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Rural Development Programme for the period 2014-2020

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"LOCAL ACTION GROUP - RAZLOG" ASSOCIATION, Administrative contract No. RD 50-144/27.04.2023 for the implementation of the project "Eurochef II – A chef at the rural" under sub-measure 19.3 "Preparation and implementation of LAG cooperation activities" of measure 19 "Community-led local development" of The Programme for rural development for the period 2014-2020.

**REPORT FROM RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON TOPIC:
IDENTIFICATION AND VALORIZATION OF LOCAL
RESOURCES
BY PROJECT: EUROCHEF II-A CHEF AT THE RURAL**

INTRODUCTION

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

1. Objectives and scope of the project The transnational cooperation project "EUROCHEF II: COOK IN RURAL AREAS" is implemented in partnership between LAG - Razlog from Bulgaria, three LAGs from Spain, Galicia region and 2 LAGs from Latvia. On the territory of Bulgaria, the activities are carried out by "MIG-Razlog" with funding under sub-measure 19.3. "Preparation and implementation of cooperation activities of local initiative groups" from measure 19 "Community-led local development" of the Program for the Development of Rural Areas 2014-2020.

Project partners: The lead partner is the Association for the Development of Southwest Galicia EURURAL, Spain. Full partners are: Association for the Development of Rural Areas TERRAS DE PONTEVEDRA NORTE from Spain and Association for Development LIMIA - ARNOIA from Spain; LAG-RAZLOG from Bulgaria. The associated partners that do not spend funds on the project are from Latvia: Association for Public-Private Partnership "LAND IN BLOOM" and Association "PIERIGA PARTNERSHIP".

The theme of the project is related to increasing the value of local culinary products, promoting their local consumption by putting them into new recipes and combining them with other cuisines, while at the same time promoting the existence of these quality products outside the territories of participating LAGs in the project. This, in turn, will be a prerequisite for the creation of new tourist products to be promoted and offered in other countries of the European Union.

The main goal of the project is to achieve sustainable economic development of the territories by increasing the value of the local products of the territories by combining gastronomy, heritage and culture.

The specific project objectives are:

- Improving the economic profitability of enterprises related to tourism;
- Improving the economic profitability of enterprises producing and processing local products, and indirectly - of local commercial enterprises;
- Promoting the transfer of knowledge and gastronomic traditions;
- Creation of new dishes prepared from local products by fusion/mixing with products from the cuisines of other European countries;
- To raise the level of knowledge of the local population through trainings related to gastronomy;
- To promote among the local population a healthy diet related to the consumption of local products;
- To encourage connections with new markets for offering tourist services;

- Integration of gastronomy in new tourist products, which will also contribute to the promotion of the cultural and historical resources of the territories;
- Facilitate the participation of local enterprises in forums and fairs that favor the distribution and promotion of their products and which, due to the size of the enterprises, would not have access or could not attend these events if this project had not been implemented;
- Inclusion of the experience of professionals in the field of gastronomy from each territory in the cooperation project;
- Supporting the creation of new tourist products that combine accommodation and gastronomy, promoting and facilitating their sale through local, national and international tour operators;
- Creation of the project's own brand to identify the participating enterprises: food producers and processors, enterprises from the tourism sector and others;
- Establishing a structure outside the project to consolidate the network and the sustainability of the tools and apply the knowledge and experience of the project; Sharing of experience and knowledge on the Law on land reclamation /restoration of land/ in other European countries such as Bulgaria and Latvia.

2. Project activities

During the implementation of the project, the following main activities are implemented:

- Creation of own brand "EUROCHEF" and preparation of advertising and informational materials on the project;
- Studies on the topic: "Identification and valorization of local resources";
- Organization of demonstration culinary events on the territories of the LAG with the participation of the local community;
- Organizing and conducting trainings for interested parties on the topics: "Sustainable environmentally friendly packaging of products in the territory" and "Ways of successful presentation of local products from the territory";
- Participation of LAG in organized culinary fairs/exhibitions in Bulgaria, Spain and Latvia/ in connection with promotion of the EUROCHEF project and brand, as well as presentation and promotion of local products from LAG territories;
- Creation of a bilingual handbook with tourist and culinary information;
- Creation of a joint video film reflecting the joint events of the project;
- Creation of a sustainability and expansion plan for the EUROCHEF network.

3. Target groups and expected impact

The project is expected to have a direct impact on the following economic sectors:

- hospitality and restaurant industry;
- gastronomy;

- processing industry;
- food industry;
- services related to tourism and entertainment activities;
- wholesale and retail trade. Involving the representatives of the target groups in trainings and their participation in events will increase their capacity and encourage their networking.

II. PRELIMINARY STUDY INFORMATION

1. Objectives of the study

The purpose of the study on the topic "Identification and valorization of local resources" is: Identification of the typical gastronomic products of the territory and selection of those to be popularized; identification of enterprises from the tourism sector, food production and processing enterprises and others interested in participating in the project; search for tourist sites to promote. Special attention will be paid to those initiatives which are led by women in rural areas and which lead to the creation of new business lines, job creation or new enterprises/cooperatives; Identification of the distinctive products of the territory; Identifying healthy recipes with local products. Similar studies will be carried out by all partners from Spain, and the results will be published on the project website, the creation of which is the responsibility of the lead partner.

2. Expected results and promotion:

Prepared study on "Identification and valorization of local resources". Presentation with a summary of the study. Information from the survey (in English) will be uploaded to the project website and social platforms.

3. Thematic scope and tasks of the study

The study on the topic: "Identification and valorization of local resources" includes the following subtopics: Thematic study of the peculiarities of local culinary traditions and of specific gastronomic products with the selection of the most suitable ones to be popularized; Identification and brief presentation of local enterprises from the tourism sector, food production and processing enterprises; Survey of other local stakeholders who wish to participate in the project; Survey of tourist sites offering local products; ideas for their promotion; Selection of initiatives related to tourism, production and supply of local foods that are led by women in rural areas and that lead to the creation of new business lines, job creation or new enterprises/cooperatives; Identification and description of the distinctive products of the territory; Identifying and describing healthy recipes using local produce.

4. Methodology:

When choosing the methodology of the research, the set goal was taken into account, as well as ensuring the precision, comprehensiveness and representativeness of the information obtained. Due to the complex nature of the research, a combination of methods is included.

IV. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TERRITORY OF LAG-RAZLOG AS A TOTALITY OF LOCAL RESOURCES

1. Geographical distribution and settlements.

The territory of action of the Local Action Group - Razlog covers the settlements and adjacent lands included in the administrative-territorial boundaries of the municipality of Razlog. The Municipality of Razlog is located in South-West Bulgaria, on the territory of the Rila-Rhodope Natural Geographical Region, covering parts of the Razlog Basin, the Rila, Pirin and Rhodope mountains, as well as territories of two of the three National Parks (NP) of Bulgaria - NP "Rila" and NP "Pirin". The Razlog valley is surrounded by the southern parts of Rila and the northern slopes of Pirin, and the eastern border is the Mesta river. It is a high intermountain valley with an average altitude of over 800 m.

To the northwest, the municipality of Razlog borders with the municipality of Blagoevgrad, to the west – with the municipality of Simitli, to the southwest – with the municipality of Kresna, to the south – with the municipality of Bansko, to the northeast and east – with the municipalities of Belitsa and Velingrad (Pazardzhik region). According to the administrative-territorial division of the Republic of Bulgaria, the municipality of Razlog belongs to the Blagoevgrad district and the South-West planning region. Razlog municipality is one of the most dynamically developing municipalities in the Blagoevgrad district, covering approximately 6.8% (440,314 km²) of the district's territory, which places it sixth out of the 14 municipalities in the district and fifth in number of the population (18,822 inhabitants as of 31.12.2021). It consists of 8 settlements - the city of Razlog, which is the municipal center, and 7 villages.

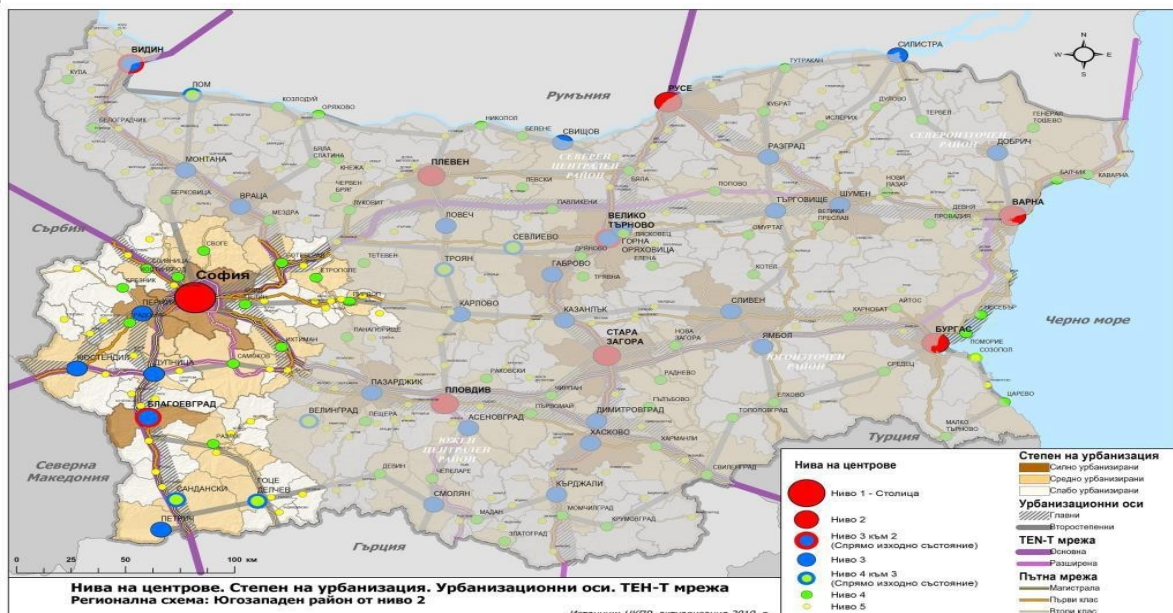


2.

	Settlement	Population at permanent address	Population at current address	Population of permanent and current address in the same town
1	Razlog town	12985	12340	11588
2	Banya village	2860	2850	2613
3	Bachevo village	1563	1493	1406
4	Godlevo village	477	460	420
5	Gorno Draglishte village	869	827	775
6	Dobarsko village	569	533	508
7	Dolno Draglishte village	598	654	556
8	Eleshnitsa village	1295	1217	1136
Total for the municipality		21216	20374	19002

This demographic characteristic of the settlements gives grounds for the majority of them to be defined as vital from an economic and social point of view and favorable for the use and development of the potential of the territory of the municipality. Given the mountainous relief, the density of the settlement network is significantly lower than the average for the country - 1.8 settlements per 100 km² compared to 4.8 on average for Bulgaria.

Transport connections:



Relief

The relief of the territory of the municipality is diverse - from high mountains to lowlands. Parts of the highest Bulgarian mountains - Rila, Pirin and Rhodope, as well as the Razlozhka valley, formed along the Mesta river valley, are covered. The predominant mountainous relief determines the significant share of forest areas in the overall balance of the territory of the municipality.

Minerals

The municipality is not rich in natural resources. There are deposits of lignite coal and uranium ore near the village of Eleshnitsa, as well as granite and marble in Pirin and the Rhodopes.

Climate

The climate in the municipality is moderately continental with a weak Mediterranean influence, coming along the valley of Mesta, located between the Rila, Pirin and Rhodope mountain ranges. The winter is mild but long, the summer relatively short and cool. The average annual temperature is about 8.3°C. The snow cover in the municipality lasts about 152 days on average, which is a prerequisite for the development of winter sports. North-west and west winds prevail, and in winter - south-west winds.

Waters

Razlog Municipality is rich in water resources. Surface running water on the territory of Razlog municipality is mainly from the catchment of the Mesta River. There are four high mountain lakes on the territory of Razlog municipality. They exert a regulating influence on the river runoff and are attractive tourist sites. Large karst springs are located in the Razlog Basin. Their waters have a temperature of 7-10°C, and the total mineralization varies from 0.19 to 0.25 g/l. The average flow rate of all springs in this area is 1850 l/sec.

Mineral springs

On the territory of Razlog municipality, 6 deposits of mineral waters have been established, incl. hot springs. In recent years, spa tourism has been actively developing, especially in the village of Banya, where large tourist complexes have been built. Also in the village of Banya, the warm mineral water is already used for heating public buildings - kindergarten, community center, school.

Soils

Soil diversity is a factor for the development of rich biological diversity, but also for agricultural activities that have been abandoned in recent decades. The alluvial, deluvial and cinnamon forest soils in the valley and low-mountain municipal territory are suitable for growing vegetable crops, tobacco, fruit and cereals. The brown mountain-forest soils are favorable for growing potatoes, rye, flax, raspberries, meadows and pastures.

