymous.

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	LOCATION
Botiveau, Elise	President	<a href="#">Bechamels Consulting</a>	Paris, France
Cooke, Chantal	Managing Director	<a href="#">Panpathic Communications</a>	London, United Kingdom
Dehghan, Hussein	Certified Trainer	<a href="#">World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations</a>	Tehran, Iran
De Lise, Jonathan	Journalist	<a href="#">Finding Food Fluency</a>	Nomad
Du Rand, Gerrie	Associate Professor	<a href="#">University of Pretoria</a>	Cape Town, South Africa
Fjellstrom, Niclas	Director	<a href="#">Culinary Heritage Network</a>	Skane, Sweden
Fofana, Yasmine	Journalist	<a href="#">Afrofoodie</a>	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Fuste-Forne, Francesc	Associate Professor	<a href="#">University of Girona</a>	Girona, Spain
Garcia, Clang	Founder	<a href="#">Food Holidays</a>	Manila, The Philippines
Gonera, Hubert	CEO	<a href="#">Landbrand Tourism</a>	Poznan, Poland
Hoheb, Camille	Managing Director	<a href="#">Wellness Tourism Worldwide</a>	Albany, NY, USA
Jampol, Glenn	Chair	<a href="#">Global Ecotourism Network</a>	Costa Rica
Perez, Nicolas	Chief Digital Officer	<a href="#">Diario El Universo</a>	Guayaquil, Ecuador
Pritikin, Lesley	Founder	<a href="#">The Poet's House srl SB</a>	Italy
Thammaraks, Max	Managing Director	<a href="#">INTCO Travel</a>	Chiang Mai, Thailand



# FOOD TOURISM IN 3 MINUTES



## WHAT IS FOOD TOURISM?

Many of our readers are seasoned food tourism professionals and many believe they fully understand “food tourism.” Therefore, you may find a definition of “food tourism” unnecessary. That said, we still find a wide variance and (mis)understanding among consumers and trade alike. Also, our industry continues to change. As the world’s leading authority on culinary tourism, we need to set the tone and remind all of our constituents how we define food tourism today.

Professionals, academics and others continue to put forward their own definitions of food tourism, culinary tourism and gastronomy tourism, with subtle variations in meaning. Practically speaking, these phrases are all equivalent to describe the same phenomenon, which we define below. While some may wish to get quite specific and offer lengthy definitions, we find that simple is best. Therefore in 2018, we introduced the following new and overarching definition:

*“Food tourism is the act of traveling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place.”*

Our definition includes beverage-loving travelers as much as food-loving travelers. It includes farm visitors, as well as gourmet aficionados, It encompasses nearly two dozen different industry sectors and activities. We also consider local residents food “travelers” when they visit neighborhoods other than the one in which they live.

[Visit our website](#) for a longer discussion of “food tourism” and how the term evolved.

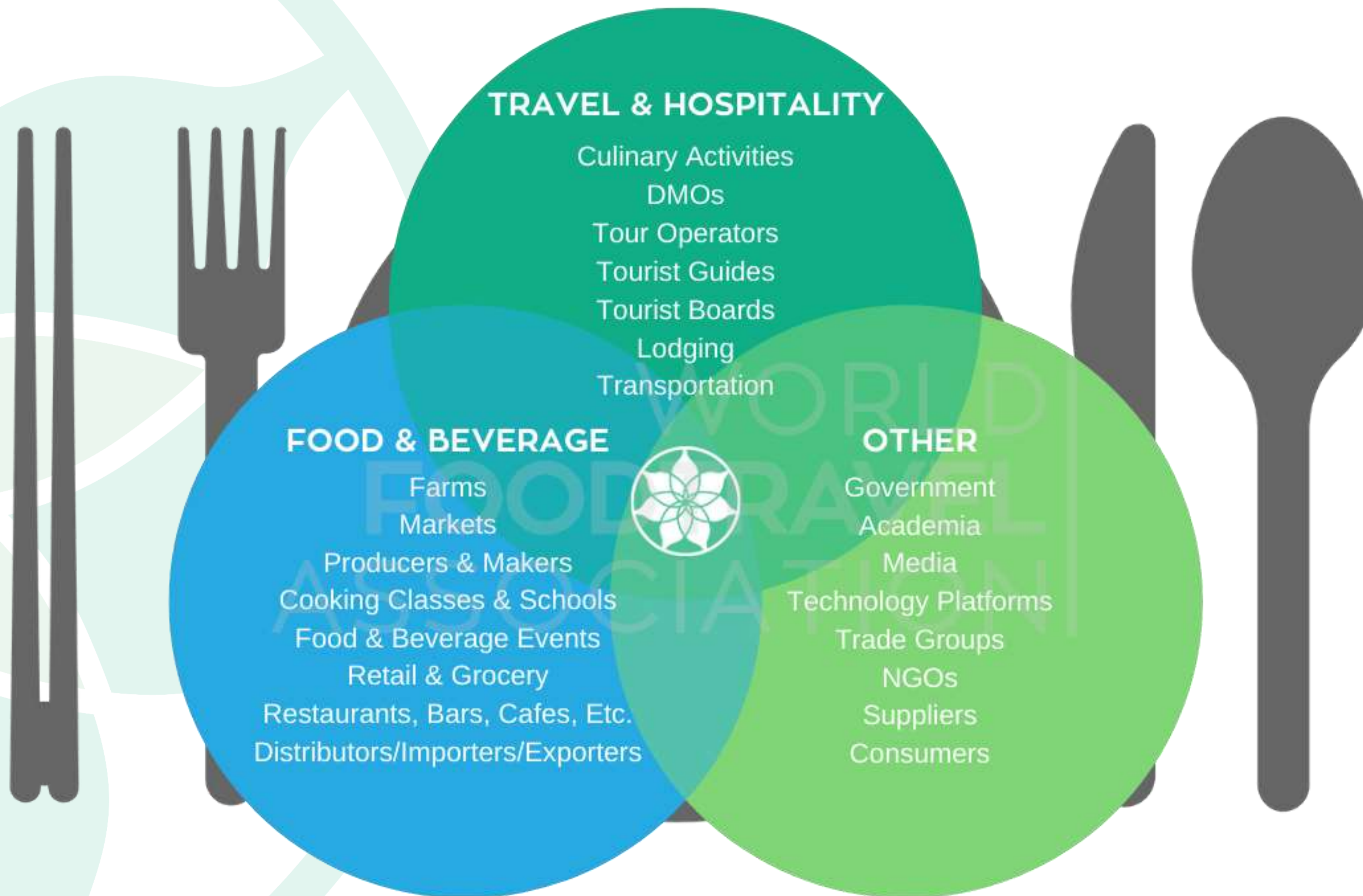


*“Food tourism is the act of traveling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place.”*

World Food Travel  
Association



# FOOD TOURISM INDUSTRY CLUSTER



You can download this graphic for your own use (with credit) from [our website here](#).



# BENEFITS OF FOOD TOURISM

For those new to the food and beverage tourism industry, or even for industry veterans, it is helpful to review the benefits that our industry offers to businesses and destinations.

Leveraging an area's food and beverage to help create a strong sense of place has the following benefits:

- Boosts visitor arrivals;
- Increases destination brand equity; and
- Drives export demand for the area's food and beverage products.

Naturally, there are economic benefits as well. While it is almost impossible to get a complete picture of the full economic benefits of food and beverage tourism on a specific destination or business, we recommend that typically 25% of total visitor spending is a safe economic impact assessment. This figure is slightly more in more expensive destinations, and slightly less in more affordable destinations. Custom research can help a destination to arrive at more precise figures if needed. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss. And if you see any reports promising to give you the “value of the food tourism industry in 2024-2026” you can forget them. We have seen these reports and they are light fluff without much useful information at all. The volume of economic impact varies widely by region and is almost impossible to estimate.

There are costs too, to increased food tourism, including increased food waste; increased packaging waste; increased traffic; increased pollution; and the possible socioeconomic costs of exposing local residents to the influences from tourists. Still, when done correctly, the benefits can far outweigh the costs. See how food tourism meets the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 towards the end of this report.

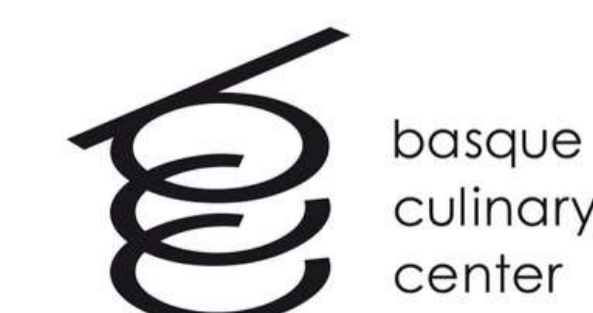


# Can we help with your Culinary Placemaking?



We've helped a variety of clients around the world with our exclusive 3-D<sup>®</sup> Culinary Placemaking process. Some of our past clients are below.

**TALK WITH US TODAY**



# TOP TRENDS IN 2024

Following are the top ten trends that we identified from interviews with our industry experts.





# TREND NUMBER 1

The Commodification of  
Authenticity

# THE COMMODIFICATION OF AUTHENTICITY

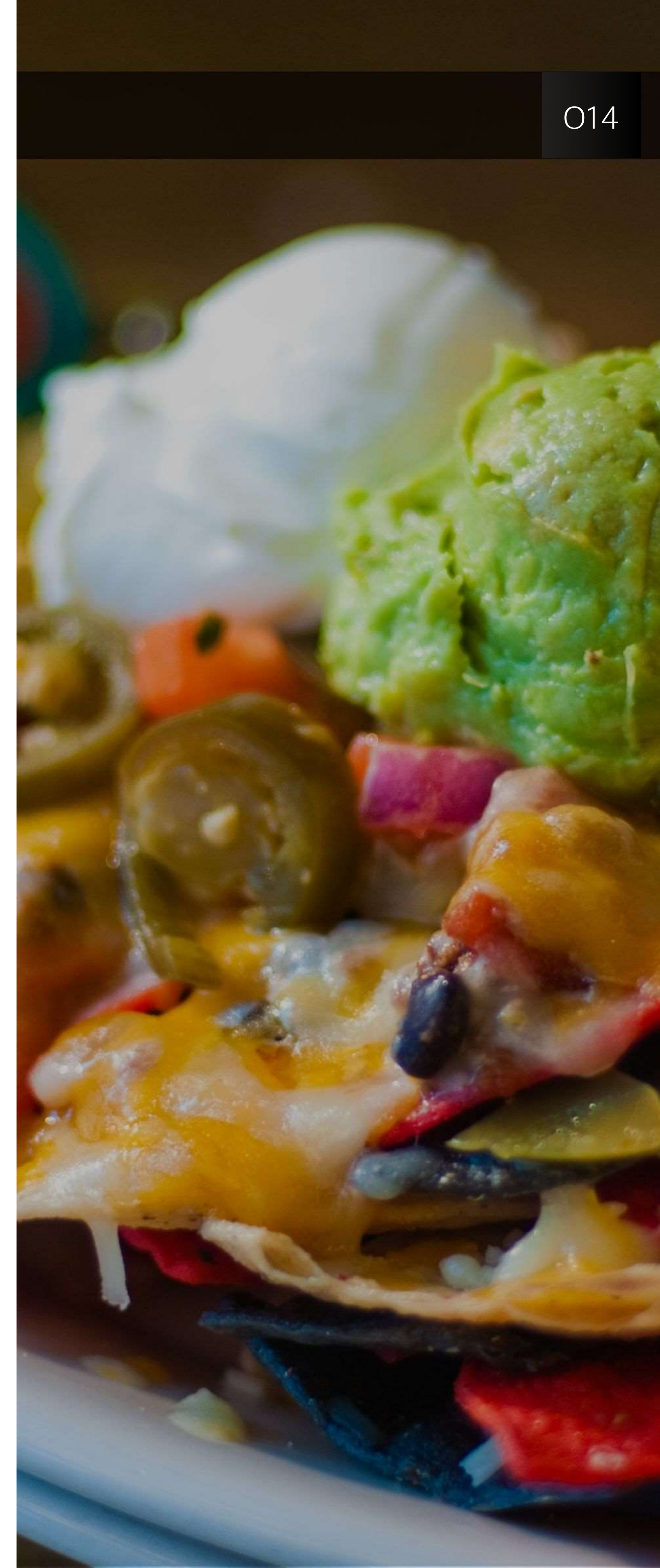
Today, many experiences that are labeled “authentic” are in fact, no longer authentic. It sounds odd to say, so let us explain. According to recent research by our Association, the terms “local” and “authentic” have become so overused in gastronomy destination marketing, that they are now dissonant and no longer have the influence over travelers that they once had. It sounds counterintuitive, but it is the reality.

