

# The rural food way

Mmmmm, smells like something fresh and tasty!  
This is the smell of the Balkan!

- Do rural areas still feed the cities?
- ▲ How do rural food systems work?
- Who produces what food, how and for whom?
- ↪ Do rural people have access to local food? And visitors?
- What is the role of farmers in food systems?

The **RUSTIK** project has been seeking answers to these questions since December 2023. The goal is to understand whether food is a resource for rural development, but also to create a sustainable tool for access to local food.

The **RUSTIK** team from Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“, together with the Local Action Group Troyan-Apriltsi-Ugarchin (**LAG TAU**), is conducting a series of studies to identify and get to know the actors in the food system of the three municipalities - Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin. The aim is to:

- Encourage demand for and access to local foods;
- ▲ Make local food producers more visible;
- Identify key issues that require special support;
- ↪ Encourage creation and development of local food policies.

Since April 2024, our team has held:

- Over 60 meetings with food producers and processors and with representatives of local food communities; (See [here](#)).
- ▲ We have created a [Geographic Identification System](#) for locating local foods.
- We conducted observations at outlets and festivals to identify their policies towards local food.

Alongside all these activities, aimed at recording new data and creating a map of local food and collaborative relationships, we also conducted two experiments with restaurants.

Restaurants are a central place and the food is prepared according to the taste and mood of the chef. It arrives at the guests in the form of a tasty meal to satisfy a real or imagined hunger for food, for taste, for aesthetics, for attitude, for a demonstration of social status, a hunger for whatnot.

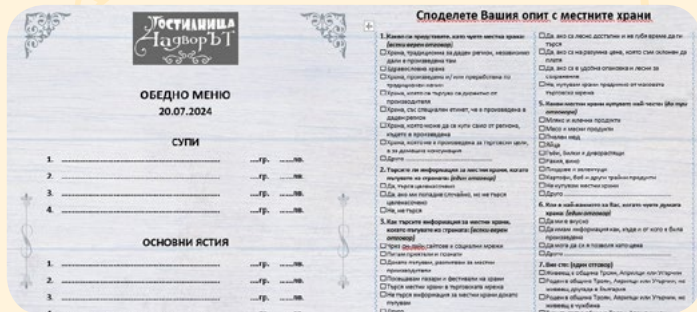
In all this food movement, food producers remain hidden. Guests enjoy the taste, thank the chef, but forget and most often do not even ask: „Which dairy is the cheese from? What about the veal, what about the pork, where did they come from ...?“. The origin of the food remains hidden, only the taste counts. At the same time, if we feel satisfied, full and above all healthy - we owe it to the food producers. One of the aims of the **RUSTIK** project is to raise consumer interest in the origin of food in TAU pilot region. Taste is for pleasure but origin - for health!

Two restaurants - „Kayzera“ tavern in the village of Oreshak and „Na Dvorat“ Inn in Troyan shared our interest in local food and agreed through **RUSTIK** to introduce their customers to their local food suppliers. These two restaurants have a special attitude not just to the cuisine and taste, but also to the origin of the food - they look for local produce of high quality, which they prepare each in their own unique way. **With full reason we can say that these are the first two restaurants in the region of Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin, which have opened their doors for guests-connoisseurs, but also for quality food from local producers. The RUSTIK project only made visible and recognizable the special policy of these restaurants towards local food and producers.**

You can check out the local food suppliers at “Kayzera” and „Na Dvorat“ here, but only Kayzera’s booklet is available in English.



If you are in Troyan, Apriltsi or Ugarchin, as a local or as a tourist, do an experiment. Visit one of the two restaurants, why not both. You’ll be greeted by friendly waiters and told that they have two menus - one à la carte, i.e. the restaurant’s main menu, which is its passport to identity, and the other - a seasonal menu or daily menu in which at least 60-70% of the food content is prepared with local products, produced within a radius of 40-60 kilometers. You will easily recognise these two menus as they contain questionnaires on the back. Their purpose is to draw guests’ attention to locally sourced foods, but also to seek their opinion on their experience with local foods. Be sure to share your experience! It’s important for anyone interested in taste and cuisine, but also in food origin and health. Here’s what those menus look like at the “Kayzera” Tavern and „Na Dvorat“ Inn.



After the waiters take your order, they’ll show you the booklet of local producers they trust. While you wait for your order, you can get to know the producers who delivered the food you ordered. The Kayzera Tavern also has a display case of local foods that you can purchase on the way out, and at no extra markup. This is as well part of the policy of these restaurants to introduce you to local food producers.



Last, but not least, The Kayzera Tavern and „Na Dvorat“ Inn fill out an electronic sales diary of local and other food sales. The aim is to find out who is looking for and liking what. The RUSTIK team greatly values the trust that restaurants have shown by sharing their data with us, as well as their willingness to collaborate with local producers.

Based on the results obtained until now, we in RUSTIK truly believe local businesses develop best when they collaborate. Restaurants and food producers have proven it! Thank you for being part of the RUSTIK efforts to gather new data and offer solutions for a better progress!