Forest fund, flora and fauna

The forest fund is rich in high-stemmed coniferous and deciduous forests. Large mammals are represented by brown bear, wolf, fox, chamois, roe deer, red deer, wild boar. Of the small mammals, squirrel, rabbit, wild cat, squirrel, goldfinch, black ferret, badger, etc. are common. The fish in the rivers and lakes are Balkan trout, grayling, barbel, river mullet, perch, walleye. The artificial reservoirs are stocked with carp, trout, catfish, bream, carp,

walleye, etc. The avifauna is richly represented, as most bird species are significant in terms of conservation.

The terrain is extremely diverse - mountainous and mid-mountainous, with steep slopes and deep valleys. The altitude is between 850 and 2250 meters. The region is also rich in localities that are of crucial importance for preserving cultural values and traditions, religious and ethnic identity.

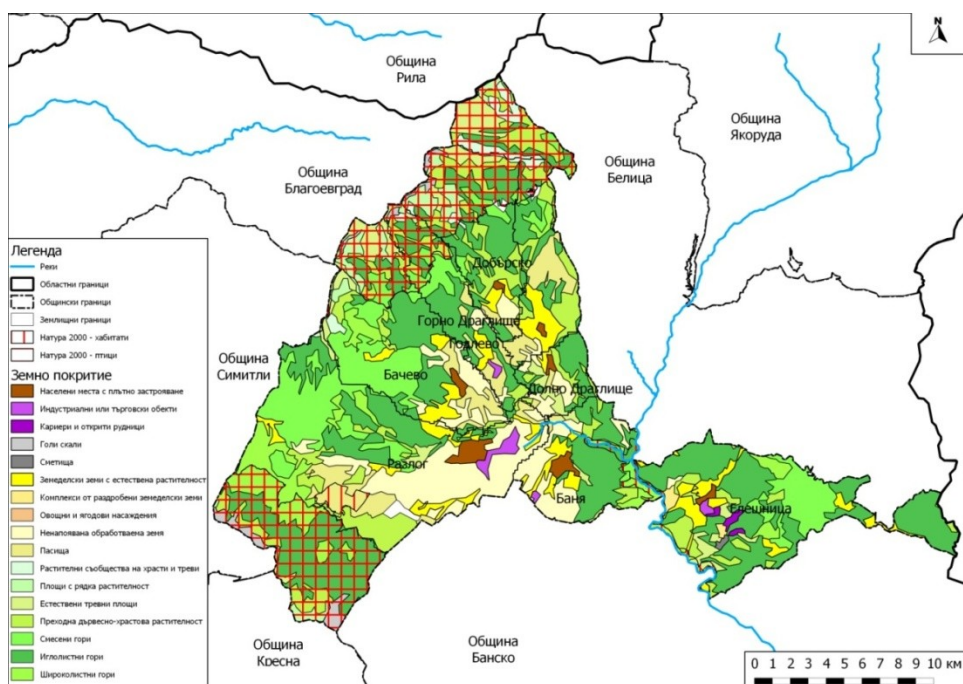
Protected Areas

The following protected areas fall within the territory of Razlog municipality:

- Reserve "Bayuvi dupki - Djinjiritsa" - in the land of the town of Razlog with an area of 2368.1 ha within the scope of the NP "Pirin".
- Rila National Park with an area of 107,923.7 ha. Rila National Park is the largest national park in Bulgaria, as well as one of the largest protected areas on a European scale, where a number of international conventions for the protection of biodiversity are applied.
- Pirin National Park with an area of 40332.4 ha. Pirin National Park is included in the UN list of National Parks and their equivalent reserves. In order to ensure the protection of the unique variety of landscape forms, plant and animal species, in 1983 it was included in the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List with an area of 39277.72 ha.

Protected areas

The "NATURA 2000" network is the most ambitious initiative for the protection of Europe's rich natural heritage through the implementation of Directive 79/409 of the EEC Council of 02.04.1979 on the protection of wild birds and Directive 92/43 of the EEC of 21.05. 1992 to preserve natural habitats and wild flora and fauna. The protected areas of "NATURA 2000" falling on the territory of Razlog municipality are extremely numerous compared to other regions of the country.



3. Conditions for tourism

The natural-geographic characteristics and the climate are key factors determining the attractiveness of the destination, which also affects the vacation period, as well as the choice and costs of tourist activity. Mountain tourism and related sports such as mountaineering, rock climbing, mountain orienteering, etc., are developed. The municipality provides active support to sports clubs, organizes and conducts competitions and sports holidays, builds and maintains sports infrastructure in all settlements.

4. Cultural-historical heritage, community center activities and museums

The cultural and historical heritage of the territory The geographical characteristics and the spatial development of the settlement structure in the Razlog valley, located between the Rila, Pirin and Rhodopi mountains, as well as along the river valleys, are the prerequisite for the settlement of different civilizations on the territory of the municipality since ancient times. The rich cultural heritage is the result of a layering of past civilizations and eras that carry a specific identity and memory. The interaction of nature and man has formed numerous cultural landscapes in the municipality. The cultural heritage of the municipality is joined by the intangible and material immovable and movable heritage as a set of cultural values that bear historical memory and national identity. On the territory of the municipality of Razlog are located numerous immovable cultural values of national and local importance with high scientific and cultural value. In the municipality there are 12 registered archeological immovable cultural values - a late antique settlement and a fortress, located southeast of the village of Bachevo. In the northwest direction from the village of Bachevo are the remains of a medieval church. The main archaeological sites in the municipality are concentrated in the areas around the town of Razlog - ancient and medieval settlements, a late antique fortress, an early Christian church, a Christian cemetery and Christian churches from the Middle Ages. Of national importance are the churches "St. St. Todor Tiron and Todor Stratilat" in the village of Dobarsko, the church of "St. Dimitar" in the village of Dolno Draglishte, located north of the city of Razlog at the foot of Rila, as well as the house-museum "Nikola Parapunov" in the city of Razlog. The church "St. St. Todor Tiron and Todor Stratilat" is one of the few fully preserved Bulgarian churches from the 17th century. In 1977, it was declared an artistic immovable cultural asset of national importance. The remarkable value of the frescoes and the iconostasis determine its unique importance for the development of Bulgarian fine art. The church with its frescoes and iconostasis was completely restored in the 1970s. The masterfully sculpted images are impressively expressive and strikingly reminiscent of the Florentine masterpieces of the Renaissance artist Giotto.

The temple "Saints Saints Theodore Tiron and Theodore Stratilat", Dobarsko village, is included in the One Hundred National Tourist Sites of Bulgaria initiative.



House-Museum "Nikola Parapunov" is part of a series of Renaissance houses that have been declared real cultural assets. The building is a Razlozhko-Chepin house type from the end of the 19th century. In the municipality there are over 80 houses declared as immovable cultural values, and half of them are located in the town of Razlog.



The intangible cultural heritage in the municipality is represented by folk traditions and ancient customs. The cultural calendar of the municipality is represented by a New Year's cooking festival held in the square in the town of Razlog and traditional horse races on Todorov Day in the village of Bachevo. The municipality hosts a gathering of folk art - "Pirin sings", traditional dance festivals of folk groups and a summer theater festival. The attractiveness of the municipality should be presented as a set of natural resources and intangible and material immovable and movable cultural heritage. Folk traditions and cultural customs, local foods and typical dishes according to traditional recipes are the intangible resource that can keep visitors in the municipality and increase its attractiveness and the quality of the cultural tourism product.

The local cultural life

Manifestations of cultural life include all the diversity of local customs and traditional way of life, linguistic features, daily life, but also the creative expression of the individual and the whole society. Creative activity is the most remarkable manifestation of culture and encompasses both the creation, but also the observation and perception of the various arts. Cultural life is a legacy of traditions and history, from which the conclusion naturally follows that the history and culture of the municipality are intertwined.



Achieving a connection between the manifestation of cultural heritage and the full-fledged, modern cultural sphere is an important challenge for the development of Razlog municipality. Using history as a source of ideas for the creation of works of art opens up a variety of possibilities for creative communities. In parallel, the presentation of history through the expressive means of art, together with the modern interpretation of the preserved cultural values through the arts, are a full-fledged practice for their presentation and socialization. **Such a bond can get a spatial expression in the formation of interaction between history, traditions and modern culture.**

Cultural infrastructure

Basic elements of the cultural infrastructure of Razlog municipality are the local museum, together with the traditional and specific to the Bulgarian way of spiritual life community centers.

Houses of culture are at the heart of Bulgaria's cultural activity, serving as the main tool for maintaining self-awareness during the long centuries under Ottoman rule. Many community centers on the territory of Razlog municipality have been preserved to this day. According to the Register of People's Community Centers, a total of 11 community center institutions are registered in the municipality, which are presented in the following table.

Among the most important places for culture is the library at the People's Community Center "15.IX.1903" in the city of Razlog, whose fund stores over 100,000 volumes, including valuable editions dating from the 19th century. Cultural calendar Razlog municipality has an extremely rich cultural calendar, which annually includes:

- New Year's cooking festival "Starhevata" on the square in the town of Razlog
- Annual festival of traditional people "Na armane s tupane"
- Traditional horse races on the occasion of Todorov Day in the village of Bachevo
- Traditional celebration of Babinden
- National motorcycle meeting "Predela"
- Annual assembly of folk art "Pirin sings"
- Annual Easter holidays in the populated areas of the municipality
- Annual summer holidays in the populated areas of the municipality
- Annual celebration of the anniversary of the Ilinden-Preobrazhensky Uprising
- Annual Christmas holidays in the populated areas of the municipality

There is no separate theater building on the territory of Razlog municipality. However, theater art reaches the people through the "Stars of the Theater" theater festivals, which have been held since 2012 in the month of June for one week in the large hall of the National Theater "15.IX.1903". The festival is of great importance because it presents famous plays, brings actors known to the public and popularizes theater art in the territory of the municipality. The film screenings are guest - in the community halls.

**IDENTIFICATION AND VALORIZATION ON LOCAL
RESOURCES**

**THE LOCAL CULINARY TRADITIONS AND
GASTRONOMIC PRODUCTS - RESOURCES FOR
DEVELOPMENT AND ENRICHMENT OF THE
TOURIST OFFER ON THE TERRITORY OF LAG-
RAZLOG**

PART ONE

THEMATIC STUDY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL CULINARY TRADITIONS AND OF SPECIFIC GASTRONOMIC PRODUCTS WITH SELECTION OF THE MOST SUITABLE TO BE PROMOTED

1. Local culinary traditions and gastronomic products on the territory of Razlog municipality

In Razlog and the surrounding villages, traditions are kept and passed down from generation to generation, and holidays are celebrated according to old customs. For every holiday there is a ritual, typical foods and preparation of dishes for the festive family table! One of the most beautiful customs is related to the winter holidays - Christmas Eve, Christmas, New Year, the name days dedicated to various Orthodox saints. Christmas Eve is one of the most family holidays, and the day starts with a cheerful mood in the whole house from the morning. Everyone gets up early, the daughters-in-law tidy up, clean the house, and the mother-in-law prepare dinner. The fire is lit and a big thick tree is put in the hearth - "Christmas tree", it is lit and burns all night until Christmas, let there be light in the house, let there be light in the souls of Christmas, and then the arrangement of the dishes begins. A "bogovitsa" - bread made of white wheat flour - is placed on the Christmas Eve table. A pumpkin is placed around the bread, and typical of Razlozhko is tseluvarki - a traditional salad of pickled beets, fried with flour, red pepper and garlic. Babarok is also added - this is a large white bean for salad, as well as wheat with walnuts. Among the salty dishes are stuffed peppers with bulgur, rice or beans, various pickles. A panica with different types of grains - wheat, corn, oats and others - is also placed on the table, so that the year will be fertile. Honey must also be present on the table, so that the year will be "good".

Before the family sits down at the table, incense is burned - the house and the table. The oldest of the family takes the pita, everyone stands straight, and he breaks the pita and gives it to everyone in order of seniority as he calls. In most homes, everything is done like "once upon a time", the young are interested, the old are pleased to pass on the traditions that are so good.



CHEESES

Sirni zagovezni is an important winter-spring holiday, also called Proshki, Proshka, Prochka, Sirni pokladi, Pokladi, Sirnitsa, Orata. Its numerous names are related to the ritual typical of the holiday. It is always celebrated on Sunday, 49 days (seven weeks) before Easter. It is the last day before Great Lent in which foods of animal origin, such as cheese, milk, eggs, etc., can be eaten. (meat has already been discontinued after Meat Imports); after Cheeses, food of plant origin is allowed only. Before the holiday, during the week between Mesni and Sirni zagovezni, called Sirna Sunday, various rites and customs are performed, many of which come from pagan times.