A similar phenomenon has happened in the design of cafes and restaurants, where a universal design aesthetic has been copied all around the world so that these types of establishments have started to mirror each other. You could be in New York, Mumbai, Bangkok or Sao Paulo, and the café or restaurant will look almost the same. This situation is explained beautifully in the book [“Global Brooklyn: Designing Food Experiences in World Cities”](#) by Fabio Parasecoli, a professor of Food Studies at New York University.

Many destination marketers and business owners miss the point that food- and beverage-loving travelers want to experience *your* local culinary heritage. We do not want to sit in a café or restaurant that looks like one where we came from, being offered food and drinks that look and taste like ones we can get at home.

What is a destination or business supposed to do when the very adjectives it wants to use have lost their marketing value? Show travelers the evidence.

You must prove what you are talking about with the first images or in the first paragraph of your supporting marketing materials. Brand trust is essential. If your destination or business fails to engender that trust, the savvy traveler will move on, looking for a destination or business that does.





# TREND NUMBER 2

A Hyperlocal Focus

## A HYPERLOCAL FOCUS

More than ever, food-loving travelers are focused on a hyperlocal experience. What do we mean by that exactly? At the very minimum, it means that travelers are interested in purchasing local food and beverage products. More than that, however, we see travelers looking for ways to make a more meaningful impact on the local communities they visit. Some travelers may stay longer and take a deep cultural dive in a new community. Others may look for a way to give back or make a difference another way, such as facilitating unique opportunities for locals, or involving them in decision-making processes (for example, when it comes to export products).

The focus on the well-being of local residents links two of the three prongs of sustainability, namely sociocultural and economic. By showing a sincere interest in the well-being of locals, and by taking appropriate supportive steps when necessary or appropriate, travelers can be part of the solution instead part of the overtourism problem.

A subset of the hyperlocal focus that we are seeing is an interest in discovering indigenous cuisines and ingredients. In your travels, you might come across bush tucker (Australia) or Saskatoon berries (Canadian plains). It is not always easy for travelers to find a way to taste such ingredients, so visiting an indigenous-owned restaurant such as [Owamni](#) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, makes it more approachable.

If the topic is of interest to you, we recommend listening to [our podcast interview](#) with Matricia Bauer of the Cree tribe in Alberta, Canada. Matricia is an indigenous herbalist who introduces visitors from all over the world to the indigenous flora of the Rocky Mountains. She serves as a liaison between her tribe and community, her region and visitors to the area.





## A HYPERLOCAL FOCUS

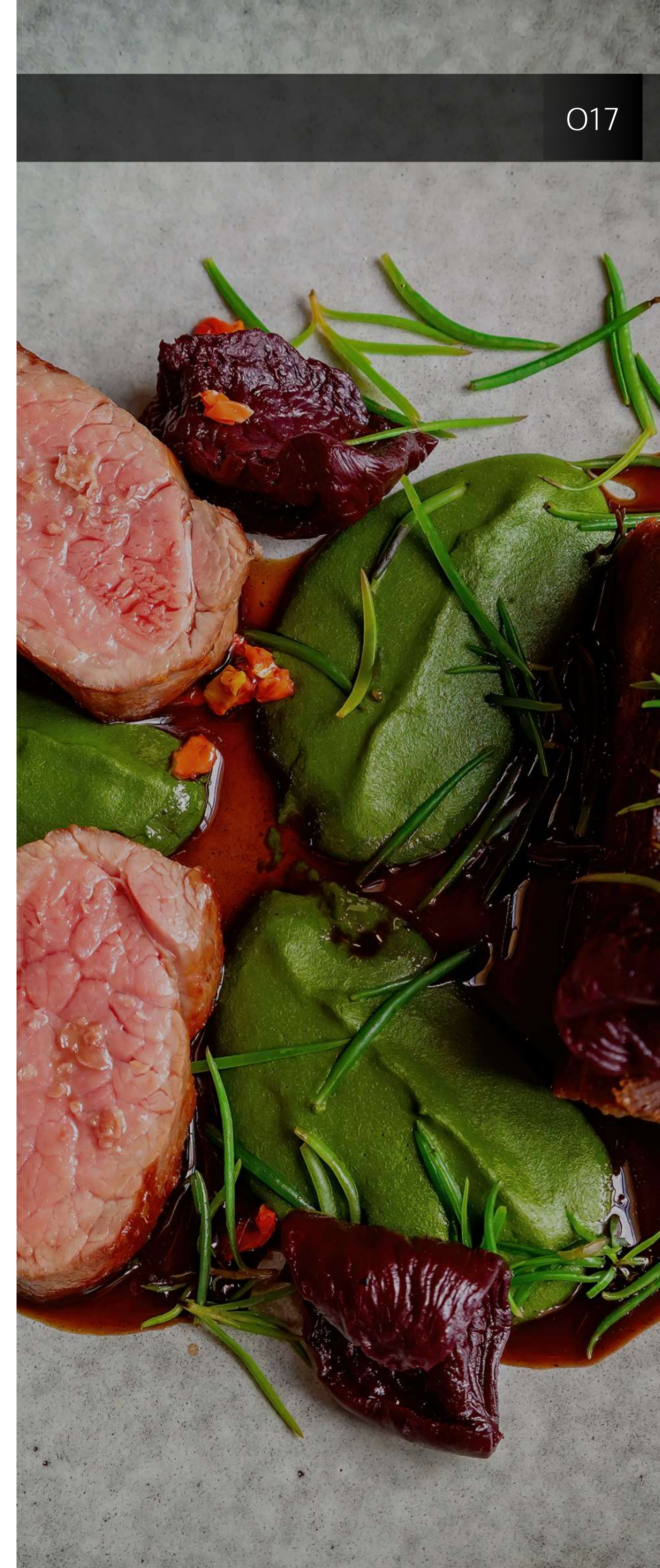
Helping other local communities to help themselves is in our collective best interest. Not so long ago during the pandemic, we were scrambling to identify our own local supply chains when the national and international supply chains broke down. For those of us who were already used to shopping at the local butcher, bakery, fishmonger or cheese shop, our behavior did not need to change. But with lockdowns preventing us from leaving neighborhoods, others of us had to explore online delivery options or shop locally. While Amazon's business boomed, so did sales in local grocery stores. Our backup plan is a strong local supply chain.

It may seem unrealistic or even impossible to support local food and beverage businesses in the bigger cities, but in fact, it has never been easier. Here is how to do it.

First, make the commitment to buy at least one new local product each month, and keep your purchases consistent. Easy local products to buy in this way are seasonal fruits and vegetables, honey, teas, baked goods, eggs, soaps, beer, wine, etc.

Next, make the commitment to share your favorite local products with your friends and family. While sharing them, explain to your audience why you chose to buy more locally, and what a major impact it makes on the local economy, not to mention its impact on reducing carbon emissions.

Lastly, stop yourself when you reach for a product made by a big, multinational company. Do you really need that bag of potato crisps (chips), soft drink or processed meal? Make one of your food from scratch instead of buying ready-made. Easy products to make from scratch include soups, hummus, bread and sauces for pastas and salads. Do an internet search on how to make mayonnaise and you will never buy it ready-made again!





The world's largest educational platform dedicated to training and certification in our industry including:

- Culinary tourist guide & culinary tour operators
  - Culinary destination marketers
  - Chefs & foodservice professionals (también disponible en español)

[\*\*CLICK HERE FOR THE FREE "FOOD TOURISM & YOU" MASTERCLASS\*\*](#)



Get ahead in your career with the world's greatest variety and highest quality food tourism education and training. Choose the Masterclass or Certification version of each program in our online [World Food Travel Academy](#).

Looking for custom training or certification in your own language? All of our training can be translated and delivered in your own language, either online, in person, or a combination of both.

[Get in touch to discuss your custom training needs.](#)

A group of five humanoid robots standing in a futuristic hallway with a grid ceiling. The robots are white with blue accents and are standing in a line, looking forward. The text is overlaid on the image.

**TREND**

NUMBER 3

AI Is Here Whether You  
Want It Or Not

## AI IS HERE WHETHER YOU WANT IT OR NOT

While the idea of using artificial intelligence (AI) as a shortcut to help alleviate heavy workloads is relatively new, it is already making an impact on the tourism industry. For example, AI can be used by travelers to make flight and hotel reservations, search for new destinations to visit, or to help resolve issues through chat and to clear up a customer service backlog. AI is also being used in email marketing to write copy and catchier subject lines, and in shopping carts for sales upsells (wouldn't you like to add one more (of whatever it is) to your order for 20% off?).

There is much concern that AI will replace travel counselors, and rightly so. However, for travel counselors who handle larger groups and complex itineraries, their careers are safe for now. Putting together a gastronomy itinerary is not merely adding in restaurant stops.

However AI or other technologies are utilized in gastronomy tourism, businesses need to remember to find the essential balance between high tech and high touch. Gastronomy is a high-touch industry. Food-loving travelers come to a destination to meet the local residents and artisanal makers, listen to their stories and enjoy their food and drink. We do not travel to eat a hamburger or drink a coffee prepared by a robot, or to listen to a kiosk screen explain the cheese-making process.

There is no putting the toothpaste back in the tube, so our industry needs to learn how to embrace this electronic genie. If not, the predicted demise of many jobs could very well become a reality. Those in fear of losing their jobs or careers may need to retrain. Remember that for now, the genuine human "touch" is still hard to replicate with a machine. Prepare for the change now, so that it does not catch you off guard.



The background of the image shows two tropical drinks in clear plastic cups on a white paper placemat. The drinks are filled with a light-colored liquid, possibly juice or a smoothie, and are garnished with fresh pineapple slices and pink flowers. The scene is set outdoors, with a blurred background of a beach and the ocean under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the image, with 'TREND' in a solid teal color and 'NUMBER 4' in a teal outline. Below this, the text 'Sustainability Lipservice' is written in a white, sans-serif font.

# TREND NUMBER 4

Sustainability Lipservice

# SUSTAINABILITY LIPSERVICE

There is a lot of fantastic work being done to help mitigate the use of plastics, and to encourage recycling, even in a tourism context. For evidence, look at the work of the [UNWTO's Global Tourism Plastics Initiative](#) or [Travel Without Plastic](#). Despite admirable programs like these, and the fact that many NGOs and governments are fighting for change, not enough is being done fast enough to combat the crisis. While many consumers are ardent recyclers, many more consumers and travelers do not seem the least bit concerned about the exponentially growing use of plastic (see graphics on next pages). Just recently, we found ourselves in three different restaurants that offered us plastic straws as well as takeaway orders provided in heinous nonrecyclable containers.

We are losing the war against pollution, and the situation is only getting worse. Beaches are increasingly unusable; plastic waste is killing ocean animals; microplastics have found their way into our human bodies and are now even passed onto fetuses by pregnant mothers.

Despite the hard facts, more plastics than ever are being manufactured (see following chart). And much less plastic than you might expect is actually recycled (see additional following chart). This problem will never be solved unless we stop producing and using plastic entirely. The problem is that plastic production is tied to petroleum production. Until it is no longer profitable to produce petroleum products (for gasoline/petrol, for plastic), we do not ever see this problem being solved. The cry of consumers against plastic is a mere drop in the ocean of the pro-plastic industry.

Sustainability also has sociocultural and economic prongs that must be factored into any business strategy. Limited space precludes us from delving into more than the environmental issues.



