



INTRODUCTION

In September 2024 Hungary hosted the SIEF 24th International Ethnological Food Research Conference – just over four decades after the 3rd Conference had been organised there in October 1983. Professor em. Eszter Kisbán, an organiser of the 1983 conference and co-editor of that conference's proceedings (1986), also participated in the 2024 event.

The 2024 conference, the theme of which was: 'Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage', was organised by the Museum of Ethnography and the Institute of Ethnology HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities (ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities from August 2025), Budapest. The conference opening was performed by Dr. Lajos Kemecsi, Director General of the Museum of Ethnography, Dr. Balázs Balogh, Director General of the HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, and Director of the HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities Institute of Ethnology, and Prof. Håkan Jönsson, Lund University, Sweden, current Chair of the SIEF Food Research Working Group. On 18th–19th September, the conference programme, consisting of lectures, including keynote addresses, and a thematic tour of a food heritage exhibition, was carried out in the excellent and welcoming environment of the Museum of Ethnography, while on the evening of the 19th of September, the conference group enjoyed dinner locally at Gundel Restaurant (founded 1894), the 'only Hungarikum restaurant' in Hungary.

On the 20th of September, the participants travelled north of Budapest to the Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre, Pest County, for the third and final day of the conference. Here, the conference group was officially welcomed by Dr. Miklós Cseri, Director General of the Museum, and a memorable full-day, museum-organised programme, consisting of a series of lectures, a food heritage (Hungarian) workshop, and guided, small-group, food heritage interpretation

visits in the museum, followed. The official closing session of the 2024 conference also took place here.

Thanks to the contributors and the generous support of the conference organisers, it has been possible to publish the conference proceedings. Included in this volume are the four plenary keynote lectures, delivered by Professors Cristina Grasseni ('Re-tooling Food Heritage: Revitalizing Communities and Landscapes'), Ágnes Fülemlé ('Goulash and Governance: The Politics of Foodways in Socialist Hungary. Culinary Transformation and Everyday Life (1948–1989)'); Lucy M. Long ('Personal Memory, Collective Heritage, and Quandaries of Tradition: Three Appalachian Mountain Dishes'), and Dr. Eszter Csonka-Takács ('Food Heritage: Paradigm Shift in the Implementation Practices of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage'), respectively, in the course of the conference. The remaining twenty-nine articles in these proceedings, reviewed briefly here, are arranged in seven parts: Part I: 'Dealing with Food in Institutions and Organisations Working with Cultural Heritage I'; Part II: 'Food and Foodways as Heritage-Making: Local Development Strategies and Tourism'; Part III: 'The Manifold Meanings of Food and Heritage'; Part IV: 'Gender, Identity, "Invention" and Food Heritage'; Part V: 'Ethnic, Local and Traditional Food: Meanings in a Comparative Perspective'; Part VI: 'Food Heritage in Times of Crisis'; Part VII: 'Dealing with Food in Institutions and Organisations Working with Cultural Heritage II'.

The interdisciplinary collection of articles in this volume represents the thematic streams of the discussions over the three-day conference period. Since the conference had strong museum connections, questions concerning the representation of food heritage, first in an indoor museum context, were considered in a number of papers. Also, the processes involved, and the effects of the designation of local dishes and food traditions as Intangible Cultural Heritage under the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), came up for discussion (Part I), as did the impact of the re-evaluation of certain foods and foodways and their promotion as regional cultural heritage in local and national development, and in cross-border and tourism strategies (Part II).

That food can have many different meanings for different actors in the field of heritage and that these can change over time in response to factors such as modern-tradition making, commercialisation, market and hegemonic forces and globalisation, is also dealt with in these proceedings, as are the possible roles – and responsibilities –

of ethnologists and ethnological institutions, acting as experts in heritage-making processes (Part III).

A number of papers focus on the role of specific dishes in the ethnic revitalisation of particular communities after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, and on the processes involved thereafter in the selection and recognition of a representative heritage food for a particular country or region. The part that perception of the texture, taste and flavour, as well as the nutritional value of certain foods, and the effects of climate change on traditional food systems, plays in (extreme) environmental adaptation by communities, is also addressed, as is the invention of a regional identity in the southern hemisphere for milk, an erstwhile colonial food, and the construction and maintenance of an ideal national identity in a northern European setting, through the gendered promotion of that very same food (Part IV).

The role of food and meals, including festive foods and dishes, and food-heritage programmes, as mediators, messengers, and channels of communication, and as indicators of identity, community cohesion, and also of culinary adaptation, in multi-ethnic and diasporic communities, also features in this volume. Considered also are the motivations and processes involved in the selection of traditional dishes as part of the conscious construction of a national memory policy of a particular country (Mongolia) in the face of rapid urbanisation, globalisation, and cultural diffusion tendencies, in recent decades (Part V).

Turning to the future – while bearing in mind the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020–2023) on culinary culture worldwide – what must also be taken into account are the climatic and environmental challenges that lie ahead and which will inevitably impact food availability and supply over time and space. Thus, a number of papers discuss, *inter alia*, the necessity of safeguarding bio-diversity and of maintaining and fostering unique culinary traditions, especially those linking contemporary culinary practices with age-old sustainable economies. The potential health and food-security roles of fermented foods – with scientifically-assessed and approved enhanced nutritional value – in modern-day diets, are also addressed, as is how and why, in today's world, a particular dish with a combination of ingredients (stew) prepared and consumed in a houseless social setting, can also be viewed as a repository of the representative cultural values of the unhoused group in which its primary function is basically nutritional (Part VI).

Food heritage presentation and interpretation in an open-air museum setting – specifically the Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre – including the representation of specific regional dishes in this context, is also discussed in this work, as is how a collection of gastronomic goods can have different heritage meanings when exhibited in different cultural locations, contexts and settings (Part VII).

This volume, the fruit of the interdisciplinary SIEF 24th International Ethnological Food Research Conference 2024, is, like its earlier counterparts from the 1970s onwards, a further contribution to the history of food studies in Europe and further afield.

Budapest and Dublin, 2025.

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