At the end of February or the beginning of March, depending on the church calendar, in the Razlog Region, Sirni Zagovezni or "Forgiveness" is celebrated. During the day, boys and girls go to the forest and collect juniper branches. The juniper is piled up in big bowls (gare) in the 7 districts of Razlog and in the villages, with the goal being to make the bowl as big and tall as possible. After the morning liturgy, one goes to relatives for forgiveness. Younger people visit older relatives and relatives - father-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law and mother-in-law, godfathers, older brothers and sisters, and ask for forgiveness and kiss the hands of the hosts, uttering traditional lines: "Forgive, little one, dad... ". "May you be forgiven (traditional colloquial form of "may you be forgiven"), may God forgive" is the obligatory response. There are always dairy and egg products on the holiday table: cheese pie, boiled eggs, halva with walnuts. It is accepted to carry out the custom of "amkane" (hamkane lamkane): a boiled peeled egg or a piece of white halva is tied to a thread (chunky, red or martenitsa), hung on a ceiling beam above the table. The thread is spun in a circle and each member of the family, mainly the children, tries to catch the egg (halwa) with their mouth. Ritual actions and fortune-telling follow: the thread, after names, is lit and fortune-telling is done according to the method of burning.



The calendar rite followed the cycle of nature. All the rites performed - caroling, survacing, beating eggs on Easter and lighting candles have magical symbolism.



Easter eggs, decorated and "painted" in the museum of the city of Razlog.

Traditional dishes

The meal on Easter should be rich and beautifully decorated, and the important dishes are 5 - the painted Easter eggs, the green salad, the main course, the Easter cakes and kozunak. Kozunak and painted eggs must be present.



St. George's Day is the biggest spring holiday along with Easter, which marks the beginning of summer and the new business year. The holiday is connected with the awakening of nature, with the aroma of flowers, grasses and herbs. It is celebrated on the day of the Christian Saint George, who in popular belief is the patron saint of shepherds and flocks.

Traditional dishes



Roast lamb, green salads and garden herbs.

You will find recipes for traditional dishes for various holidays in part seven.

2. Selection of local products - foods and dishes to be promoted

TRADITIONAL LOCAL DISHES

Kapama recipe - the original kapama is cooked in a cauldron over an open fire, but you can also cook it in a clay pot in the oven. It is prepared from many products - several types of meat - pork, chicken, beef, rabbit and sauerkraut. Arrange in layers, placing the pork on the bottom. Sauerkraut, veal, chicken, bloodroot, rice and spices are also added. It is baked on slow fire. An extremely tasty and nutritious dish, which is eaten mostly in the winter months with a glass of good red wine.



Razlozhka shupla

It is thin bread with yogurt, eggs and cheese. The characteristic of Razlozhka shupla is that it is sprinkled with cumin, which gives it its characteristic taste and aroma. The specific thing about the preparation of Razlozhka shupla is that it is brushed with melted butter when it is almost baked, then it is returned to the oven for a short time so that the butter is absorbed.



Razlozhka Fudula – The products needed to make it are similar to those used for the Shupula Spread. The difference is that yeast is also added here. A dough is kneaded, which is then left to rise. Cheese, bacon or sjudjuk /sausage/ is added.



Fudula from a baker in the village of Godlevo, Razlog municipality.

Nafpavok – Nafpavok is a raw-dried meat delicacy that has a long tradition in Bulgarian cooking and preservation. It was prepared more than a century ago in all the villages of the Razlog valley - Eleshnitsa, Banya, Dolno Draglishte, Gorno Draglishte, Dobarsko, Godlevo, Bachevo. Today it is prepared only by Deshka Kroteva from Gorno Draglishte. The interesting thing about the preparation of this traditional Bulgarian delicacy is that it is dried for a very long time and buried in ashes. Only the tastiest pork meat is used for it - tenderloin, tenderloin, thigh, neck and a little bacon.



Nafpavok - a unique Bulgarian dish from 100 years ago. Today it is prepared by only one woman - grandmother Deshka from the village of Gorno Draglishte, who is also the owner of the Guest House "Deshka", which is visited by Bulgarian and foreign tourists. Her specialties are yalova banitsa, pogacha, shupla, sweet pastries with Turkish delight or rice, and most of all nafpavok - the local sausage, which only she makes according to ancient technology.

Chomlek - is a very rich and satisfying main dish from the traditional Razlog cuisine. Pork shank and vegetables are prepared - potatoes, carrots, garlic, onions and tomatoes. Spices are added, such as red and black pepper, salt, bay leaf. It is baked on a slow fire in a clay pot.



MORE TRADITIONAL FOODS OFFER IN RAZLOG



Desserts

The most popular traditional desserts in the region:

Borek - a very tasty pumpkin dessert that is simple but with great taste. For its preparation, walnuts, sugar, flour, oil and pumpkin are used, of course.



Kukurini are sweet dough circles that become curly at the end when fried. It is from the curls that are formed that the name of this dessert comes. In banski kukurini means curls. The dough is prepared from flour, eggs and oil, and the finished kukurini are served sprinkled with powdered sugar.

Kukurini with powdered sugar



Razlog traditional cuisine is original and diverse. The residents of the region are masters of delicious home-cooked food. At first glance, the products they use look simple, but the result is impressive. The variety of spices that are used and the low temperature that is maintained for a long time are among the reasons for the incredible and rich taste of the feasts. It is also curious that most of the dishes are prepared according to old recipes passed down through generations. In the Razlog region, they are famous as guardians of culinary traditions.



PART TWO

IDENTIFICATION AND BRIEF PRESENTATION OF LOCAL ENTERPRISES FROM THE TOURISM SECTOR, FOOD PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING ENTERPRISES

1. Local enterprises from the tourism sector of the territory

Tourist sector. The development of tourism as an economic activity

The "Hotel and restaurant industry" sector is directly related to the development of the tourism functions of the municipality of Razlog. In the last two decades, the policy of the municipality and the tourist business has been aimed at more efficient use of the available tourist resources and the tourist potential of the territory. Razlog Municipality is emerging as a significant, attractive tourist destination. This is the result of the large-scale tourist infrastructure in several separate tourist centers on the territory of the municipality. The main elements of the tourist infrastructure are: the places of accommodation and means of shelter, including the bed base of the tourist sector; dining and entertainment establishments. Places of accommodation and other means of shelter. Accommodation plays an important role in the tourist infrastructure. According to the Law on Tourism, accommodations are classified into two groups (classes): Class A. Classic type hotels, apartment hotels, tourist villages; Class B. Family hotels, guest houses, guest rooms, boarding houses, etc. In addition to accommodation, the tourist bed base also includes other means of shelter: huts, rest stations, villas, spa hotels, spa hotels, spa centers, etc. According to information from the Municipal Administration - town of Razlog, the parameters of the accommodation places and other means of shelter in the municipality of Razlog as of 2022 show that the bed base covers a total of 95 sites that have over 4,000 beds. Of these, 3,200 beds are in accommodation facilities in the town of Razlog and in areas of its territory. Almost all villages have guesthouses or small hotels. The tourist base, which is larger and for higher-class tourists, is in the holiday villages and the golf complex around Razlog, as well as in the village of Banya - for spa tourism. In support of the private tourism initiative and the established accommodation base, the Municipal Administration works actively to create tourist attractions, recreation, sports and entertainment areas. Insufficient information security and advertising was established.

Development of tourism

The focus on tourism is necessary, due to its recognition as a priority industry in the long term both at the municipal level and by the population of the territory. The reason for this is that the development of tourism has a favorable effect on increasing the income from related activities such as transport, trade, agriculture, education, culture, infrastructure, food industry, etc.

The wealth of natural, cultural and historical sights and attractions, as well as the proximity to the Bansko ski resort, makes it possible to develop all kinds of traditional and alternative forms of tourism on the territory of Razlog municipality. The territory is located on the border of 2 culturally distinct areas - the Macedonian and the Rhodope ethnographic groups, which is the reason for the characteristic balance of Razlog between different traditions and life strategies. The cultural life of the municipality is characterized by the preservation of traditions and the search for modern models that meet the needs of generations. As you can see, Razlog municipality has great potential for tourism development.

Identified active companies in the "Hospitality and restaurant industry" sector

Big hotel complexes		
1	KATARINO HOTEL AND SPA	Katarino locality
2	HOTEL RAZLOG	Razlog town
3	PIRIN GOLF AND COUNTY CLUB SPA HOTEL	Betolovoto locality
4	HOTEL COMPLEX RIMSKA BANYA	Banya village
5	SPA HOTEL ASPA VILLA	Banya village
Family hotels and tourism		
6	HOTEL PAPI	Razlog town
7	HOTEL ZORA	Razlog town
8	HOTEL SHATEV	Razlog town
9	HOTEL KUPENSKI	Razlog town
10	HOTEL COMPLEX MEHOMIA	Razlog town
11	TOURIST COMPLEX TURSKA BANYA	Razlog town
12	HOTEL COMPLEX SHIPOKO	Predel locality
13	BIO-HOTEL MORAVSKO SELO	In the locality of Razlog
14	FAMILY HOTEL PRI BALTO	Banya village
15	CHOBANOVA GUEST HOUSE	Banya village
16	FAMILI HOTEL SVETI NIKOLA	Banya village
17	DESHKA GUEST HOUSE	Gorno Draglishte village
18	VASIL GUSTE HOUSE	Dobarsko village
19	PRIYATELI GUEST HOUSE	Dobarsko village
20	HOTEL DOBARSKO	Dobarsko village
21	ASENOVA GUEST HOUSE	Godlevo village
22	HOTEL PRIPETSITE	Godlevo village
23	HORSE STABLE PERI VOLAS	Bachevo village
24	MIZINA GUEST HOUSE	Eleshnitsa village
25	SVETA VARVARA TOURIST ROOMS	Eleshnitsa village

The territory has significant opportunities and potential for upward and sustainable development based on human, material, natural and cultural resources. The achieved level of infrastructural, social and economic development must be preserved, modernized, further developed and upgraded. The attractiveness of the territory should be interpreted as a set of diverse natural features, but also of intangible and material immovable and movable cultural heritage, as a resource that can attract visitors to the municipality and enrich the overall tourist product.

2. Local food production and processing enterprises

Local products have an important economic, social and environmental role. Sometimes they are connected with the historical and cultural past, with traditions and local culture, which turns them into a kind of cultural heritage. There are also newly created local products based on the resources of the territory - economic, natural, climatic, human and material.

Local foods as part of the cultural heritage can play a major role in the development of tourism and small craft productions. Combined with local folklore and material cultural, historical and natural heritage, traditional foods give the territory uniqueness and local identity. Local products can be "food from the farm", but they can also be part of a production chain uniting one or several producers along the chain: Raw materials - Primary processing - Processing to final product - Supply - Consumption. Local products have the potential to stimulate the sustainable economic development of a given territory, to create a cluster or a common territorial brand.

The advantage of a local food system is that it makes a comeback of sorts for small, sustainable farms and food producers, at the expense of the big industrial business that dominates the market today and that puts profit before the well-being of people and the planet. More and more people want to know where their food comes from, want to support local sustainable farmers and producers, or reinvigorate local economies. There is a growing grassroots movement to support short (i.e. local) food supply chains that offer food grown sustainably on a small scale – a concept also known as agro-ecological farming. Consumers want more local food. Consumers are also driving change in food supply patterns.

More and more people are becoming aware of the many benefits of adopting responsible eating habits, and this is leading to the emergence of many different initiatives designed to shorten food supply chains and create new alliances between producers and consumers.

The "short supply chain" is one of the most innovative methods of supplying the food products desired by consumers. Short supply chains are considered the most suitable channels for organic/biological and local specific products of small and medium-sized farmers who have limited opportunities to participate in conventional trade chains, but can

be very effective in direct sales. In the presence of direct contact with consumers and the increase of social contacts, additional characteristics are transmitted to the authenticity of the product, the farm where it was produced and its adjacent territory. The exchange of information includes details about the type of products, the methods and technologies of their cultivation and packaging, and last but not least the identity and ethical values of both producers and consumers.

Types of short supply chains:

- Direct sales from individual producers and micro processing enterprises, producers of their own raw material;
- Collective direct sales (from several holdings);
- Partnerships between producers and consumers.

Benefits of short supply chains: social; economic; ecological.

Social benefits: expressed in more and better employment opportunities at the local level, requiring and encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge and skills; social contact between urban and rural people is encouraged, more opportunities for cooperation and interaction; consumption in shorter periods has a positive effect on the health of consumers, as the vitamin composition and nutritional value of the products are preserved to a greater extent.

Economic benefits: they are expressed in obtaining a fairer price and the entry of fresh financial means into the local economy; improving the income of small farms, raising their standard of living, building and maintaining local markets and shops; preserving and restoring the vitality of the territory; local food production and short supply chains combine well with the development of local tourism.