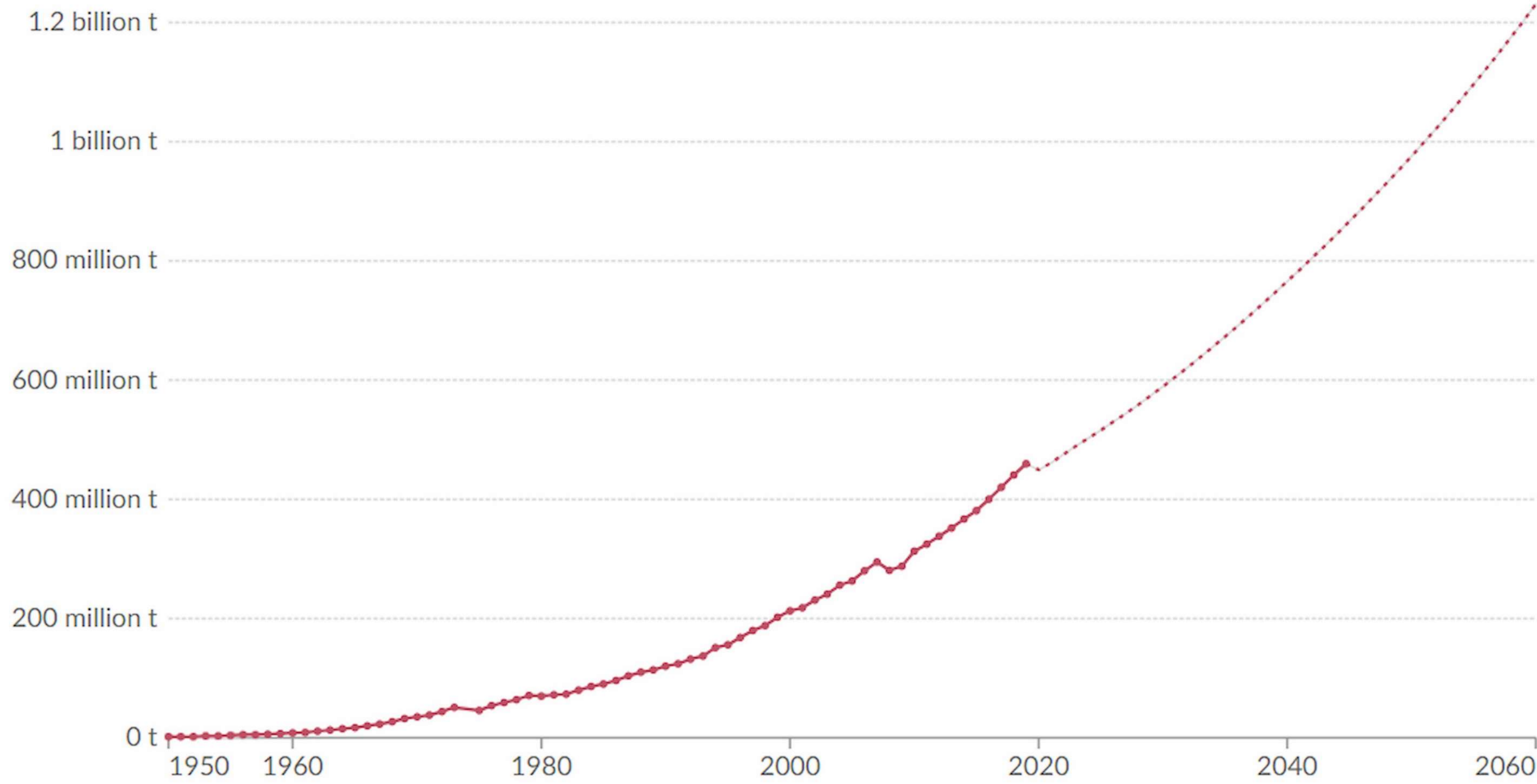
# SUSTAINABILITY LIPSERVICE

## Global plastic production with projections, 1950 to 2060

Our World in Data

Annual production of polymer resin and fibers. Projections are based on the "business-as-usual" scenario which assumes that current policies remain unchanged in the foreseeable future.

Table Chart

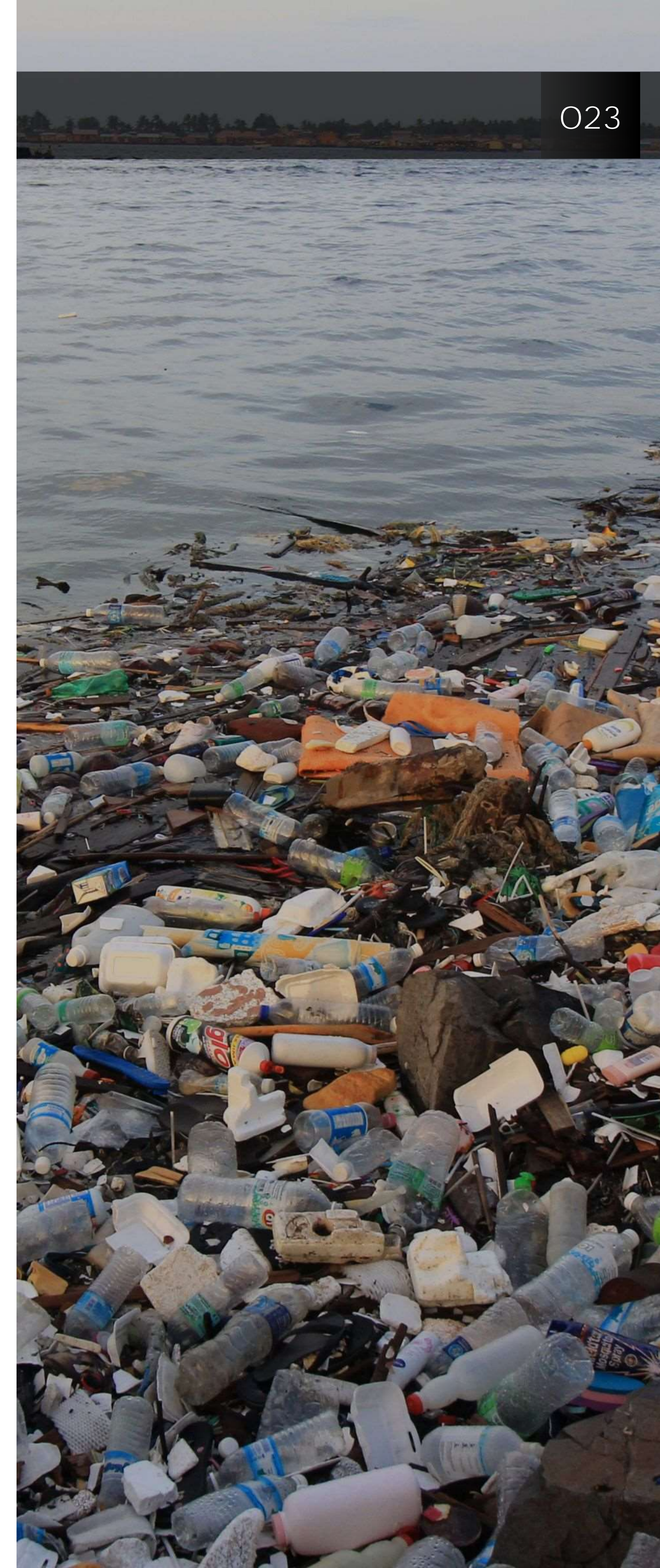


1950 2060

Data source: Geyer et al. (2017); OECD (2022) - [Learn more about this data](#)

OurWorldInData.org/plastic-pollution | CC BY

Download Share Full Screen



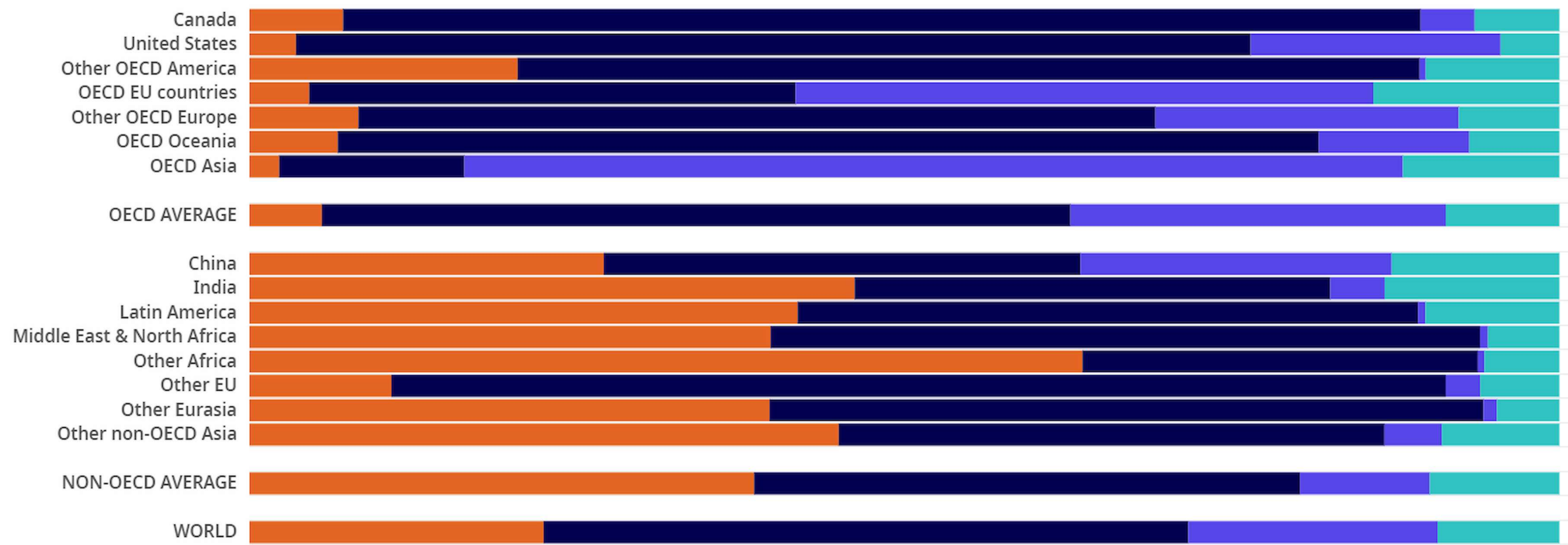
# SUSTAINABILITY LIPSERVICE

Data like this should scare anyone into immediate action. And companies must move to alternate packaging solutions immediately. We are well beyond a gradual phased-in approach for new packaging and containers.

## Globally, only 9% of plastic waste is recycled while 22% is mismanaged

Share of plastics treated by waste management category, after disposal of recycling residues and collected litter, 2019

■ Mismanaged & uncollected litter ■ Landfilled ■ Incinerated ■ Recycled







FoodTreX stands for **Food Travel Excellence** and is the umbrella brand name for all of our events.

FoodTreX events provide an opportunity for industry professionals to meet and discuss topics related to culinary culture and tourism and to connect with other professionals in our industry.

FoodTreX events are designed to inspire, educate, and connect attendees, while providing a platform to exchange ideas and explore best practices.



SPEAKING OF SUSTAINABILITY, THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE TOPICS THAT WE REGULARLY DISCUSS AT OUR FOODTREX SUMMITS. BE SURE TO CHECK OUT OUR EVENT CALENDAR AND MARK THE DATES FOR EVENTS THAT YOU CAN ATTEND THIS YEAR.

### **CHECK OUR EVENT CALENDAR**

FoodTreX events can be organized as area roundtables, online summits or meetings, or live regional summits.

Is your destination interested in hosting one of our regional FoodTreX Summits?

Get in touch and we can explain the process. There are no deadlines – we review applications on a revolving basis. Get more attention for your destination on a global scale.