Environmental benefits: environmentally friendly production methods, in harmony with the local natural conditions; reducing emissions in the limited transportation of food; more gentle tillage practices when using small equipment; in these systems, less packaging is used, resulting in a reduction in the amount of waste.

Short food supply chains are a sure engine for changing the supply of products from small farms and a method to increase the sustainability, confidence and development of producers in the light of rural development policy. Short supply chains are a means for successful local economic development, for close territorial and social relations between producers, processors and consumers.

LOCAL MANUFACTURERS IN THE TERRITORY OF LAG-RAZLOG

Local production chains in the field of food and cooking are mainly in the field of production, processing and marketing of meat and milk from mountain animal husbandry, fish farms in high mountain freshwater basins. To promote local production chains and cooperation between stakeholders from the public and private sectors, LAG-Razlog develops measures in the Community-led Local Development Strategy, through which it financially and expertly supports investment projects in modern agricultural machinery, machinery and equipment for - efficient production technologies in the processing of agricultural and forest products, aiming at resource and energy efficiency and higher competitiveness. Agriculture is not widespread in the area, due to the lack of large arable areas and the peculiarities of the soil, topography and climate. The area favors greenhouse production of vegetables and flowers with mineral water heating in the villages of Banya and Eleshnitsa. The prospects for the development of organic farming are good. There are initiatives for the cultivation of essential oil crops. Livestock breeding and, in connection with it, the processing industry for meat and milk food products is well developed. In most settlements there are livestock farms for cows, goats, and sheep. There are fishponds for trout in the lands of the town of Razlog, the village of Bachevo and the village of Dobarsko. A large number of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises operate on the territory of LAG-Razlog, incl. in the field of meat and milk processing; family businesses for food production – bakeries and small confectionery workshops. A large part of the companies are in the field of trade and services, including and tourist and transport services.

Tourism: Almost all villages have guest houses or small hotels. The tourist base, which is larger and for higher-class tourists, is in the holiday villages and the golf complex around Razlog, as well as in the village of Banya - for spa tourism. In the village of Bachevo there are also 5 equestrian centers for mountain riding and equestrian sports, there is also 1 equestrian center near the town of Razlog. In support of the private initiative in tourism and the built accommodation base, the Municipal Administration works actively to create tourist attractions, areas for recreation, sports and entertainment.

Local traditional products and dishes prepared with them according to old recipes give the inhabitants and guests of the territory a variety of tastes, quality, a touch to the customs, culture and traditions of the past, while having a positive impact on the local economy.

Buying local traditional products has a number of advantages - family farms are supported, added value and jobs remain in the region, shorter transport routes protect the environment, reducing dependence on imports. Food consumption is an integral part of tourism and its economic impact can be significant not only for those directly providing food to tourists (such as hotels, restaurants and attractions), but can also have a significant economic impact throughout the supply chain of foods, especially if the food provided is delivered locally. A study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that food plays an important role in the development of tourism services, as it often comprises 30% or more of tourism expenditure, which is a direct income for local

businesses. Unique regional and local productions stimulate cooperation between agriculture and other sectors, including tourism, hospitality, education, crafts and more. Better interaction between the sectors is expected to have a significant synergistic effect - on the one hand, to stimulate and make more sustainable the development of local production of agricultural products, food and beverages, and on the other hand, to help strengthen interest in the country as a tourist destination and in particular to unlock and support the realization of the enormous potential of culinary and wine tourism.

The local products with traditions and potential in the territory of LAG-Razlog are related to the natural and ecological characteristics of the area:

- meat - from mountain animal husbandry, processed into final products
- milk - from mountain animal husbandry, processed into final products
- fish - from mountain water basins fed with clean spring mountain water

LOCAL MILK PRODUCTS

BIO farm and dairy Kozle - a family business between Rila and Pirin <http://www.kozle.eu/> "Kozle" sounds both sweet and headstrong, but also kind of cute. The small family dairy is in the town of Razlog, by the river, and the farm with the goats is in Bansko, in the mountains. The BIO farm has a visitor center, where visits by naturist groups from all over the world (Germany, France, Japan, Israel, etc.) are periodically organized. Guests have the opportunity to get acquainted with the traditional way of raising 240 goats of the indigenous breed "Local long-haired" and of the rare breed "Kaloferska long-haired", surrounded by the incredible nature of the Pirin Mountains.



Goats give little milk, but of unsurpassed quality, which is immediately felt in the aroma and taste of the cheese - fresh with a shelf life of only 20 days and mature goat cheese. A priority and goal for the family dairy is to offer pure and delicious cheeses from non-skimmed milk obtained on their own mountain farm.

Organic dairy products from goat's milk All products produced by "Kozle" OOD are organically certified by EcogrupperoItalia. Dairy products with the "Kozle" brand are created for people who have an affinity for natural and healthy foods.



BIO mature goat cheese Kozle

The organic goat's milk cheese is aged in brine for a minimum of 60 days. All the fermentation processes have gone through and led to the unlocking of the unique and valuable taste of the product.



BIO fresh goat cheese Kozle

BIO fresh goat cheese, aged in brine for 18 hours, with the characteristic soft structure and slightly salty taste. The shelf life of this product is only 20 days.



BIO goat yogurt

Goat BIO goat yogurt according to an authentic recipe, giving it the traditional flavor of Bulgarian yogurt, highlighted by the milk produced in the mountain BIO farm.



BIO pasteurized goat milk Goat

Goat's milk, obtained from the own BIO farm and pasteurized to 72 degrees. Milk is sold in a form suitable for direct consumption.



The successes and performances of "Kozle" OOD "Kozle" Ltd. takes part in both Bulgarian and international exhibitions for BIO producers. Among the exhibitions visited are AGRA (International FairPlovdiv), DiVinoTaste (Sofia), Sport& Health (Sofia), ADF Gast (Vienna, Austria), BioFach (Nuremberg, Germany), TerraMadreBalkani (Torino, Italia), FoodEXPO (Herning, Denmark), BulgarianFarm-Market (Bussels, Belgium) and others. Kozle OOD is one of the winning companies in the competition organized by 24-Chasa newspaper, Metro Bulgaria and KRIB Bulgaria "Big Small 2015". The award, worth BGN 10,000, serves as a great start to the online advertising of the business.

LOCAL MEAT PRODUCTS MEAT COMBINATION RAZLOG - SARAY

<https://sarai-bg.com/> The meat processing enterprise "SaraY" is an emblematic company for Southwestern Bulgaria, developing its activity in the city of Razlog. It wins the trust of its customers and partners with correctness, quality and taste of the products, with high standards of production and environmental friendliness. "Saray" supports animal husbandry at the local and national level, using only Bulgarian meat for its products. The company owns its own livestock farm, an ecological slaughterhouse and a modern production facility for meat processing. Local GI products A unique local product with a registered territorial trademark is "Razlozhki starets".



According to our own technology and a local traditional recipe, the fillet "Chef's Appetizer" and "Pirinsky delicacy"



Technical equipment

The production base of "Sarai" is at the highest European technological level. The equipment used is from the German companies ALPINA and HALTMAN, guaranteeing excellent quality and a hygienic environment.



Public activity

SaraY has an important role in supporting the regional initiatives of Southwestern Bulgaria. Located in the city of Razlog, with a store network in Bansko and wide distribution of its products, it is a factor in the development of local business. He is a member of the Association of Meat Processors in Bulgaria and the Association of Producers of Traditional Raw-Dried Sausages. He regularly participates in the "Mesomania" exhibition, which is organized every autumn in the Inter Expo Center, Sofia. In addition, it supports regional tourist events in Razlog and Bansko, sponsoring events such as the "Pirin Pee" folklore festival, culinary festivals of the city of Bansko, cultural forums of the city of Razlog and others. Every year in the month of August, a golf tournament for the "Sarai" cup takes place at the Pirin Golf and Country Club near Razlog. Distinctions - recognition of quality:

- Gold medal for "Banski starets" sausage from the National Exhibition "Mesomania" 2009.
- Gold medal of sujuk "Sarai" from the National Exhibition "Mesomania" 2009.
- First place at "Mesomania" 2010. in the "Consumer's Choice for Saray" sudjuk competition
- First place for "Pirinsky delicacy" at "Mesomania" 2011.

LOCAL PRODUCTS - FRESHWATER FISH

BIOHORIZONT - Pirin Fish Farm and Izvoro Restaurant <http://biohorizont.bg/> Fish farm "PIRIN" is located next to a large karst spring near the town of Razlog, at the foot of the Pirin mountain. The mountain water springs from a great depth with a constant flow rate and temperature throughout the year.



This provides the fish farm with the opportunity to grow fish all year round under conditions closest to the natural environment in the mountain rivers.



The company's efforts are aimed at a complete renovation of facilities and equipment to achieve the goals of intensive breeding of all types of trout fish and production of stocking material.



The functioning of the production part of an old fish farm is gradually being restored, the technological scheme, which was laid down in the design of the entire facility, is being optimized. Investments are being made in modern equipment and new machines with funding from the Maritime and Fisheries Program for the project "Modernization of facilities and processes in the production activity of the Pirin fish farm".



RESTAURANT IZVORO NEAR FISH FARM PIRIN

Next to the fish farm there is a cozy fish restaurant with a garden and a children's play area.



PART THREE

STUDY OF OTHER LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS WISHING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECT

The importance of sourcing local products is becoming increasingly important given the new challenges related to health, climate change, food security, disrupted global supply chains and the worsening economic situation due to the Covid19 pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the development potential of local traditional products through their protection and promotion. It is possible to register territorial marks and apply European quality schemes. Stimulating the production and processing of local traditional products will contribute to the development and competitiveness of agricultural producers, will promote the social well-being of the population in the regions and will contribute to increasing the quality of products. In order to improve the market position of micro and small enterprises that encounter difficulties in the realization of the products, it is necessary to be stimulated to associate. Bringing farmers together in various forms of cooperation makes it possible for activities that benefit them to generate higher added value that they could not achieve alone. The identified interested parties by sectors and groups on the territory of LAG – Razlog are presented below: **Business sector**

- Agricultural producers (individuals, companies, cooperatives);
- Enterprises in the field of processing of agricultural and forest products;
- Micro enterprises from all non-agricultural economic activities;
- Hotels, guest houses, restaurants and other tourist sites;

- Individuals practicing trades;

Non-profit sector

- Non-governmental organizations operating in the field of economic development, tourism, ecology, culture;
- Reading centers and museums;
- Representatives of civil society, clubs and interest groups.

Public sector

- Municipality of Razlog and town halls by settlements;
- State and municipal institutions in the field of agriculture, food, professional education, tourism, ecology.

Meetings with representatives of the local government, the non-governmental sector, citizens and small businesses

Need for a strategic approach:

The main problem indicated is the lack of a strategy for the development of the municipality of Razlog as an independent tourist destination. According to the survey participants, tourism in the municipality is developing "in the shadow" of the large tourist center - the ski resort of Bansko. This trend brings with it both the positives of free advertising and the negatives of the neighboring city of overbuilding and high prices.

The participants see a solution to the problem in the creation of a comprehensive municipal strategy for the development of the city as a tourist center, which advertises local tourist attractions, accommodation and natural features of the municipality, such as mineral springs. Well-thought-out advertising and marketing campaigns that combine the presentation of natural features, cultural heritage, and local products are also needed. The representatives of civil organizations in Razlog share the opinion that the non-governmental sector is very well developed in the municipality. Practically all spheres of public life are represented - ecology, youth activities, social activities, sports and culture.

On the positive side, there is a history of the civilian sector. Here is the first Business Center, there is also the LAG with extensive experience. Many and varied projects are implemented, incl. ecologically oriented. The civil sector's communication with businesses in the region is defined as relatively good. According to the representatives of the NGO, the entrepreneurial activity is above the average for the country, there are many people with energy and desire to develop their own business. This is evaluated as an extremely positive trend, but it also has some disadvantages - entrepreneurs find themselves in an extremely competitive environment. The main problem facing economic development is the lack of diverse and innovative business ideas.

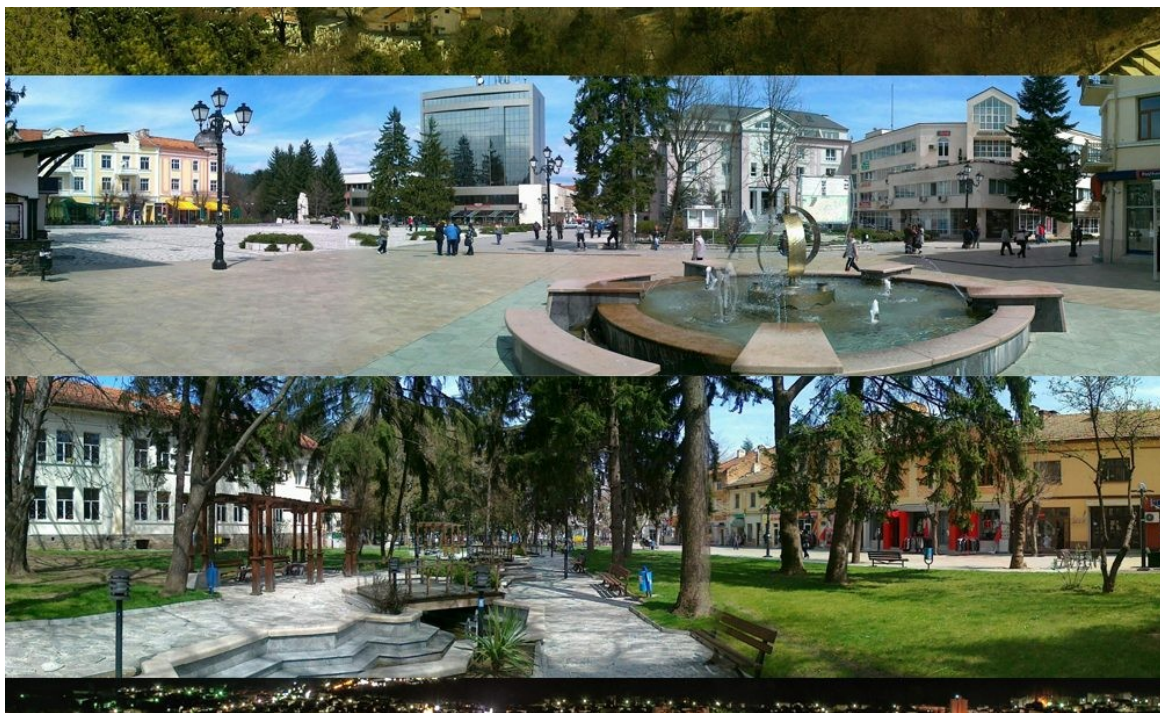
Most entrepreneurs tend to copy already established and successful models, which further strains the business environment and creates hyper-competition in a given industry. For example, guest houses continue to be a priority target for new entrepreneurs, despite

evidence that the capacity of such projects on the territory of the municipality is already exhausted. According to the representatives of NGOs engaged in consulting and supporting local businesses, the greatest potential for development in this territory is organic agriculture, festival and event tourism, as well as the development of tourist services outside of hotels and restaurants. The representatives of the different target groups that participated in the study (entrepreneurs, administration, NGO activists and citizens) recognize similar problems and challenges to the development of the territory (low environmental culture, insufficient initiatives and following good environmental practices, lack of innovation and creativity of business for better energy and resource efficiency). NGO representatives share a common intuition and vision for their resolution: development of an ecological culture, implementation of good practices, adaptation of institutional policies to the local context, investment in technological innovation and above all in human development and attitude to the environment. The active representatives of the community take into account the changes in the environment and realize the resulting need for changes in the environmental culture of business, administration and civil organizations, but it is still difficult for them to formulate a clear vision for change and outline the ways and means for its achievement. This stage of development implies carefully selected interventions that consider and are responsive to the community's capacity to integrate change. An example of a regional partnership and a common tourism product: The project "Bansko, Razlog and Kresna in the embrace of Pirin" aims at the development of a regional tourism product that is based on the specific local resources, both natural and anthropogenic, and its subsequent popularization and positioning on the national and international tourist market. The municipal partners Bansko, Razlog and Kresna are united around the idea of introducing a standard for the promotion and marketing of the tourist area "Pirin", which will lead to overcoming the discrepancy between the rich potential for the development of various forms of tourism and the insufficient knowledge of the area, as well as by professionals in the tourism industry, as well as by tourists themselves. The development of tourist packages and the implementation of a mass advertising and marketing campaign covering the entire region, and not individual municipalities, is a new practice for tourism offering and presentation, which can be adopted and adapted to the specific conditions of other municipalities directing their efforts towards development of a regional tourism product. The planned advertising and marketing activities, as well as the participation in international tourist exhibitions and exchanges, the organization of expedition trips.

PART FOUR

RESEARCH OF TOURIST FACILITIES OFFERING LOCAL PRODUCTS; IDEAS FOR THEIR PROMOTION

The town of Razlog is the economic, cultural and administrative center of Razlog municipality. It is hidden between two hills - Golak to the north and Sarovitsa to the south. The green areas and the panoramic views of Pirin, Rila and the Rhodopes create a unique feeling for the tourist. The visitor has the opportunity for unique contact with the majestic nature in the resort areas of Betolovoto, Predel and Katarino. The hot mineral springs in the village of Banya, in the locality. Razdavets near the village of Bachevo and in the village of Eleshnitsa are suitable for balneotherapy and prevention.



Razlog hosts one of the largest gatherings of folk art in Bulgaria - "Pirin SINGS". The meeting is organized every two years in the area of Predel in the second half of August. The festival celebrates the richness and diversity of folk art from the Pirin region - songs, dances, customs, rites, costumes and more.



Razlog is also proud of its impressive Kuker holidays – the Starchevata procession on January 1 each year, where local people in traditional costumes celebrate the start of the New Year and ward off evil spirits, is something not to be missed.



1. Tourist sites on the territory of Razlog municipality that offer local food

Razlog is becoming an increasingly popular tourist destination. The key is in the nature and hospitality of the local people, in the preserved traditions. Based on the traditional foods that many hotels and restaurants offer to their guests, culinary tourism is also developing. The town has a friendly face with lots of greenery, cafes and restaurants with excellent cuisine. Here you will have a good meal, and the children will have fun running safely under the shady crowns of the trees of the city park. Razlog is not far from Bansko, but has its own charm, vibrancy and character. The hotel complexes are located in resort areas about 5 kilometers outside the city. In the areas of Betolovoto and Katarino, a remarkable bed base has been built and successfully operates throughout the year. The offers are varied: accommodation in lodges and houses, four-star and luxury spa hotels. The climatic features of the Razlog valley, the springs with mineral water and the appropriate infrastructure turn Razlog into a new and modern destination for balneology, spa and sports.

Restaurants offering traditional local dishes

Ethnic restaurant "Mehomiya" (Turkish Bath) is located in the city park of the city of Razlog, in the authentic building of an old Turkish bath, which has been restored. The interior is country-style, over two floors, and outside there is a cool summer garden. The menu includes traditional local specialties.



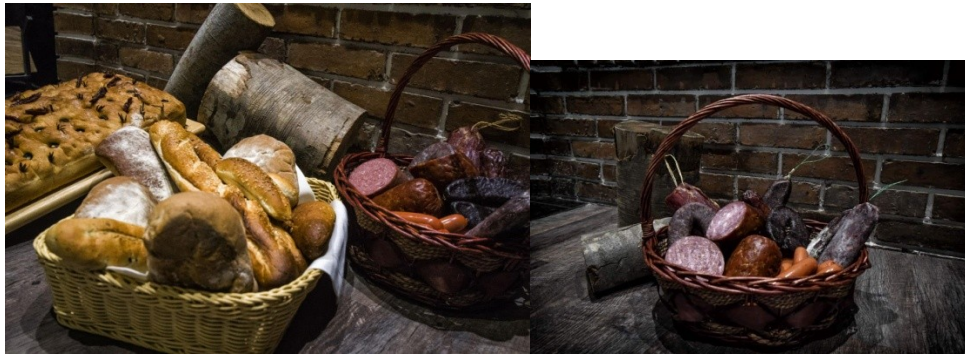
Restaurant Cassa di Papi - town of Razlog, Sheynovo Street



It offers dishes from traditional Bulgarian cuisine, as well as refined dishes from Italian cuisine.

Katarino SPA Hotel

Katarino Spa creates a feeling of earthly perfection, where natural beauty is complemented by the latest Spa & Wellness technologies! This is the place where you will restore your mental balance, and limitless lightness and happiness will fill you after the rest in the relaxation area, lit by the live fire of the fireplace or in the panoramic steam bath with an enchanting view of the mountains. Restaurant Mehanata in Katarino SPA The best of traditional Bulgarian cuisine and local specialties: smoked meats and aged cheeses, grilled specialties, home-cooked food, own oven for bread production. The unique taste is largely due to the natural products of our own production.



Restaurant - Razlog: a culinary journey in the heavenly region

In the main restaurant "Catharino" spa, every bite becomes a unique culinary journey in the heavenly region of tastes. The place where comfort and sophistication meet with tempting aromas and gastronomic experiences. Razlog Restaurant is a place where taste meets natural beauty, providing an exceptional experience. Discover a gastronomic spectacle in the heart of nature at the Razlog restaurant, where every bite is part of this highly representative art. With its unique setting and stylish service, Razlog restaurant combines high-quality products with art to provide its guests with a gastronomic show. An exciting culinary experience and atmosphere. Every bite becomes an actor in this gourmet gastronomic spectacle, where nature and taste dance in harmony, providing you with a unique pleasure.





2. Promotion of local products

The Law on Cultural Heritage also places intangible heritage under legal protection. Apart from the scientific, cognitive and educational value, this heritage, presented in an appropriate form and environment, represents an important element of the tourist resource of the municipality. The municipality of Razlog annually implements an extremely rich cultural calendar, which includes many traditional and new holidays and entertainment events. On January 1, every year in the town of Razlog, a New Year's cooking procession "Starchevata" is held. The city of Razlog is a member of the Federation of European Carnival Cities and every second year it hosts the International Kuker Carnival, which gathers masquerade and kuker groups from all over the world. Every year on January 1, a cook meeting is held in the villages of Bachevo and Dobarsko. On Todorov Day in the village of Bachevo, a water festival is traditionally held in the church "St. Dimitar" and consecration of the icon of St. Theodore Tiron, a festive liturgy in the square in the center of the village, followed by a race (kushia) and horse pull-up in the town of "Vlasovitsa". Every year, on the first day after Easter, a kuker carnival is organized in the village of Eleshnitsa, and a mass of masked women participate in it, accompanied by traditional whistling and playing. On the second day of Easter, the festival "1000 costumes in one place" is held in the central square of the town of Razlog, which reveals the folklore richness and diversity of the territory of the municipality. More than a thousand people in national costumes take part in it. Also on the second day after Easter, traditionally in the village of Godlevo, a solemn holy liturgy is performed, a sacrificial offering is prepared for health in the town of "St. Elijah", followed by a holiday concert in the center of the village. On the second day of Resurrection, in the town of "Krushata" on the land of the village of Banya, a council is held, a solemn liturgy is held, followed by a race and a tug-of-war with horses. In the spring (April-May), with the aim of popularizing the Bulgarian heavy draft horse, in the town of Razlog, National trials for the pulling power of heavy draft horses in Bulgaria are held annually, on the basis of the Association for Horse Breeding and Equestrian

Sports "DVAL". Every year on May 6, St. George's Day, in the town of "Presveta" in the territory of the village of Bachevo, 1 km from Gergeva Skala, the residents of Bachevo make a sacrifice for health and fertility. On the evening before St. George's Day, the young girls of the village perform the "Wrist Melting" ritual. In the month of May, a rich folklore program is organized on the holiday of the village of Gorno Draglishte. In the month of June, since 2012, annually on the "Transfiguration" square in the town of Razlog, the municipality of Razlog and the "September 15, 1612-1913" National Festival organizes a national festival "On armane with drums", at which various traditional people are presented, performed by participants in clubs and folk dance ensembles from all over the country, accompanied by orchestras of folk instruments. On the first Sunday of July, a traditional assembly "Festival of my village" is held annually in the village of Banya, with the participation of folk ensembles from the country and abroad. The last Saturday of July is the holiday of the village of Dolno Draglishte, a rich folklore program and traditional family meetings between the inhabitants of the village and the village of Zlatitsa are organized in the village square. At the beginning of August, since 1962, the assembly of folk art "Pirin sings" has been organized in the town of "Predel", and since 1999, the assembly has been held every two years. Thousands of performers from Southwestern Bulgaria take part in it. This is one of the symbols of Razlog municipality and Blagoevgrad region. The participants present authentic and preserved folklore - songs, dances, rites and rituals. On August 15, in the town of "Church" in the land of the village of Bachevo, a sacrifice is made for the health of the village, and on the Saturday before this holiday in the town of "Perivol" in the same land, a youth gathering with songs and dances is organized. October 24 is the holiday of the town of Razlog, a solemn Holy Liturgy is held in the church of "St. Annunciation" in the city and a festive folk concert. The local folklore is studied and preserved in numerous groups and ensembles developing their activities in the folk community centers.

A way to widely promote local products and culinary traditions is the exhibitions of local products and culinary demonstrations during traditional holidays, when local people and tourists of different age and social groups, and often of different nationalities, gather in one place.