# TREND NUMBER 5

Lifestyle Tourism:  
The New Way To Travel



# LIFESTYLE TOURISM: THE NEW WAY TO TRAVEL

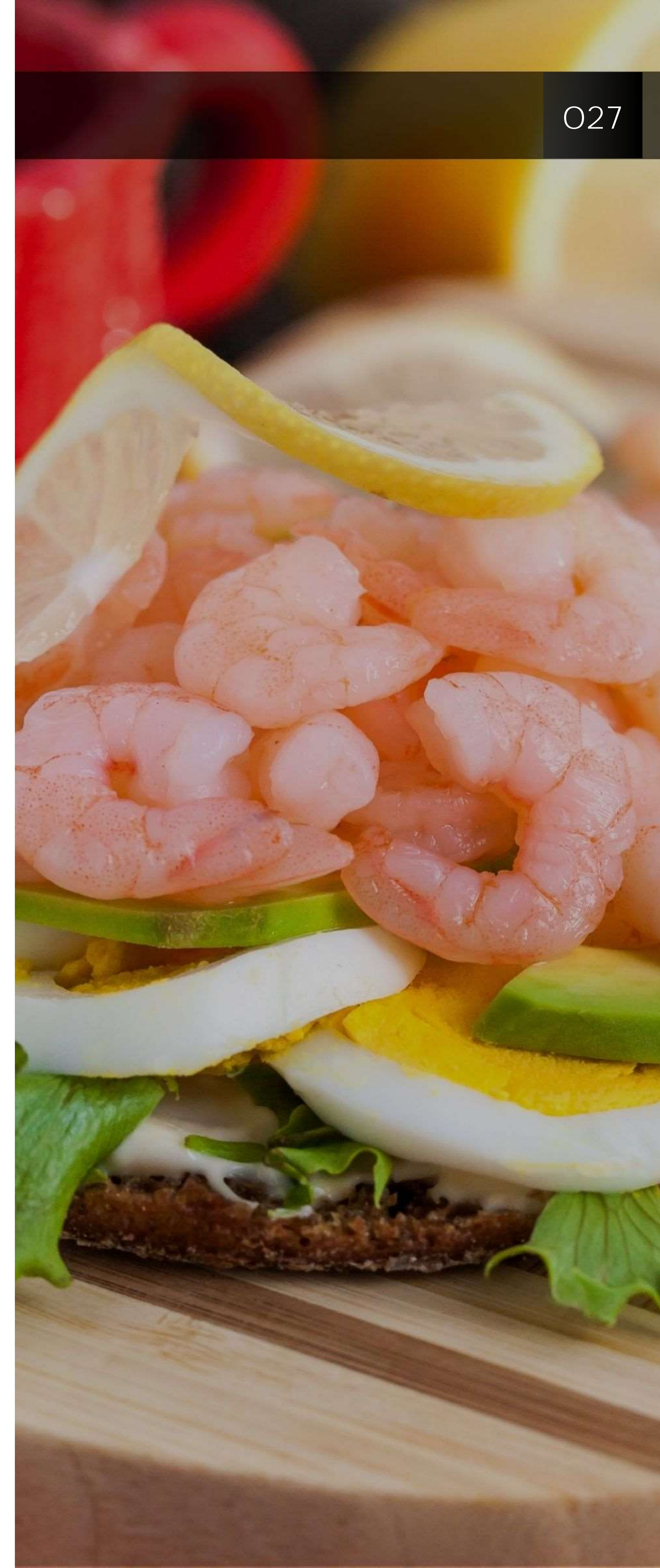
You might recognize this phenomenon under the moniker of “digital nomad.” We take a broader view and call it lifestyle tourism because really, people are choosing to travel to a destination for a longer period of time in order to know it the area intimately.

A tourist who stays somewhere for just a few short days can never experience more than a superficial taste of a destination.

Sometimes locals resent these kinds of travelers, but in many ways, they are preferable over regular tourists for two main reasons. First, digital nomads tend to stay much longer than tourists, sometimes up to a full year. There is an important distinction to keep in mind. Technically digital nomads need to work during their stays abroad, while a lifestyle tourist does not need to be working to enjoy the best that a destination has to offer.

Other than becoming a full-time permanent resident, there is simply no better way to truly get to know a community and its people, find the nooks and crannies of all the great restaurants, eateries and markets, learn a bit of the language, and really dive deep into the local culture, including the culinary heritage. Digital nomads must also prove that they have a certain amount of income or savings. This means that they will bring a consistent and considerable influx of new cash into a destination. Infusing a society with fresh cash is a powerful driver of economic development.

Many countries have special visa programs for this type of traveler. Some countries allow stays of up to one year. Check out some of the options [here](#). The lesson for gastronomy tourism marketers is that this is an entirely new kind of target market that is very much worth exploring to achieve an even greater economic impact for the area.





Applications Open: July 1, 2024  
Applications Close: Sept. 1, 2024

[LEARN MORE NOW](#)

**Get the recognition you deserve.**

Apply for the world's oldest & largest culinary tourism awards, recognizing innovation & excellence in our industry.

Note that this year's awards timeline was moved to the later half of the year. This was to allow national versions of the Awards to take place first. If you would like to organize a version of the Awards for your country, please get in touch with us.



# TREND NUMBER 6

The Rise of the Underdog



## THE RISE OF THE UNDERDOG

The idea of travelers getting out of city centers and into more rural locations is a trend that had been brewing for a long time. Certainly the pandemic accelerated its pace. Now destinations are witnessing a tremendous urge by visitors to leave behind the expensive, crowded, noisy and polluted city centers in favor of getting out into open expanses, fresh air, and “where the locals are.” There will always be travelers who want to visit the famous sights, but ask yourself, are you dying to return as a tourist to New York City, San Francisco, Barcelona or Amsterdam?

These changes in consumer and traveler behavior have given rise to underdog destinations, that is, places that might not have been first on a travelers list, yet which still offer outstanding experiences, and not just with gastronomy. Consider Ecuador, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Georgia or The Philippines. Tourism to these countries is booming. Meanwhile, many destinations in the USA and the EU are somewhat neglected. A perfect example of just such a destination is Cuenca, Ecuador, which just earned its [Culinary Capitals certification](#) from our Association.

Travelers are discovering such underdog destinations because they give them what they want – something unknown, undiscovered and different, preferably at a lower cost, with fewer crowds and less pollution.

Contributing to this trend to travel more is the revenge travel that the world witnessed after the pandemic, which was travel for the sake of releasing the pent-up demand caused by the pandemic. Everyone was ready to travel again, but there were not enough staff in hotels, restaurants or airplanes to meet travelers’ demands. Secondary and tertiary destinations still have huge, unrealized opportunities to get noticed by travelers today.





**Culinary Capitals certification can help your destination get on the radar of food- and beverage-loving travelers from all around the world.**

**Speaking of underdog destinations**, we designed the Culinary Capitals program to recognize destinations that are often overlooked, yet which nevertheless have worthwhile culinary cultures.

The program assesses a destination's culinary assets including its culinary heritage, and derives a score using an algorithm. A score of 70% or higher earns the destination Culinary Capitals status.

If you work with a tourist board of any size, a national tourist office, a mayor's office, an economic development region, a business district or a similar organization, then please [get in touch](#). We'll show you the power of Culinary Capitals!

A young woman with long, dark hair is smiling and drinking from a bubble tea cup with a black straw. She is wearing a light-colored, textured top. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

**TREND**

NUMBER 7

Diversity Still in the Spotlight



## DIVERSITY STILL IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The notion of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is important to understand on many levels. Thanks to all the press coverage and social media commentary over the past several years, most people working today have a pretty good understanding of DEI's basic tenets and how to recognize, recruit and celebrate diversity in their workplace. It makes sense to work proactively to increase diversity in all aspects of a business, including product planning, marketing and organizational leadership, because the more different perspectives you have, the better your business and your products will be. The movement is not without its extensive problems, which are explained [here](#).

The discussion of diversity in gastronomy tourism means the opportunity to highlight historically underrepresented cuisines in a specific area. That might be at food festivals, in tour planning, cooking classes and so on. It also means that traditionally underrepresented voices, such as the world's many indigenous cultures, are finally starting to get the recognition and appreciation that they deserve.

However, product planners and marketers need to keep in mind that **travelers choose a destination *because of its local food*, not because of the immigrant food that can be found in the destination.**

We have often said that travelers do not visit Italy for Chinese food, or Korea for Italian food. Yet we still see many cities, regions and even countries promoting their 100+ cuisines as a badge of honor. The “something for everyone” approach is typically not the best positioning option for a gastronomy destination.



# TREND NUMBER 8

Are Influencers on  
the Way Out?



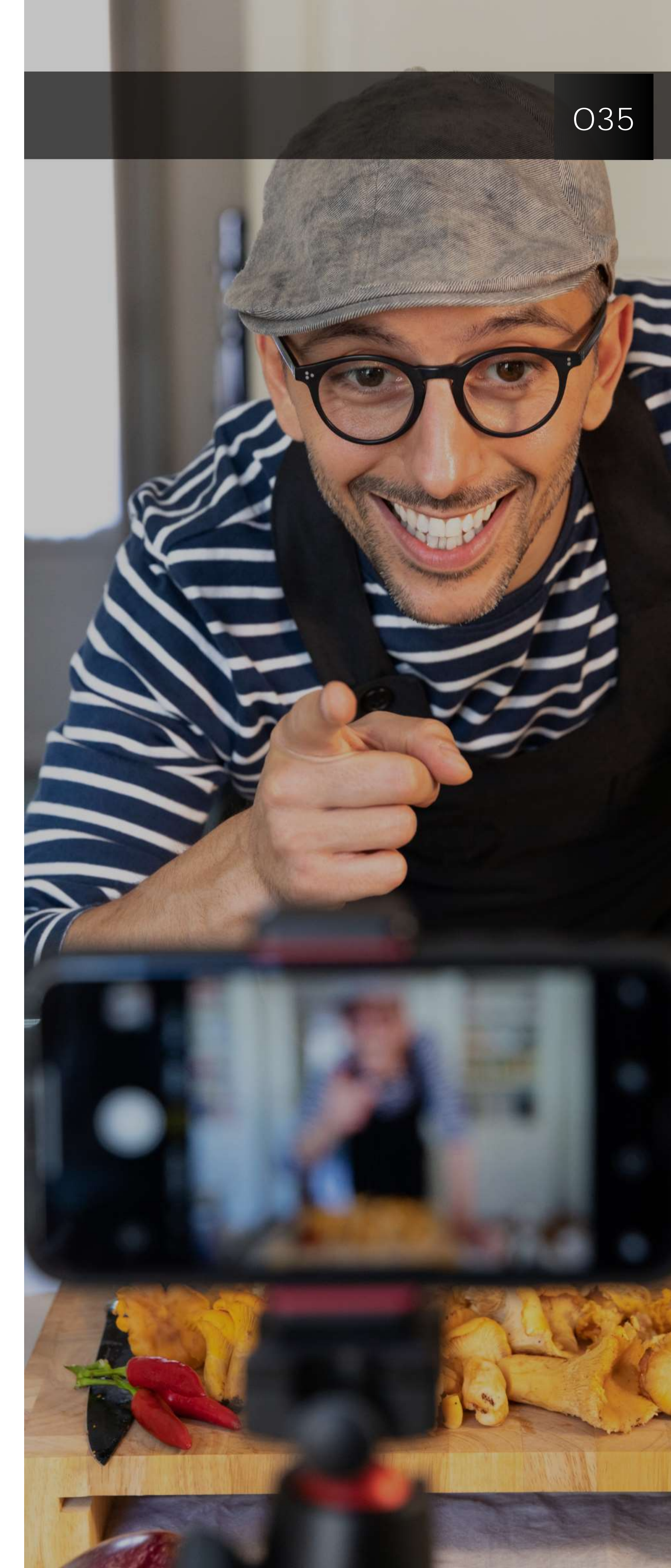
## ARE INFLUENCERS ON THE WAY OUT?

There is quite a bit of chatter these days about influencers, and most of it is not good. Community engagement platform EnTribe published a [survey](#) in April 2023 in which it was announced that “81% of surveyed consumers say a brand’s use of influencers has either no impact or a negative impact on their perception.” That’s a big number. But wait, there’s more. And in the same survey, 42% of consumers regretted a purchase promoted by an influencer. Ouch.

We have worked with a few influencers over the years and can attest that many are not easy to work with. They also tend to be expensive. Consider the disastrous Bud Light campaign in which Anheuser-Busch, the parent company of the beer brand, [paid US\\$185,000](#) to Dylan Mulvaney, a [transgender influencer and actor](#), for the fiasco. Because the campaign backfired, the parent company lost billions of dollars worth of market valuation. That hurts a lot more than a mere ouch.

And as if that were not enough, we now have AI-inspired influencers. Sorry, humans, you are out of a job! It seems that AI influencers are catching on and from a brand’s perspective, they don’t eat or sleep, they don’t require payment, and they do what they are told. Check out [Li’l Miquela on Instagram](#) who has 3 million followers already. In 2018, she (it?) made it onto Time Magazine’s list of 25 most influential people on the internet. No, we don’t get it either.

Bringing the conversation back to tourism, the [Out of Office](#) platform curates travel recommendations from people you trust – namely, your friends and family. Related to our comments about how social media is changing, consumers and travelers are rediscovering what (and who) matters – family and friends.