Projects of non-governmental organizations funded by the strategies of "Local Action Group - Razlog":

Beneficiary of the LAG-Razlog strategy: NGO "Destination Razlog" with the project "Look, listen and try Razlog!".



Pie /banitsa/ festival held by "Destination Razlog" Association

Beneficiary of the LAG-Razlog strategy: NGO "Eco Razlog" with the project "Environmental information center "ECO RAZLOG" for sustainable development through preserved nature"





Outdoor event under the motto "Gifts from nature for a healthy and quality life", held by the "Eco - Razlog" Association - afforestation of the Golak area by volunteers - nature lovers, followed by a tasting of local products

Transnational cooperation project of LAG-Razlog in partnership with LAG from the Czech Republic and Bulgaria: Ecologically responsible local communities in the rural areas of Europe





Event held by LaG-Razlog: Exhibition - tasting of local products, town of Razlog

The development of the territory of LAG-Razlog and its economy is a function of the development of individual business entities and economic directions, as well as the establishment of appropriate inter-branch connections. Therefore, it is necessary to build interaction between the representatives of the agricultural and food industry, economy and tourism, as well as the non-governmental sector working with these foods, and the local communities, in order to achieve coherence in their actions and a synergistic effect in the deployment of the potential of local traditional products.

The implementation of the European policy on the quality of agricultural products, food and drink ensures uniform protection of names as an intellectual property right and the provision of clear information about products with specific characteristics related to geographical origin and others. In this way, manufacturers are given the opportunity to increase the image and recognition of their products.

The access of the products to new markets or the preservation of their market share is facilitated, which is also a prerequisite for better prices for their sale.

Awareness

The lack of comprehensive information about local traditional and regional traditional products and channels for accessing this information creates difficulties for their production and realization.

Systematic approach, local and national policies

At the moment, in relation to local traditional products, there is a lack of a systematized approach at the national and regional level by the competent authorities and interested parties, and a platform for wider dialogue and partnership is not available. The potential of these products is underdeveloped, they are usually the subject of activities limited in time and scope and remain on the periphery of local policies. No database has been developed for these products that would support efforts to promote them and promote their production. The existence of mechanisms for the protection and promotion of local traditional and regional traditional products at the national level would give a chance for

their consolidation in the country, for the sustainability of local producers and the possibility of expanding the basis for their participation in European quality schemes and better access to both domestic and foreign markets.

PROMOTING FORMS OF TOURISM COMBINED WITH LOCAL FOODS, TRADITIONS, CULTURE AND NATURE

According to the World Tourism Organization, the main parameters of sustainable tourism, its implementation and management, are applicable to all forms of tourism and all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the different segments of tourism niches. The principles of sustainability refer to the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism and to establishing an appropriate balance between these three dimensions to ensure long-term sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism should:

- To realize the optimal use of environmental resources, which is a key element in the development of tourism, maintaining the ecological balance and helping to preserve the natural heritage and biodiversity.
- To respect the socio-cultural identity of the host communities, to preserve cultural heritage, traditional values and to contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance.
- To provide long-term sustainable activities that bring socio-economic benefits equitably distributed among all participants, including a stable employment base, earning opportunities and social services for the host community. Sustainable tourism development requires the conscious intervention of all involved, as well as some important political leaders, to ensure broad participation and ensure genuine consensus. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process that requires constant monitoring of impacts and implementation of corrective and preventive measures when necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of satisfaction at the tourist and provide him with an unforgettable experience, raising his awareness on issues of sustainable development and promotion of sustainable practices tourism. The World Tourism Organization undertakes the task of promoting the sustainable development and overall management of tourism in Member States, regions and destinations, both public and private, to generate social and economic benefits for host communities commensurate with the interests of the developing world to ensure quality tourism products and to avoid or reduce negative impacts on the quality of the tourism product and to prevent or reduce negative impacts. The key objectives of the World Tourism Organization for the sustainable development of tourism are as follows: Facilitate the integration of sustainability and quality criteria in national, regional and local tourism policies.

Increasing the responsibility and training of the public and private sectors to manage their activities so as to ensure the social and cultural sustainability of tourism, with special attention to the rights and interests of local communities, including those of vulnerable groups of the population, especially children, women, the elderly and the disabled. Encouraging the positive participation of emigrants in the development of tourism Better understanding of the links between climate change and tourism and promoting and implementing policies and measures to adapt and reduce negative effects.

3. Promotion of the sites offering local food

The concept of tourism originates from the French tour - trip, trip. According to the modern definition, tourism is a trip with a purpose - mainly recreation and entertainment or for work, visiting, with cognitive motives, etc. At the same time, tourism is an economic sector with a serious contribution to the creation of GDP (in our country between 12 and 14%), and in recent years there has even been talk of a tourism industry comparable to that of production.

Tourism in rural areas

From the point of view of rural areas, in some of which, despite targeted support policies, the situation continues to deteriorate in economic, social and demographic aspects, tourism in its alternative forms is recognized as one of the priority sectors for the development and diversification of agriculture. The development of rural areas in the Program period 2014-2020 focuses not only on promoting the competitiveness of agriculture, but also on ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and achieving balanced territorial development of economies and communities, including the creation and maintenance of employment. Against the backdrop of the relative prosperity of urban areas, many rural areas began to struggle for existence due to dependence on mechanized agriculture and depopulation. On the other hand, tourist demand increasingly prefers precisely such areas with preserved nature and peaceful life. Therefore, the main development goals are related to the creation of new non-agricultural activities, reasonable use of nature, valorization of potential and resources, increase of income and employment.

Rural tourism potential

Usually, rural areas also have a huge preserved immovable cultural heritage, with deep roots in traditions, with preserved folklore and customs, with diverse flora and fauna and interesting natural phenomena. These resources are a potential for tourism, which can become a successful tool for social and economic development of rural communities. When we talk about tourism in rural areas, we mean its alternative forms, not the mass holiday ones (resort tourism is practically also available in the villages) and especially the development of the so-called sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism

According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization (WTO, UNWTO), sustainable tourism "satisfies not only the requirements of tourists and the local population in the target regions, but also ensures the improvement of opportunities for their future development. Resources must be used so that they are satisfied economic, social and aesthetic needs and, at the same time, to preserve cultural integrity, significant ecological processes and biological diversity". The characteristics of sustainable tourism are: use of natural resources in an optimal way, maintenance of ecological systems and services, protection and enrichment of biological diversity; respecting and preserving the social and cultural authenticity of the host community, protecting the material and living cultural heritage and traditional values; ensuring sustainable economic development providing equitably distributed socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders, creating poverty alleviating social services for host communities. It is on the basis of these characteristics that sustainable tourism is primarily associated with rural areas, which occupy more than 90% of the territory of the EU and are home to around 55% of the population, and which, unlike urban settlements, continue to have serious structural problems . The WTO recommends the observance of the following principles in order to apply the concepts of sustainable and alternative tourism: participation of the local population from all social groups in the development of tourism; establishing relationships of collective responsibility in planning, decision-making, problem-solving, project implementation and evaluation; implementation of a system approach for integrated solving of social, economic and environmental problems; use of environmental restrictions to limit the development of tourism within appropriate limits; ensuring equality before the law and justice, implying respect for human rights; implementation of long-term, strategic planning with care for the future.

From the above, it can be seen that sustainable tourism can also be successfully developed through the CLLD approach, which is applied through similar principles.

Alternative tourism, non-standard forms of tourism

The modern understanding of alternative tourism products expands the boundaries beyond familiar forms, plays a major role in reducing seasonality and achieves a balance between quality and price so that they are accessible to all. Alternative tourism is also associated with the choice of non-traditional destinations and the avoidance of places for mass tourism, as well as with tourists who do not want to feel like consumers, but like participants in the process. Alternative tourism is becoming increasingly popular as a counter to mass holiday sea and ski tourism. Through its forms, new opportunities for the use of natural and anthropogenic resources are discovered, revenues are generated for local communities, and prerequisites are created for an even territorial distribution of tourist activities. Alternative tourism provides an opportunity for the development of territories in the interior of the country that are relatively poorly developed in terms of tourism. A wide variety of species and forms already exist. According to the definition of the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT), "Alternative forms of tourism combine tourist packages or individual tourist services, which are defined as an alternative to the mass tourism product

in terms of the way it is offered, run and the human resources involved. These are: rural, ecological, mountain, adventure (hiking by bike, on horseback, with skis and snowshoes, boating, diving, entering unlit caves, crossing alpine routes with a guide), thematic - related to the cultural and historical heritage, tourism related to the esoteric, religion, wine, traditional cuisine, ethnography and traditional music and crafts".

Rural tourism in a narrower sense is tourism in rural areas (according to the location), alternative (according to the course and philosophy), a type of sustainable tourism (according to the goals of its development: economic development, nature conservation, social function), but the main its characteristic is determined by the purpose of the visit: to get to know the rural environment, demography, social culture, the origin of the place, the way of life of the people, traditions, customs, i.e. village life. Thus, rural tourism can include farm tourism - a tour of farms for purchase, participation in their work, rural tourism is also training in crafts and participation in folklore festivals, assemblies, culinary competitions, partly wine and gourmet tourism, if they present typical for the area products. Most important for rural tourism is the active participation of all local stakeholders in its development: not only guest house owners, but also local producers, restaurants, crafts, arts, food, services.

In Bulgaria, the idea of rural tourism is a holiday in a reconstructed country house in an old style with costumes on the walls, eating "traditional dishes" in a small tavern next to the house, the attractions are limited to a swimming pool or a children's playground. It should be emphasized that this is not classic rural tourism either, because although it is an alternative to resort tourism, it is a kind of passive rest during the vacation or weekend. The "authenticity" of village life is not at all limited to accommodation - in Western Europe there are a number of examples where guests stay in super modern new village houses (especially eco and natural materials) or in tents and caravans, but they still manage to get actively involved in the local life and community. In conclusion, it can be said that "alternative" is any tourism other than traditional resort tourism, regardless of the place in which it takes place. Various forms of alternative tourism can be practiced in rural areas, one of which is rural tourism. Rural tourism is any form that presents the rural way of life, art, culture and traditional heritage in the best light, thus bringing economic and social benefit to the local population. In rural tourism, visitors are actively involved in local life, and are not observers, as in most cases it is understood in our country.

For the development of rural areas, not only rural, but also most types of alternative tourism, which meet the requirements of sustainability, can help.

Culinary tourism is also a type of cultural tourism and is a new modern tourism product growing in the last two decades. A number of studies of world tourism indicate that more than 1/3 of tourists' expenses are for food, which also applies to Bulgaria - according to NSI data, the costs of final consumption of services related to serving food and drinks are respectively 30% and 27% of all costs. The new profile of the tourist, who is looking for

satisfaction and an individual experience, defines good cuisine and familiarization with local culinary traditions as the main factor for the quality of the experience.

Culinary tourism has a strategic role in the image and branding of 88% of tourist destinations worldwide. Among the advantages of this type of tourist offer are the traditional cuisine and various dishes characteristic of the different regions of Bulgaria, the regional culinary specifics, allowing the development of culinary routes and the possibilities of combining the product with wine and cultural tourism. Culinary tourism has a chance to become a leading product in the tourist offer, as well as to develop additional events related to food - festivals, competitions, demonstrations, culinary shows, as well as activities directly supporting the development of local communities - visits to local producers, including organic, farmers markets, tastings and more. Among the problem areas are its weak promotion over the years and the underestimation of its possibilities to support the development of regional destinations.

Festival and event tourism is also a key element of the cultural tourism product. In the Register of Tourist Festivals and Events, 1278 events and festivals are entered, of which 99 are of international importance. Although they are attractive to foreigners, folklore events and singing festivals are not particularly advertised abroad, which is why their visitors are relatively few and mostly from Bulgaria. The product has unrealized potential, since a number of traditional Bulgarian holidays and customs - nestinari, kukeri, etc. are unique in Europe and can attract many tourists.

Since 2000, many Bulgarian towns and villages have started to initiate holidays and festivals celebrating home-produced foods and pre-industrial technologies for food production, agriculture and animal husbandry. For more than 20 years, this type of celebration of local traditions, culinary technologies and gastronomic products has gained great popularity, with more than 130 small towns and villages organizing similar events across the country. Some of them are imposed not only as a sustainable tradition over time, but also as a main event in the cultural calendar of settlements and municipalities. **Holidays and festivals dedicated to food and food products are a kind of mixture of elements of traditional festivity, urban and rural fairs and assemblies, but also combine innovative elements of collective celebration and support of local identity.** They can be considered as a new type of phenomenon in Bulgarian festivity and culture. These new forms of collective celebration are also linked to a rethinking of culture, traditions and territory. Holidays and festivals dedicated to food and drink can be seen as part of the tools to construct and transmit collective memory and build local identity, but also as a way to represent, transmit, promote and incorporate cultural phenomena into economic activities. Since the 1970s, similar events celebrating culinary traditions and local foods have developed worldwide. The trend of their increase in the last two decades is a global phenomenon, which is related both to anti-globalist sentiments and rethinking of pre-industrial knowledge and skills, and to global processes of cultural economization. Cultural (and culinary) products become part of cultural and creative industries, cultural entrepreneurship, and also become key resources for cultural and experiential tourism. This new festivity has been influenced by global cultural and economic exchanges, but also by

European policies for the instrumentalization of festivals to create the social fabric of local communities and provide the opportunity to obtain economic benefits.

Regardless of considering food festivals in the context of tourism, the authors emphasize their importance for the local community because they present traditions, knowledge and skills with which it is measured - therefore they are also a reason for local pride and identification. Through culinary festivals, local communities don't just demonstrate how they produce and consume typical products. Rural and urban festivals, assemblies, carnivals and fairs can be defined as traditional forms of group events that aim at social inclusion. Each of the listed collective events and celebrations is based on shared common values, cultural practices and mythologies. In and through them, the worldview of relatively localized communities is "played out". The use of festivals as a way to declare, celebrate and preserve culinary traditions is a relatively new phenomenon for Bulgaria, which began in the first decade of the 21st century and has an established potential for popularizing local culinary wealth combined with folklore traditions. history and nature.

PART FIVE

SELECTION OF INITIATIVES RELATED TO TOURISM, PRODUCTION AND OFFERING OF LOCAL FOODS WHICH ARE LEADED BY WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS AND WHICH LEAD TO THE CREATION OF NEW BUSINESS LINES, JOB CREATION OR NEW ENTERPRISES/COOPERATIVES

A new opportunity for the development of tourism is the financing of integrated territorial investments and the partnerships formed for their implementation. Good coordination and unification of efforts is a necessary condition for understanding the nature of the problem and the search for adequate solutions for the development of tourism, which is one of the main economic sectors, standing at the center of an ecosystem of enterprises that contribute significantly to the prosperity of the territory. It is necessary to analyze the problems and opportunities for building sustainable partnerships between local authorities and local key figures in the field of tourism and sustainable development, will give specific recommendations to eliminate or minimize local problems, as well as increase the opportunities to use local resources , by creating new integrated tourism products. Achieving these ambitious tasks is possible by combining the efforts of science, business, local administration and non-governmental organizations.

1. Importance of tourism for local and regional development

Tourism is a trip /walk/ with the aim of recovery and rest. The tourist trip is connected with getting to know new settlements and localities, the way of life and cultural features of the people living in a certain territory. Tourists find themselves in a new environment that excites and provokes them. They break away from their everyday life, from their problems and from their own environment, which is the deep meaning of tourism as an activity, because they get to know new and interesting things. Tourism also includes activities supporting travel, providing rest for nature lovers, entertainment lovers, rural and adventure tourism, including workers, pensioners and children, representatives of various

social groups of the population in the country and abroad. Tourism is indeed one of the economic activities with the greatest potential to generate future growth and employment in the EU. And under a narrower definition, tourism contributes about 4% of the EU's GDP, with this percentage varying between 2% in some new member states and 12% in Malta. Its indirect contribution to GDP is much greater – tourism indirectly generates more than 10% of EU GDP and provides around 12% of all jobs. Tourism is extremely important when it comes to providing employment to young people, who are twice as engaged as a workforce in the tourism sector than in other economic sectors. In the tourism sector, employment growth has been significantly higher than in other sectors of the economy in recent years, making it a significant contributor to achieving the Lisbon goals of creating more and better jobs.

The importance of tourism is likely to increase in the coming years as far as the EU economy is concerned, as the demand for tourism services is expected to increase in the coming years, despite the Covid crisis.

The development of tourist destinations is closely related to their natural environment, cultural identity, social interaction, safety and well-being of the local population. These characteristics make tourism a driving force for the preservation and development of destinations - directly by raising public awareness of them and supporting their incomes, and indirectly - by providing an economic justification for the provision of similar assistance by other actors. All this supports the local population and favors the development of any region developing tourism.

The future of European tourism depends on the quality of the tourist experience – tourists will increasingly realize that where care for the environment, staff and local communities is a priority, they are much more likely to be cared for themselves. By integrating sustainability concerns into their activities, tourism stakeholders will protect the competitive advantages that make Europe the most attractive tourist destination in the world – its internal diversity, abundance of landscapes and cultures. In addition, focusing on sustainability issues in a socially responsible way will help the tourism industry to renew its products and services and increase their quality and value. This is the European policy for the development of sustainable tourism, on the basis of which local and regional policies are formed and developed.

Stakeholders must not only continue to anticipate change, but also keep pace with it. Actions and policies must take into account how supply and demand will be affected not only by war and crises, but also by environmental and climate change, droughts, technological developments and other current political, economic and social disproportions. Therefore, with the help of all stakeholders, these sustainable policies will need to be developed and regularly updated. In this way, it will be possible to respond adequately to the dynamic changes occurring at the regional, national and European level.

2. Women's entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship is gaining strength in Bulgaria. In the last 20 years, more and more women have created their own businesses, usually small and mainly related to small

production or services in the field of beauty and health, real estate, tourism, culinary and catering. Statistics show that Africa has the highest proportion of female entrepreneurs in the world. In Europe, the percentage of entrepreneurial activity among women is only 5.7%, according to data from the European Investment Bank. The numbers sound like an error or outdated information from the middle of the last century, but were last updated in April 2023.

In Bulgaria, the situation is no different, but there is clearly progress. In the last year, businesses led by women have been among the companies with Bulgarian participation most highly valued by external investors (see Lyubomila Yordanova's Plan A, which raised 27 million euros). And recently, the local ecosystem has a new player whose goal is to support women in business - FEB, or the Women in Entrepreneurship in Bulgaria Foundation.

Women are increasingly involved in the creation and management of their own businesses. In this way, they are also actively involved in entrepreneurial activities that are an engine for socio-economic development, providing not only employment and economic growth, but also contributing to technical progress, increasing the quality of life, achieving regional cohesion and social stability. Despite the growing importance of female entrepreneurship, starting and developing a business is still associated with men, as they dominate both in terms of numbers and other indicators. It is debatable whether women and men differ in their entrepreneurial practice and to what extent these differences are substantial enough to warrant targeted research and specific support measures. In fact, women entrepreneurs can be considered those who have created their own business, run an enterprise independently or in partnership, holding a majority share of ownership. The data show that there is a well-developed female entrepreneurship in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria occupies the twenty-sixth position in the world, and ranks seventeenth in the EU. The achieved index of the country on prerequisites for the development of female entrepreneurship is 93.8 out of a possible 100 points, and the main problem identified here is related to the receipt of pensions (IANMSP, 2020). It can be concluded that in our country women are actively involved in entrepreneurial activities, and a number of historical, economic and cultural prerequisites contribute to this. Motivating more and more women to create and develop a business goes through the in-depth clarification of their specifics and advantages as entrepreneurs, as well as the formation of concrete measures to overcome the barriers facing them. Gender equality, higher education, life, professional and entrepreneurial experience are prerequisites that form the advantages characteristic of women in business.

What are the strengths that make women entrepreneurs successful?

It is noteworthy that women mainly rely on qualities related to the ability to communicate effectively, build good relationships at work, their ability to adapt to changes and refrain from undertaking business ventures characterized by higher risk. The strengths of women

entrepreneurs, their education and experience are among the prerequisites that determine to some extent the spheres of activity in which their companies most often operate. A little over 60% of the women entrepreneurs included in the study are active in services or trade. Starting an activity in them in most cases does not require a large initial capital, but they are distinguished by strong and intense competition. About six times less are those whose companies operate in production.

Entrepreneurship is a driving force for the development of societies not only economically, but also socially. Although a smaller proportion of entrepreneurs are women, they also contribute actively to increasing employment, dynamisation, internationalization and growth of the economy, as well as to regional and technical progress. In our country, women are involved in the creation and management of their own businesses, and their share is relatively above the average level for the EU. This is due to a number of factors, including the traditional social position of women, the opportunity to receive education and actively participate in socio-economic life. A study conducted among 178 female entrepreneurs in the country shows that they are highly educated. The type of education received is mainly economic or technical. Businesses owned by women operate in services and trade, and about half were established before 2008, i.e. many of the women entrepreneurs have experience, including in crisis situations. A large part of women entrepreneurs are convinced that they have equal chances with men for success in business. They define as their strengths some soft skills that give them a competitive advantage, and among the desired support, in addition to access to financial resources to invest in the initial stages and the expansion of the activity, is the promotion of good examples, as well as entrepreneurship training. Among the more interesting Euromechanisms for promoting women's entrepreneurship are: The EC's small business legislation for subsidizing small business enterprises managed or owned by women with a turnover of up to 1 million euros; the information "Portal for women entrepreneurs"; or the "Progress" program, financing startup companies with up to 10 employees with up to 25,000 euros; And the so-called General Block Exemption Regulation reduces the bureaucratic formalities for granting state aid through a state subsidy for newly established small companies. And from the useful practices for promoting female entrepreneurship in the field of high technologies, the "Women's Network for Innovation" from Great Britain, as well as "Power for Women Entrepreneurs", "Project for Women in Information Technology" and "Business Academy for women" from Germany.

The fight against gender discrimination is enshrined in EU equality legislation by applying the principle of equal treatment of women and men in the field of employment. The profile of the female entrepreneur in Bulgaria is characterized by the following: age between 30-39 years, married - with husband and children. 89% of women are university graduates and 7% have two university degrees. They mainly studied business and economics - 47% or engineering sciences - 26%. The average female entrepreneur in Bulgaria works in the field of trade - 49%, in industry - 43% or in the service sector - 39%. Only 1% of women are

engaged in crafts and handicrafts. Women mostly work in small companies - 1-9 workers. 13% are employed in large companies – over 250 employees.

The contribution and leadership of women should be a priority in order to create together an innovation ecosystem that supports creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship.

PART SIX

IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTINCTIVE PRODUCTS OF THE TERRITORY

MEAT COMBINATION RAZLOG - SARAY 73

<https://sarai-bg.com/>

Saray 73 has been a trademark since 1992 with established authority in the meat processing industry. Produces various fresh and durable products from selected pork, veal and beef. The main product groups it offers are ground meats and semi-finished products, local cuts, short-lived sausages, delicacies, durable cooked-smoked sausages, durable raw-dried sausages. The delicacies have their own territorial brand, of which the most popular is "Razlozhki starets". Since 2005, the company's activities have been carried out in the newly built enterprise, which complies with all European norms for the production of meat semi-finished products, sausages, delicacies and carcasses.

<http://www.saray73.com/>

Contact information: city of Razlog, Industrial zone "West" office@saray73.com phone: 0747/80 006 fax: 07447/80 007 mobile phone: 0888 150 333; 0887 818 798

BIO farm and dairy Kozle

<http://www.kozle.eu/>

All products produced by "Kozle" OOD are organically certified by EcogrupperoItalia. Kozle brand dairy products are created for people who have an affinity for natural and healthy foods. Produces fresh and mature organic goat seed, organic fresh and sour goat milk, cheese with herbs, whey product.

<http://kozle.eu/en/index.html> <https://www.facebook.com/kozleood/>

Contact information: City of Razlog, Tsar Samuil St. No. 5 Tsar Samuil St. 5, Razlog, Bulgaria phone: 089 560 7249 e-mail: kozle@mail.bg

VELES DAIRY "Veles-Kostadin Velev" is a milk processing enterprise with veterinary registration number BG 0112014, with the object of activity, purchase and processing of raw milk for the production of dairy products.

The company has been on the Bulgarian market for 18 years. Produces dairy foods. The equipment is new and meets all European standards and requirements. It has a quality certificate for the domestic market and has a developed, documented and implemented FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM - HACCP system from 03.29.2007.

<http://velesbg.net/produkti.html>

*Contact information: City of Razlog, Golak St. No. 33 tel.: 0747 80818, fax: 0747 84444
e-mail: www.veles_@abv.bg*

MANDRA "MATAND" Ltd

Production of yellow cheese, cheese, butter and cottage cheese. The company MATAND EOOD was founded in 1997 as a private company and for more than 10 years it has held stable positions in the market of food products in the country and abroad, producing dairy products under the MATAND brand. Exports sheep and goat milk products to Austria, Canada and America. Since the beginning of 2008, it has been certified for export to EU countries. The company currently works with clients from Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Romania and Greece. The food safety management system of MATAND EOOD has been evaluated and certified as a HACCP system in accordance with the requirements of ISO 22000:2005. The products are distributed throughout the country, with the main share of sales concentrated in South-West Bulgaria.