A top-down view of a white bowl filled with acai bowl ingredients, including sliced strawberries, banana slices, blackberries, shredded coconut, and almonds, set against a rustic wooden background. The text is overlaid on the left side of the bowl.

# TREND NUMBER 9

Health & Wellness  
Take Center Stage

## HEALTH & WELLNESS TAKE CENTER STAGE

Over the years, we have reported on consumer shifts in making healthier choices, often with a wellness orientation. In last year's report, for example, we reported last year about the increase in sober vacations, not because there is an epidemic of people with a drinking problem, but because people are simply choosing not to drink alcohol.

Interest in health and wellness is increasing each year. As more and more consumers enforce their preferences while on holiday, destination marketers and businesses need to take note. Special diets (Halal, Kosher, food allergies, etc.) are not going away. Popular destinations like Spain are in a tight spot, because their gastronomy experience is heavily focused on pork products, drinking alcohol and smoking after dinner. Of course one can find vegetarian and vegan options, one does not need to consume alcohol, and not everyone smokes in Spain. And to be fair, Spanish chefs are some of the most innovative in the world, but their creations tend to be more for an audience with gourmet or innovative PsychoCulinary profiles, a minority of travelers.

The point is that finding dining options to suit a broader group of travelers is harder to do in a place like Spain than it is in destinations like London, UK, or Portland, Oregon, USA, which seem to be better in tune with how travelers' preferences are evolving. Even many Asian cuisines prominently feature vegetarian or vegan dishes as part of their cuisines. Spain is not the only country with gastronomy that is heavy on meat and alcohol, but it is certainly lower on the list when it comes to meeting the demands of evolving consumers.

As for beverages, product developers should seek inspiration from destinations like Saudi Arabia, where one can find some of the most satisfying mocktails in the world, or Asia with its wide variety of green and white teas.



A landscape photograph showing a stark contrast between a dry, cracked path on the left and a lush green field on the right. A large, leafy tree stands in the center, partially obscuring the path. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

# TREND NUMBER 10

It's Hot in Here

## IT'S HOT IN HERE

No one can argue that the climate is not changing. Summers are getting hotter. Storms are getting more intense. Rivers are flooding more often, etc. These are overt effects of a changing climate, but less obvious to consumers and travelers is that terroirs are changing too. Has it occurred to you that your favorite pinot noir wine may not be available in a few years because the climate where it grows currently is getting too hot to support the cultivation of that grape type? The same changes are affecting other types of fruits, vegetables, grains and nuts too.

The changing climate means that your culinary heritage, and by extension, culinary tourism to your region, is being increasingly and rapidly threatened.

A hotter world means some of our favorite foods, including cheese, chocolate, seafood, mushrooms and more are in jeopardy of being eliminated or severely reduced. [According to Euronews](#), Iberian ham, French cheese and Spanish and French rice growers are all finding it increasingly difficult to produce these favorite foods. This means that foods of [protected geographical origin](#) might disappear altogether, not just in Europe, but anywhere.

Climate change also means that insects and other pests are having their way with popular crops like bananas. Have you perhaps heard about how outbreaks of various diseases are decimating banana crops around the world? [Read here](#) to learn why this is fact, not fiction.

You don't like bananas so you are not too concerned? Well, what about your morning cup of coffee? [Higher temperatures are affecting coffee growing areas and coffee taste](#), as well as making much easier for pests like the coffee borer to decimate coffee crops. It would be hard to imagine a world without coffee. Now do we have your attention?

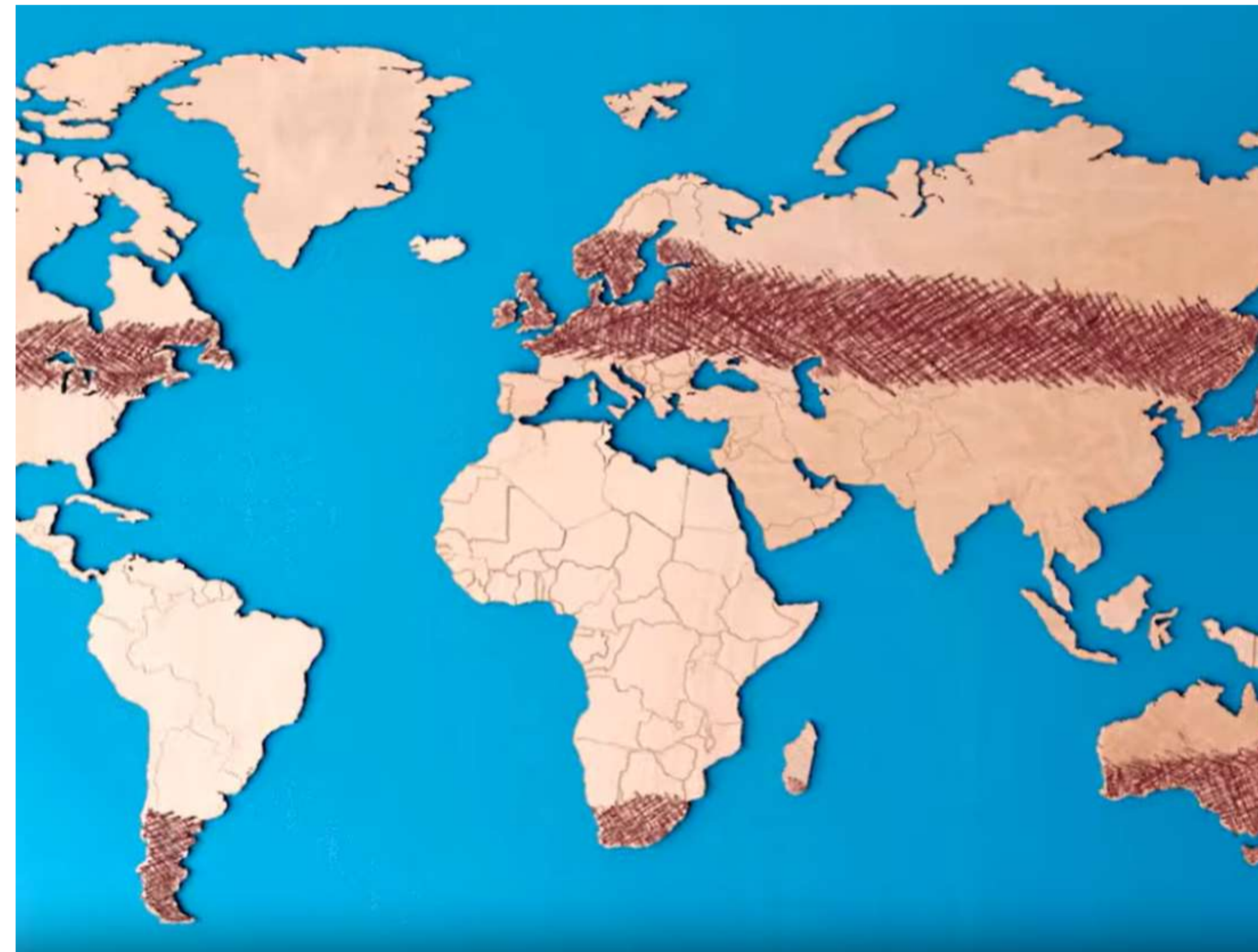


## IT'S HOT IN HERE

Returning to our discussion of wine, the graphic below shows how wine grape-growing regions are expected to change because of global warming. [According to Liquor.com](#), Spain, Italy, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Armenia and Georgia are all expected to lose their entire wine industries within the next 100 years. As shocking as this sounds, the implications for our gastronomy tourism industry mean that new opportunities in wine-making will emerge in Canada, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, the Baltic republics, Poland and Japan. For a deeper dive into what this could mean for agricultural crops of all kinds, check out the [Winkler Index](#), which is used to measure heat units in wine-producing regions.

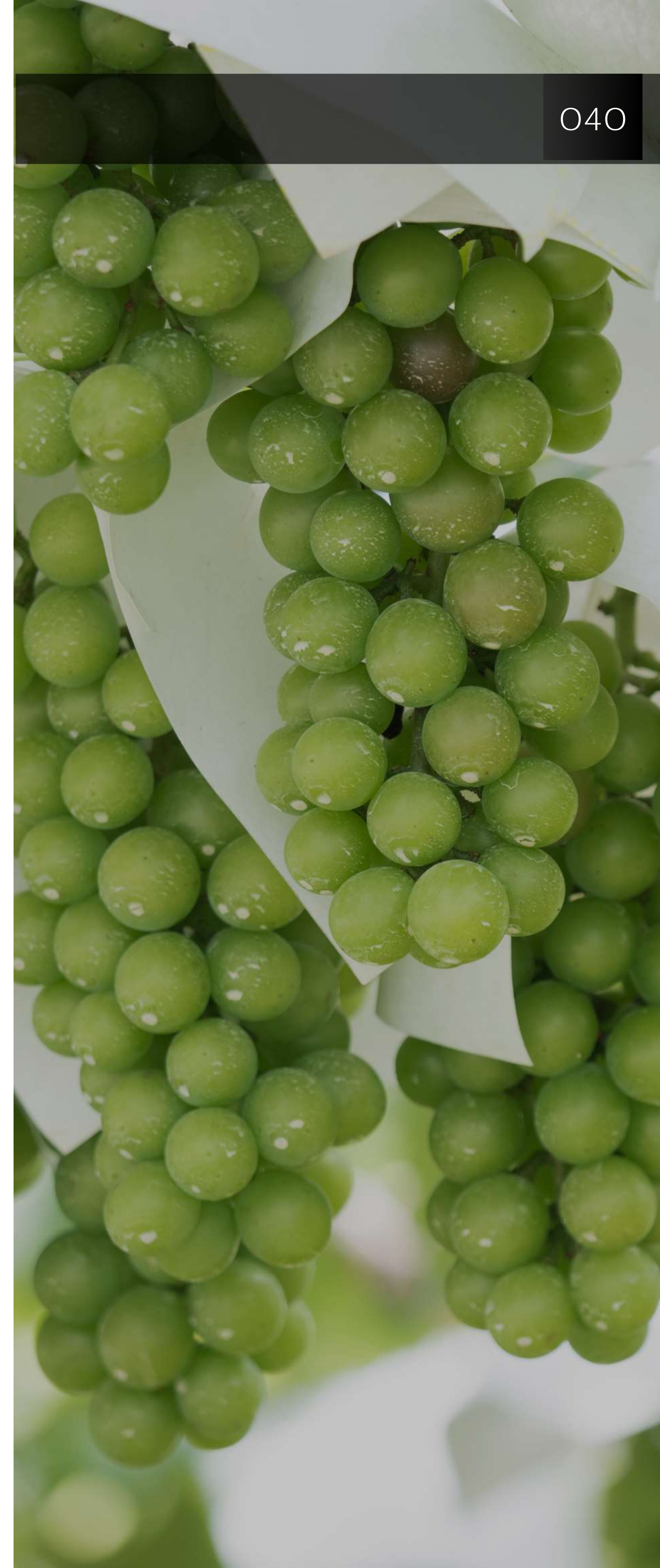


Grape-growing regions in 2021



Predicted grape-growing regions in 2121

Source: [Liquor.com](#)







The world's only dedicated community of professionals like you, in:

- Food & beverage tourism
  - Culinary tourism
  - Gastronomy tourism
  - Gourmet tourism
  - Wine tourism

Network, gain knowledge, and follow events like our area round tables and FoodTreX Summits.

[LEARN MORE & JOIN TODAY](#)

Join us on the new GastroTerra platform! It's free to join.

On GastroTerra, we talk about a variety of food & beverage tourism topics including:

#sustainability  
#technology  
#wine-beverages  
#culinary-culture  
#wellness-health  
#agriculture-rural

And topics specific to your #destination.

# TREND NUMBER 11

Social Media Landscapes  
Are Changing



## SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPES ARE CHANGING

Do you remember the Facebook [data privacy breach](#) in 2018? Facebook was caught harvesting users' personal information from third-party apps. In the UK, the company was fined a mere £500,000, the maximum allowed by law at the time. The [breach affected Ireland too](#), where the courts fined the media giant a more suitable £648 million for its offence. Media articles that were published at the same time reported that the breach cost Facebook one-third of its UK user base, although such articles are now strangely missing from search engine results. This fiasco lost Facebook a lot of credibility and members, and opened the doors for other community platforms to recruit former Facebook members.

Today there is much hype over platforms like TikTok, and also Snapchat and Twitch. Each of these comes with its own controversy. TikTok is unofficially [purported to be controlled by the Chinese government](#), a fact that has gotten the app banned from the phones of many government officials around the world. Snapchat and Twitch have very young user bases. For example, Snapchat reaches [65% of the US population between the ages of 18 and 29](#), but only 24% of the audience aged 30-49. A major problem with these platforms is that they are shifting content discovery away from your own network of friends instead to display what sophisticated algorithms want you to see.

Brands like the American fast-food restaurant Chipotle, have taken advantage of TikTok's opportunity for free organic content. Chipotle created [several viral challenges](#), such as the Chipotle Guac Dance, which [generated 250,000 video submissions and resulted in the biggest day of guacamole sales for the brand](#). This may sound like a fantastic result, but selling a portion of guacamole for less than US\$10 is much different, and arguably, easier, than selling a holiday that costs US\$10,000.



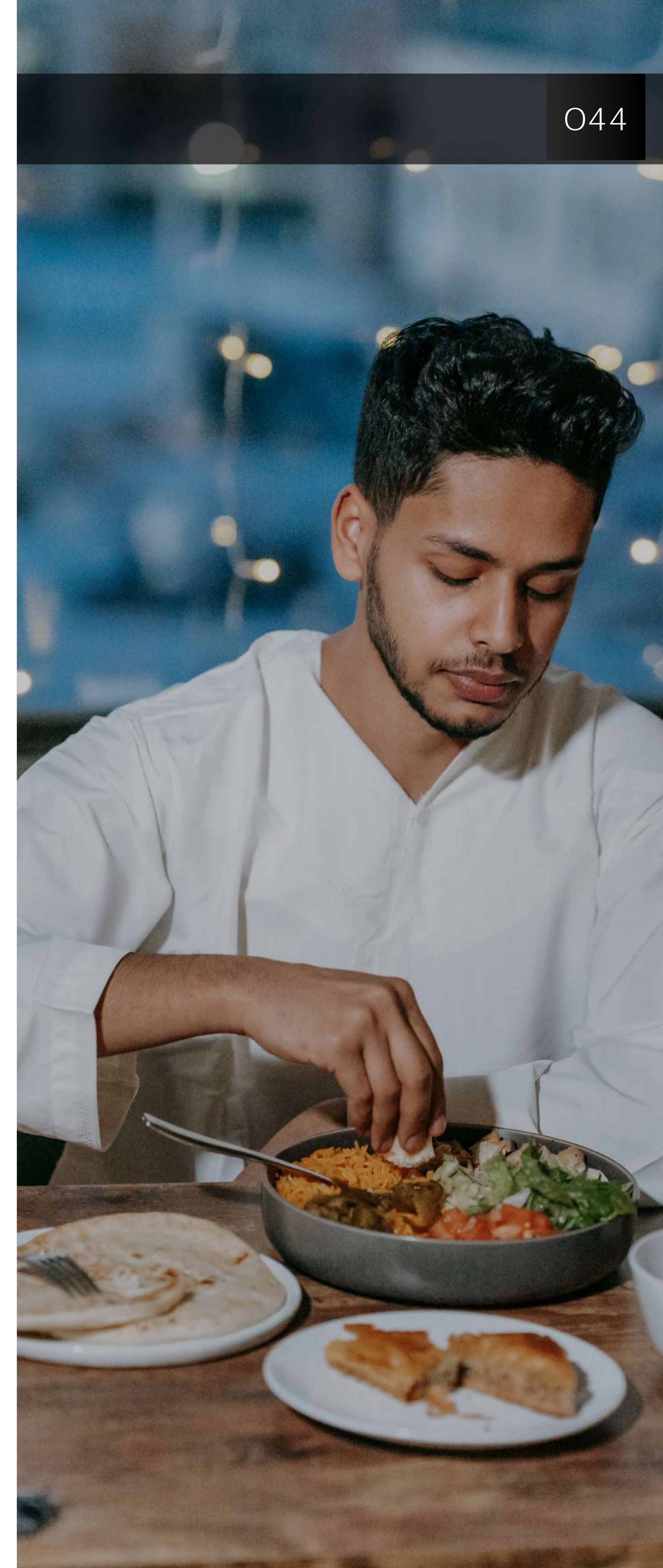
## SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPES ARE CHANGING

Marketers would argue two points. First, people in these age ranges do not have sufficient income yet to drive trends in purchase decisions, including travel. And secondly, while these consumers may not have a large amount of expendable income right now, they are tomorrow's consumers and as they age, they will acquire presumably greater income.

Before you panic about which social media properties your business or destination is on or not on, first you need to look at your overall marketing strategy. Who is your target market? What is their purchasing behavior? If you sell video games, energy drinks or vaping equipment, then absolutely TikTok makes good sense. If you are selling high-end food and beverage products and experiences, does TikTok seem to make as much sense?

The implications for marketing in gastronomy tourism are the following:

Marketers should eschew trendy platforms like TikTok and look to what is quickly emerging as the next platforms of choice, namely smaller, less advertising-based micro-communities and niche user groups. Younger users are finding refuge in micro-communities on Discord, [Geneva](#) and Reddit. Also gaining traction right now are networks like [Locket](#) and [Yubo](#), which are based on specific interests and relationships. A specific example that relates to our industry is London UK-based [DELLI](#), a community-led platform for food sellers and food lovers. And remember that our own [GastroTerra community](#) is a membership platform dedicated only to professionals in our gastronomy tourism industry.

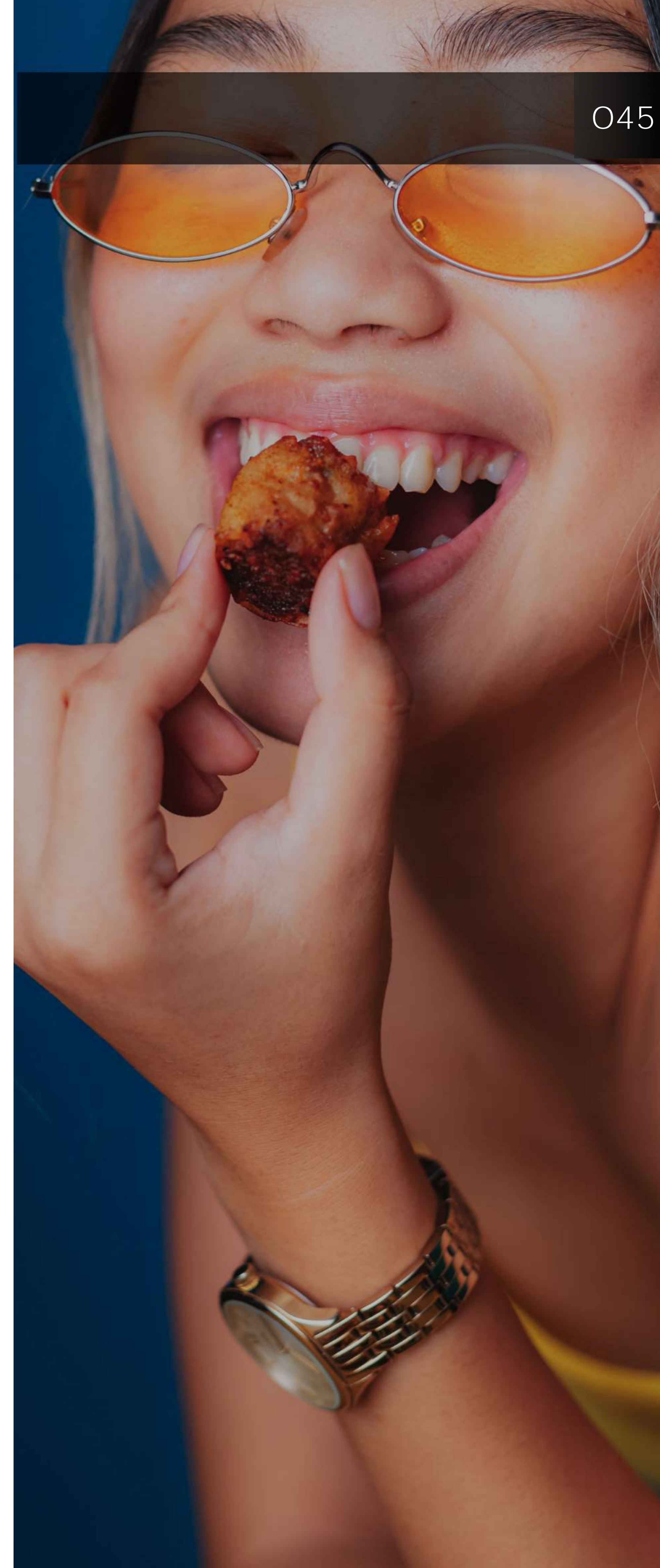


# SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPES ARE CHANGING

Social networks are evolving. The newest and arguably, better-performing networks are smaller and more fragmented than the older and bigger networks like Facebook.

Ultimately, we expect to see a situation where companies use [headless brands](#), i.e. decentralized, “web 3” communities like [Niche](#), where products and services are built by and for the community’s own members. In such communities, brands will watch from the sidelines as their narratives are developed externally and organically, with little centralized input directed by them. For one such food and beverage community, an example to check out is [ThirstyThirsty](#).

Does the idea of “headless brands” scare you? Don’t worry, it has nothing to do with the headless horseman. At its simplest, the purpose of a headless brand is to deliver an e-commerce experience that separates the front end and back end of an ecommerce offering (like a store). This setup gives brands more flexibility in terms of how they develop and launch their offerings. For now, you do not need to worry much about headless brands. Concentrate on the smaller, niche community platforms.





**TREND**

**NUMBER 12**

Is Customer Loyalty  
Still Worth The Hassle?

## IS CUSTOMER LOYALTY STILL WORTH THE HASSLE?

This trend is not unique to gastronomy tourism, although it is becoming pervasive in the tourism industry overall, which is why we include it. We have seen countless situations recently where airlines, hotels and food retailers either denying loyalty credit altogether, or making it so hard to qualify for, they hope that you will give up and go away.

Speaking from our own experience, Delta Airlines denied credit for two business-class tickets on a partner airline, even when nothing about the ticket would disqualify any points accrual (all qualification requirements were met). Attempts to get responses from their customer service department fell on deaf ears. We had another experience with Iberia Airlines that would not refund us or rebook us for a flight that it, itself canceled. Wow, that is a fascinating approach to customer service.

Marriott's Bonvoy program is fraught with similar holes, as it would not award points for quite an expensive hotel stay because it was a "group booking." That's right. We were penalized for bringing more business to the hotel! Even grocery leader Carrefour's 3x2 (buy 3 items for the price of 2) is not always honored at the checkout and on more than one occasion, we have had to show evidence of a photo taken of a product on the shelves along with the offer, which we were then told that the computer "must have missed." We wondered how many other customers "missed" the same offer.