The MPP produces ecologically clean products from milk collected and produced in the Rila, Pirin and Western Rhodope regions. During all the years of development, investments have been made step by step in the construction and modernization of our own material base, machines and production facilities. MATAND company is extremely concerned about the quality of the raw material, the quality of the manufactured product and, together with the new design of the packaging, is a guarantor of a high-quality and aesthetic final product.

<http://firmi1.com/firma/matand/351063>

Contact information: Eleshnitsa village 2782, Razlog municipality, Blagoevgrad district, tel. 07446332

MILK PHILIPOPOLIS - RK LTD

Founded in Plovdiv in 1993, Filipopolis-RK Ltd. is a leader in the dairy industry in Bulgaria. The company is licensed for the EU and Russia and is the main exporter of dairy products (cheese and yellow cheese) for the USA, Canada and European countries. Philipopolis secures its production from high-quality purchasable raw milk. Distribution is carried out according to a certain schedule with specialized refrigerated transport. Coverage about 70% of the country.

<http://philipopolis.eu/>

*Contact information: City of Plovdiv, Prosveta St. No. 2A, Proslav quarter New workshop city of Razlog, district of Blagoevgrad 2760, Razlog, Industrial Zone ph_milk@abv.bg
philipopolis@abv.bg <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Philipopolis-RK-OOD-ceh-Razlog/288240758038718>*

DAIRY PROCESSING COMPANY VEKIR-RADKA BELEZHKOVA

Dairy processing enterprise ET "Vekir-Radka Belezhkova" village Godlevo, municipality Razlog has a twenty-year history in the dairy products market. The enterprise has a use decision No. 16/1998 of RDNSK Blagoevgrad, in compliance with all normative and legal provisions. Since 2008 is approved and complies with regulation /eo/ 852/2004. and

regulation /EC/ 853/2004. under No. 0112003 for the production of bss, yellow cheese, and cottage cheese. MPP has its own herd of animals registered as an agricultural producer in order to maximally satisfy the needs of its own enterprise in accordance with the requirements of the regulatory framework, it has a protected report for assessing the impact on the environment for the development of "Eco-friendly livestock farming" in a mountainous area with production acc. No. 4722 p.c. No. 0581/22.04.1997 of the Ministry of Health.

The main and only purpose of the enterprise is: production of a boutique product, i.e. a product that is produced solely and only from fresh milk without additives of dry milk, preservatives, stabilizers and palm oils. A product meeting all veterinary medical and sanitary requirements for the production of dairy products under BDS before 1989. Produces cheese; cheese and cottage cheese. Expands its activity with yogurt production; molten; smoked cheese and butter.

Since 2011, MPP has trademarked its products, registered under number 77747/10.10.2011 by the Patent Office of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Contact information: Godlevo village, Razlog municipality, region Blagoevgrad 074402304, 0888503140 vekir@mail.bg

LORD I&G

Distillery Production of highly alcoholic beverages: grape brandy, mastic, vodka, fruit vodka, brandy, gin, mint, etc. The production complies with the latest requirements for the production of spirits imposed by the EU. "Lord" company works with clients from all over the country with its own transport at negotiable prices. The production has an artistic and aesthetically designed appearance. The motto of the Lord company is: Precision in quality, accuracy and loyalty to the customer, because "Drink as much as you can" and in the morning you are fresh, rejuvenated and ready for new emotions!!!

<http://lord-i-g.business.bg/> <https://bg-bg.facebook.com/pages/Alkoholna-fabrika-LORD-IG/162807457072899>

Contact information: city: Razlog Address: 4 Ilinden Square Phone: 0888 864 909 e-mail: et_lilia_g@abv.bg

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTER DESTINATION RAZLOG

<https://destinationrazlog.com/index.php/bg/kakvo-da-4/tur-paketi>

Offers comprehensive travel packages for staying in the area, as well as information on accommodation, dining and entertainment options.

Contact information Phone: 0876 145151 E-mail: destinationrazlog@abv.bg Address: 13 Sheinovo St 2760 Razlog, Bulgaria

<https://www.destinationrazlog.com/index.php/bg/begining>

What should I look at?

PART SEVEN

IDENTIFYING AND DESCRIPTION OF HEALTHY RECIPES USING LOCAL PRODUCTS

LOCAL PRODUCT: GOAT CHEESE

Spinach, goat cheese and blueberry salad



"A classic rich salad with a bunch of flavors that combine perfectly - blueberries, goat cheese and spinach"

Necessary products:

- spinach - fresh link
- goat cheese
- blueberries - 1 handful fresh
- avocado - 1 pc.
- nuts - 1 tbsp. fresh mix
- salt
- olive oil
- copper
- balsamic reduction

Method of preparation Wash the spinach and tear it into pieces. Put it in a large salad bowl. Crumble the goat cheese over the top. Sprinkle with blueberries and nuts. Peel the avocado and cut it into pieces. Put it in too. In a bowl, mix the honey, olive oil and salt. Mix very well. Pour the dressing over the spinach salad and drizzle with the balsamic reduction. You

can make a balsamic reduction yourself from balsamic vinegar, which is boiled on the stove for a while until it thickens. The end result is a delightful glaze that is perfect for drizzling on your salad. Serve.

LOCAL PRODUCTS: PORK, BEEF AND LAMB DISHES FOR THE WINTER HOLIDAYS

Chomlek

Chomlek falls into a specific category of dishes. The chomlek is not just a representative of the Bulgarian national cuisine, the chomlek is a delicacy from the Pirin region, which proudly stands next to the kapam and kateno meze, not only on the menus of taverns in Bansko, Dobrinishte, Razlog and the region, but is often present on the table in this end. Whether it is because we all love the mountains and the prepared local delicacies, or because they are really very tasty, all these typical dishes are increasingly being prepared by the housewives. Chomlek is a delicious and easy-to-prepare dish that is so rich and filling that it needs no other company at the table than a good red wine. Very suitable for a festive table, chomlek is a dish that will delight relatives and guests, both at the Christmas table and at any other winter holiday.



Ingredients needed:

- pork knuckle 1 piece
- potatoes 1 kg
- tomatoes 4 pieces
- 2 carrots
- garlic
- 1 head red wine
- 2 tea cups paprika
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp bay leaf

- 4 pieces onion

Method of preparation:

The first step of the chomlek recipe is the preparation of the products. You can use either pork or beef shank. The collar should be well washed. Clean the tomatoes, carrots, onions and garlic, cutting the carrots into large pieces and leaving the rest of the vegetables whole. In a large casserole, place the shank, tomatoes, carrots, onion and garlic. Add all the spices, 1 cup of water and the intended red wine. You must place the casserole in a cold oven and turn it on at 200 degrees, and after about 30-40 minutes, reduce the oven temperature to 180 degrees and bake for about 4 hours. After 4 hours of baking, take the casserole out of the oven, debone the shank, add the peeled and cut-in-two potatoes and return the casserole to the oven for another 30 minutes or so to cook the potatoes as well.

Beans in a pot

Necessary products:

- 500 g of beans
- 150 g of bacon
- 1 pepper
- 1 carrot
- 1 head of onion
- 1 tomato
- thyme and salt to taste

Method of preparation:

The beans are washed and put in a clay pot. Cut all the vegetables into cubes and add them to the beans along with the chopped bacon. The pot is filled with cold water and placed next to the fire to boil. Boil for 2-3 hours, then add salt and thyme.



Easter salad

Necessary products:

- lettuce - 3 pcs.
- eggs - 5 pcs.
- fresh onion - 3 stalks
- cucumbers - 2 pcs.
- tomatoes - 4 pcs.

FOR THE DRESSING:

- eggs - 1 pc.
- vinegar - 3 tbsp.
- olive oil - 3 tbsp.
- salt - 2 pinches
- honey - 1 tsp
- lemons - 1 pc.

Method of preparation:

First, the dressing is prepared. The egg is boiled for about 4-5 minutes - it should be a little soft. After it is boiled, peel it and put it in a blender. Honey, lemon juice and olive oil are added to the egg. Everything is mashed. Finally add the salt and vinegar, as it may not be necessary to add all of them - it depends on the taste. So ready, the dressing is left in the refrigerator. Lettuce is cut into long strips.

Eggs are boiled for 7 minutes (after turning). Cucumbers are peeled and cut into cubes. The onion is washed and finely chopped, and the tomatoes are also cut into cubes. After the eggs are boiled, they are poured with cold water and peeled. Then they are cut first in half, then each half in half, and set aside.

Put all the ingredients except the eggs in a deep bowl and pour the dressing over. The salad is then tossed by hand, perhaps crushing the lettuce slightly, being careful not to touch the other vegetables. After the salad is very well mixed, the eggs are placed on top. The salad is served immediately, and the chilled dressing makes it more springy and festive.



Oven-roasted lamb

Necessary products:

- 1 piece. leg of lamb (2.5 kg) or shoulder (2 kg)

- 1 head of garlic
- 2 tbsp tomato puree
- 1 tbsp mustard
- 1 tsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp white wine
- 5-6 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp red pepper
- 100 ml. sunflower oil

Method of preparation:

Wash the meat well and dry it with a towel. Make small slits (about 20) all over the surface of the lamb with a knife. Insert half a clove of garlic into each slit. Mix the salt, black pepper and red pepper and rub it into the meat. Heat the olive oil and add the brown sugar. Stir and pour in the tomato puree, mustard and wine. Simmer until thickened, stirring occasionally. Coat the meat with the mixture on all sides. Preheat the oven to 240 °C on the first level. Place in the bottom of a deep metal baking tray. Pour into the pan 1 tsp. hot water and 5 tbsp. sunflower oil. Cover the tray with foil. Bake for about 30 minutes, then reduce the oven to 180 °C and bake for another 3 hours. Remove the foil and leave the oven on for another 20 minutes for an appetizing crust.



Fat-free cookies

Necessary products:

- 500 g of flour
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 packet of vanilla

Method of preparation:

Mix the eggs and sugar in a bowl. You add the yogurt with the soda dissolved in it. The flour is sifted and mixed with the vanilla, then poured into the rest of the mixture. Dough is kneaded and rolled out into a thin crust. From it, with the help of molds, you cut the Easter cookies and arrange them in a tray covered with baking paper. Leave it like this for 10-15 minutes and put it in the oven. Easter cookies without fat are baked at 190-200 degrees until golden. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.



Homemade kozunak /cake/

Necessary products:

- 7 eggs
- about 1.2 kg - 1.4 kg of flour
- 400 g of sugar
- 300 ml of lukewarm fresh milk
- 60 g of fresh yeast
- juice and grated rind of 1 lemon
- 2 vanillas
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 120 g of liquid fat (maybe oil) and 230 g of liquid butter

Optional: walnuts, Turkish delight or sweet raisins

Method of preparation:

Dissolve the yeast in about 100 ml of fresh milk together with 1 teaspoon of sugar and add a little flour. We mix well. Then let it rise in a warm place for 1/2 hour. Beat the eggs with the sugar and add the remaining milk, lemon juice and zest, vanilla and salt to them. Pour the foamed kvass and mix well. Pour 1 kg of flour into a large pan. Form a well and put the egg mixture inside. We begin to knead the dough, gradually adding a little of the remaining flour until we get a soft dough that does not stick to the hands.

We mix the two types of melted fat and, with continuous mixing, add to the dough until it is all absorbed. Knead until air bubbles begin to form.

We put the kneaded dough in a large enough container, cover it with a towel and leave it in a warm place to rise for 2 hours.

After the dough rises, you can make kozunaci of various shapes from it. Divide six equal balls of dough and roll them out on a greased counter into long rectangular pieces. Sprinkle them with filling - walnuts, jam, raisins or Turkish delight.

We braid two triple braids in a large, buttered deep baking dish. Brush the top with one beaten egg. Place in an oven heated to 180 degrees. Baking lasts 40-50 minutes. Remove from the pan and cover with a towel.



Sweet banitsa /pie/ with bulgur

Necessary products:

- 1 kg. flour
- 1 teaspoon bulgur
- 1 ½ teaspoons of water
- 1 tsp salt

Method of preparation:

The bulgur is boiled, drained and fried. Knead a soft dough with 1 ½ teaspoons of water, to which one teaspoon of salt and flour is added. Break into roughly equal sized pieces for grinding. Each ball is rolled into a thin crust. Each of the crusts is smeared with oil, sprinkled with bulgur and rolled up. It is arranged in a tray so that a twisted patty is obtained. Bake on moderate heat in the oven. When it is taken out and cooled, it is poured with warm water with sugar and wrapped with a towel.



Blueberry jam

In the mountain villages sheltered by Pirin and Rila, the traditions of making ecological sweets are carefully preserved. There is nothing tastier than freshly baked bread and a spoonful of aromatic berry jam.