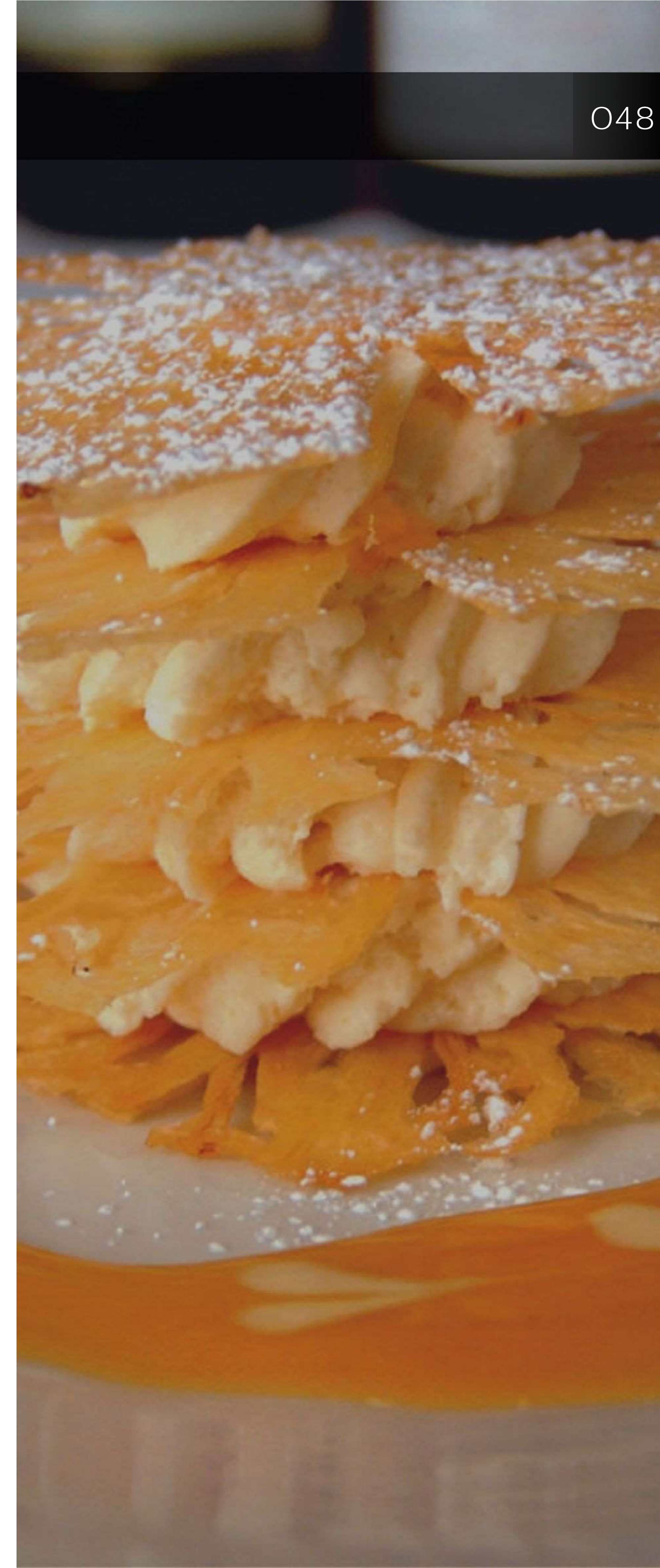
When companies like these treat you like the most invaluable customer, then there is no reason to keep buying from them. Complacency has a very high cost, namely customer attrition. There are plenty of other upstart companies that are working hard to earn your business. If you are trying to build airline loyalty for free entrance to airline lounges, save your time and money and bring your own food with you on the plane, or visit a restaurant or bar in the airport instead.



## IS CUSTOMER LOYALTY STILL WORTH THE HASSLE?

There are a few companies that get loyalty right. As for airlines, British Airways and Alaska Airlines do a good job. For hotels, we like Europe's NH Hotels (based in Spain), although their loyalty website is not easy to use. And for dining, most restaurants with loyalty programs are bigger national or multinational companies. Check to see where the headquarters is and make sure you are spending money locally, whether or not you get any points or free products for it. If your favorite café has a paper punch card, it is a good bet they are locally owned. If they have a slick app for your phone, it probably is not.

The lesson here, is that if you find a good company that treats you well, stay with it and invest your loyalty with them. If you are mistreated by a brand, move along, but be sure to share your experience first with all of your followers on social media. You are merely reporting the truth about a factual experience that happened to you. People need to know, and no one will ever know what happened to you unless you speak up.





# CONCLUSIONS

FROM ERIK WOLF  
FOOD TOURISM INDUSTRY FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
WORLD FOOD TRAVEL ASSOCIATION



## HONORABLE MENTIONS

That was our list of the most important trends affecting our industry going into 2024. There are still a few other items that you need to be aware of:

- **Cuisine is still the number one driver among travelers everywhere.** Everyone eats and drinks when they travel, but not everyone visits museums or a casino, goes shopping, or engages in outdoor recreation. Gastronomy should be the cornerstone development and marketing strategy for most destinations.
- **Many tourism offices are obsessed with gourmet and make the mistake of striving to appeal in every way to this very small minority of travelers.** Whether it is the perception of prestige, personal preferences or something else, it is a short-sighted approach that does not serve the travelers or the destination well. We published a [popular article](#) that goes into this very subject in great detail.
- **The world is in a state of perpetual chaos.** Geopolitical events affect everything from food supply chains to product imports to available and safety of flights, among other things. Natural disasters in the form of volcanoes, earthquakes, floods and so on change flights, traveler itineraries and the kinds of experiences that may be available. The most important thing travelers need to embrace is flexibility. Something is going to change or go wrong with your trip. Be prepared for it so that you can deal with it in a way that does not ruin your holiday.
- **The food and beverage industry continues to evolve rapidly.** Special diets, food allergies and culinary innovation continue to provide consumers (and travelers) with new options. At the same time, consumers are increasingly demanding as to how sustainability, traceability and accountability factor into all aspects of food production, marketing and consumption.



# WORLD FOOD TRAVEL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT

For year ending December 31, 2023



## 2023 YEAR-END ANNUAL REPORT

On the following pages you will find a sample of metrics that help you to understand us better, and how we are changing and improving over time.

Our mission is to facilitate the discovery and appreciation of culinary destinations by travelers.

We accomplish our mission with our various programs. While we serve a wide audience, we focus primarily on the needs of tourism offices and governments, tourist guides and tour operators, media professionals and academics and researchers.

We are registered in the US State of Oregon as a non-profit organization. We accept donations, which may be tax-deductible (as an actual donation or as a marketing expense) depending on where you live. Please check with your accounting professional to check the eligibility of your proposed donation.

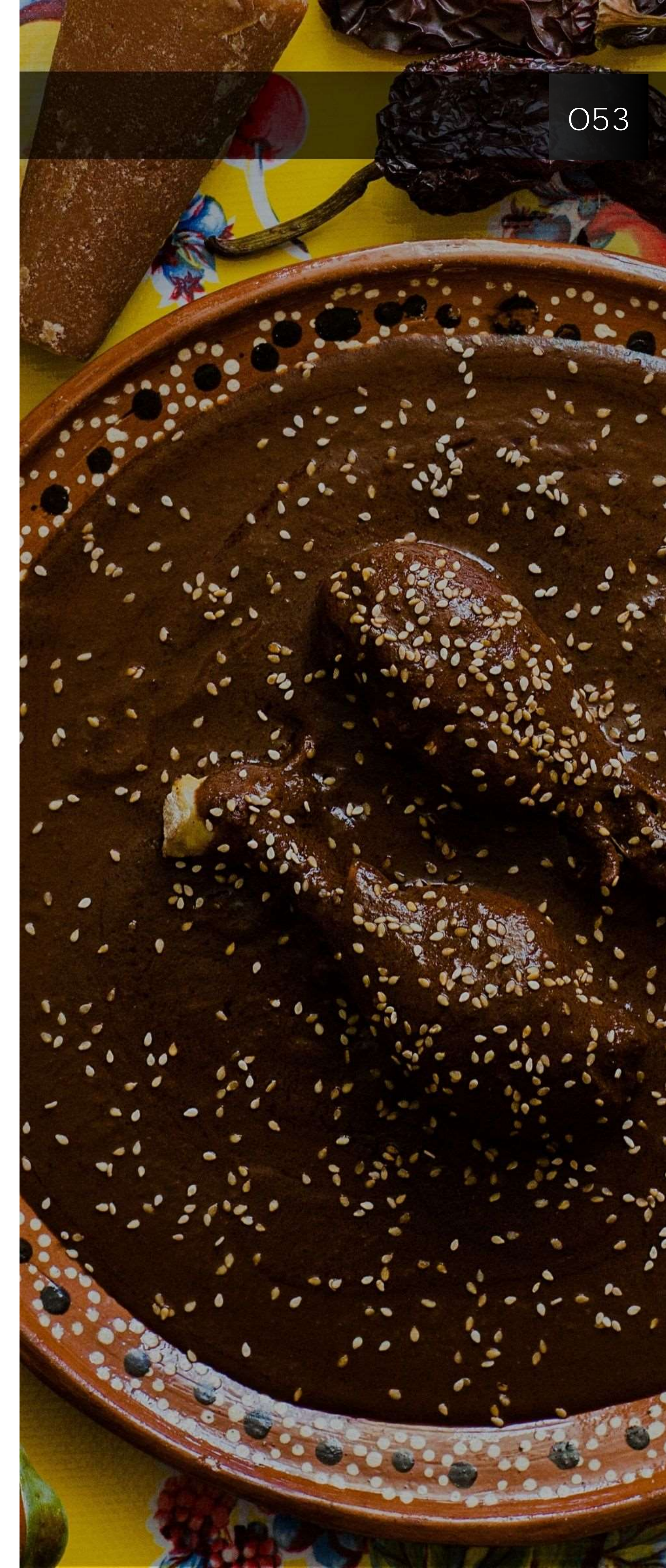
**To get started with your donation, please get in touch with us here.**  
**or via WhatsApp on +447827582554. Thank you for being generous.**



## OUR REACH IN 2023

	2024	2023	% change
Facebook (all profile followers)	7,637	7,730	-1.20%
GastroTerra Community	337*	2,230	-84.88%
Instagram (all followers)	4,324	3,937	+9.83%
LinkedIn (all followers)	15,701	14,014	+12.04%
LinkedIn (total members in our group)	12,206	12,132	+0.61%
Medium.com Followers	369	357	+3.36%
Newsletter Subscribers (monthly)	3,477**	6,146	-43.43%
Podcast (annual)	1,892***	2,434	-22.27%
Website (annual unique visitors)	103,614	103,790	-0.17%
YouTube Followers	468	445	+5.17%
<b>TOTAL REACH</b>	<b>150,025</b>	<b>153,215</b>	<b>-2.08%</b>

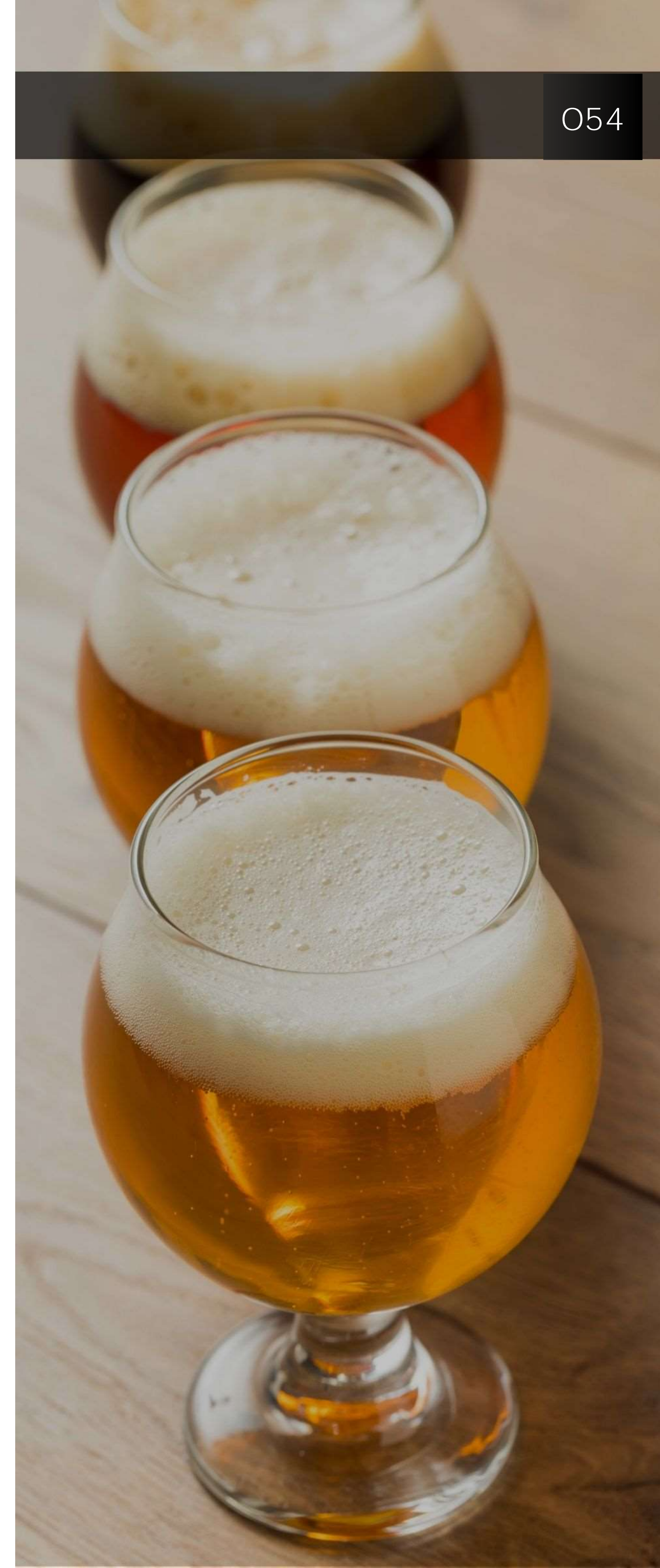
- \*The large change in GastroTerra members was due to a move to a new software platform and the elimination of inactive and spam profiles. Quality members are preferred over a high quantity of largely inactive members.
- \*\*The large reduction in newsletter subscribers was largely due to the removal of inactive readers.
- \*\*\*The reduction in podcast listeners was due to fewer episodes being published last year.
- NB: If a social media property is not listed here, then we do not currently use it. Note that we stopped using Twitter in 2023.



## OUR MAJOR ACTIVITIES IN 2023

This year we completed the following major tasks and projects:

- We published our 2022 annual State of the Food Travel Industry report.
- We mentored 15 young professionals in our internship program.
- Thanks to your donations, we were able to provide 8 FoodTreX event scholarships, 10 membership scholarships and 7 World Food Travel Academy scholarships. We want to offer more but we need your donations to do so.
- We hosted our 7th annual World Food Travel Day on April 18 (same date every year).
- We announced 6 new winners in our 2023 Global Culinary Travel Awards.
- We introduced our Culinary Attaché program to continue our geographic expansion to include professionals who do not have the time for full ambassadorship.
- We nurtured professionals and networking in our [GastroTerra community](#) platform.
- We continued hosting roundtable meetings for various regions around the world. Our staff, ambassadors and directors also spoke at events representing the WFTA in dozens of countries around the world.
- We published a few more Eat Well Travel Better podcast episodes, although it is getting increasingly hard to find suitable guests who will devote time for the interview.
- We hosted only one global conference (FoodTreX Global). Unfortunately, there was not enough interest from the academic community to hold our FoodTreX Research Summit this year. We are seeking destinations to support our regional event plan growth.
- We reworked the Culinary Capitals program to suit better the needs of our destination partners.
- We removed three inactive strategic partnerships, while exploring other new partnerships of interest.
- We analyzed our internal sales and marketing processes and identified opportunities for improvement.



# OUR CURRENT LEADERSHIP

Meet our current Board of Directors below. [Visit our website](#) to meet our entire team.



[Maria Athanasopoulou \(Greece\)](#)  
Board Chair



[Chantal Cooke \(United Kingdom\)](#)  
Board Vice Chair

Two new directors will be joining our Board in early 2024. Check our website for updates.



[Elise Botiveau \(France\)](#)  
Director at Large



[Brian F Lorge \(USA\)](#)  
Chairman Emeritus



[Erik Wolf \(USA/Spain\)](#)  
Secretary-Treasurer



[Glenn Jampol \(Costa Rica/USA\)](#)  
Director at Large



[Maureen Littlejohn \(Canada\)](#)  
Director at Large



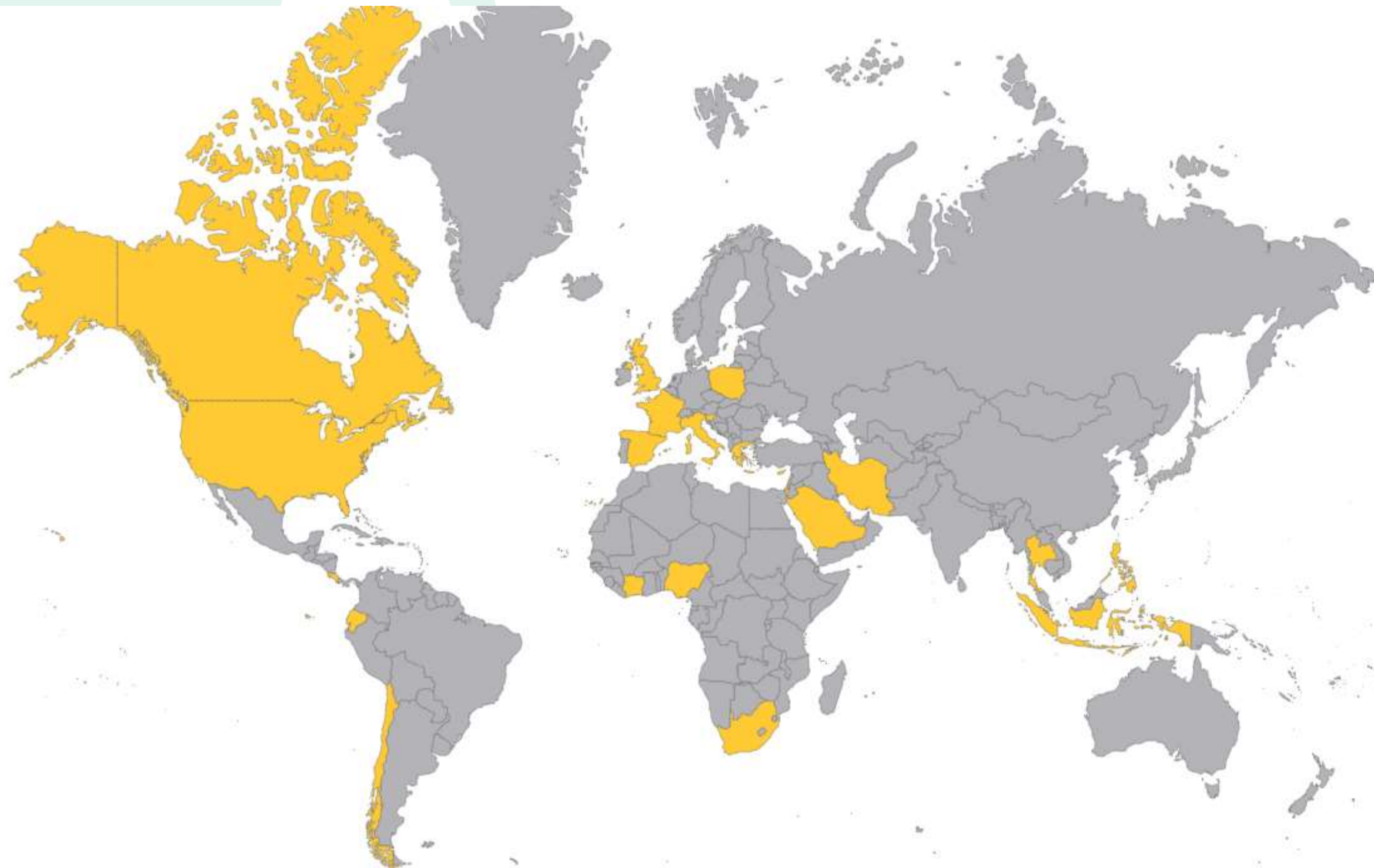
*We're always looking for motivated professionals to join us as members and area ambassadors.*

*Then you can use ambassadorship as a stepping stone for your career, to roles of greater responsibility within the Association, including the possibility of joining our Board of Directors.*

*Interested in doing more with our Association?  
Get in touch today.*

## OUR NETWORK

The keystone of our network is our ambassadors, who share our news and activities throughout the world. In 2023, we introduced our latest extension of this program called *Culinary Attachés*, who are similar to our Ambassadors, but the designation is designed for those with less time. You can search the most current list of all our area representatives [on our website](#). Interested in becoming an ambassador of our Association in your area? [Learn more here](#). Briefly, we have representatives in:





# OUR GLOBAL COMMITMENT

Occasionally we are asked how the World Food Travel Association upholds the UN's Sustainability Development Goals for 2030. While we support all 17 goals as a matter of principle, we offer the following tangible support of the following 10 specific goals.



Food tourism is inherently a tool for economic and community development. We work with destinations to develop it properly, which can reduce or eliminate poverty almost entirely in the host destination.



Food tourism products can be designed in such a way to help to eliminate hunger in the host destination. For example, restaurants, cafes and other foodservice outlets and farms, can be required to donate unused products to those in need.



Developing food tourism successfully requires supporting local agriculture and quality farming practices. Improved local agriculture leads to better health. Good health helps to support well-being in the resident population.



Food and beverage tourism requires the training of food, beverage, foodservice and hospitality professionals. Our vocational training is of the highest quality, and is designed to dovetail well into other training curricula.



We encourage the development of food tourism products are designed to support an equal balance between male and female entrepreneurs.



Working in food and beverage tourism is a respectable career choice. Employers are usually required to pay a fair wage, which is often higher than the minimum required by law. Fair wages help to support economic growth.



We know that food and beverage tourism is inherently entrepreneurial. By supporting the vision of local entrepreneurs with training, funding and distribution mechanisms, industry innovation takes place. Infrastructure often benefits as well.



In addition to helping to alleviate gender imbalance, food and beverage tourism can help other minorities or disadvantaged communities to thrive with careful planning, equal access and preferential marketing support.



Food and beverage tourism products can be designed in such a way to foster responsible consumption and protect local supply chain by educating the travelers as such. Local residents benefit from traveler education through a spill-over effect.



Food and beverage tourism can be used to foster gastrodiploamacy, or peace and mutual understanding through food and drink. Additionally, we encourage the creation of producer associations and cooperatives to support the interests of producers and entrepreneurs.



## YOUR DONATION MAY BE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Every year, we aim to donate at least US\$10,000 worth of educational programming to people in need. To be able to continue supporting those in need, we need your support.

We are a non-profit organization registered in the United States (State of Oregon business registry # 322290-98). Because of our non-profit status, your donation may be tax deductible. If your donation is not tax deductible as a “donation” in your country, then you might still be able to claim a deduction as a marketing expense for your company. We accept donations from both individuals and companies. Check with your accounting professional as to the tax deductibility of your donation.

In 2023, we provided 8 FoodTreX event scholarships, 10 membership scholarships and 7 World Food Travel Academy scholarships.

**To get started with your donation, please get in touch with us here.**  
**or via WhatsApp on +447827582554. Thank you for being generous.**



# RESOURCES



# World Food Travel Day

100% online. Celebrate with us from your own country. Share your favorite food or beverage travel memories. Use #WorldFoodTravelDay when you post. Takes place **April 18** every year. [LEARN MORE](#)



# Key Industry Events in 2024

Below are this year’s key food & beverage tourism industry events that are known to us at the time of publishing.

2024 DATE	EVENT NAME
<b>April 17</b>	<b>FoodTreX Poland</b> , details TBD.
<b>April 18</b>	<b>World Food Travel Day</b> Held virtually all around the world, always on the same date. <a href="#">Learn how to participate here.</a>
<b>April 27-28</b>	<b>FoodTreX Global Online Summit</b> The food and beverage tourism industry’s largest summit. Exploring a variety of issues. Held online. <a href="#">Learn more and register now.</a>
<b>May 30-31</b>	<a href="#">Gastroshow Turkey.</a> This is the next edition of this great event in Istanbul.
<b>July 1</b>	Applications open for the <a href="#">Global Culinary Travel Awards</a> . Learn more and apply when they open.
<b>Nov. 5-7</b>	<b>World Travel Market (WTM)</b> Look for our food/culinary/gastronomy tourism seminars held in partnership with <a href="#">WTM</a> . If you’ll be attending, <a href="#">let us know</a> . We’d love to meet you.
	We are in discussions with destinations to organize FoodTreX regional summits on those continents. If your destination would like to bring a FoodTreX regional summit to your area, please get in touch. Please check our <a href="#">online event calendar</a> for the latest news and announcements, including area roundtables, which come up on an ad hoc basis.

# Masthead & Publishing Information

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& MORE INFORMATION**



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- © 2024 World Food Travel Association. All rights reserved. You may use excerpts from this work only when attributed as follows: ((Your citation) + (Credit: World Food Travel Association)). Creative Commons terms apply (click CC logo to left for Creative Commons license details).
- The mixed use of both UK and US English spelling is intentional.

**FEEDBACK & QUESTIONS**

Have you noticed a factual error? Do you have a comment? Would you like to make a suggestion for next year’s report? Would your destination or business like to support next year’s report as a sponsor? [Please contact us here.](#)



**“The only source of knowledge is experience.”  
– Albert Einstein**

How can we help you?

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**WORLD  
FOODTRAVEL  
ASSOCIATION**

