chapter 1

The Spirit of a Place on a Plate

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To define and contextualize food and wine tourism as a fairly recent phenomenon.
- To explore how sustainable practices may affect food and wine tourism strategic vision and operational marketing.
- To consider the importance of 'quality' as the combination of technical, emotional and environmental aspects.

SOME REFLECTIONS TO START

Visualize a slightly inclined tasting glass, in which the red of a Malbec fades into the autumn vineyard landscape, at the foot of towering Andean peaks covered with snow. The message reads: 'High quality or high altitude? Discover both in Argentine wines'. The landscape is captured in the glass: this is an invitation to physically sample the flavour of a unique *terroir*, an invitation to take a (virtual) sensory journey that may give unexpected geographical and cultural depth to a simple sip of wine. Years ago, even the most inattentive readers of a well known international wine magazine were struck by this powerful and evocative image, chosen by the organization Wines of Argentina to broaden the vision of an amateur searching for information on manufacturers, vintages and varietals.

Over the past 10–15 years, in a relentless cavalcade of products and territories, the agri-food sector has sealed its inseparable (and sometimes unconscious) link to tourism. Advertising campaigns justified the uniqueness and organoleptic quality of a product by its being rooted in its place of origin, and so the consumer-taster has been invited to become, directly or by implication, a virtual or real traveller to the *terroir* of production. For instance, Umbria chose the image of Gianfranco Vissani, a famous Italian chef, riding astride a Norcia ham, to epitomize a region that wanted tourists to savour the variety of its geographical, anthropological and cultural ingredients through the medium of food (the slogan read '*Umbria. Dove la buona tavola è un'arte*', i.e. 'Umbria. Where good food is art'). In a more recent example, in the Trento Dolomites – an Italian counterpart of the Argentine Andes – the Cantina Mezzacorona series of advertisements depicted

the seasonal summer and winter shades of mountain rock faces, linking them to the colours of Müller Thurgau and Pinot Gris wines, and the warm autumn nuances of deciduous forests with hints of the garnet colour of the Teroldego grape: thus three grape varieties for the same landscape dense with values and sensory stimuli to be appreciated all year round.

The pairing of a product and its aboriginal *terroir* is even more explicit and synaesthetic on the pages of the Canberra District Wine Industry Association's website (www.canberrawines.com.au). In the foreground, bottles in shades of green recline; in the background the hilly landscape almost mirrors the shapes of the bottles. The slogan, imbued with magical realism, reads 'Wine with diversity in variety and style found nowhere else. Wine that is Liquid Geography'. The variety of elements that contribute in different ways to characterize the shimmering uniqueness of that particular *terroir* is summarized precisely in the absence of shape of that (liquid) wine, which, however, portrays a strong sense of identity. The magic arises when the liquidity in a bottle conveys the meanings of a territory and gives the opportunity to understand those meanings, either by travelling through the wineries on site, or just tasting their geographical context in a glass of wine.

Fluidity is an ever present feature of the (post-modern) tourist market. There is fluidity in the segmentation of tourist market groups: today there is no clear delineation of traveller profiles (of both groups and individuals) on the basis of defined socio-psychographic characteristics or of motivations and travel choices. Fluidity also affects the organization of the trip, since it is evident that there is a growing demand for flexible and tailor-made holidays from consumers who are sometimes (hyper-)active participants. Consequently the diversity that characterizes the authenticity of the places must be well 'managed' and conveyed in tourism products and communications. The aim is to give life to authentic experiences that, though based on a structured and studied supply, should result in flowing regional values that are mixed in a fluid way and can be tuned to different frequencies, based on different targets, themes, resources, destinations, organizations, etc.

In a certain type of experiential marketing, tourism strategy increasingly seems to include spectacular elements that transform destinations into enchanted contexts, into stages for unusual events, sometimes almost completely disconnected with the everyday life of the place. We rely too little on the success obtainable using the common elements of daily life that comprise the soul and the identity of a place and of any (tourist) experience in that place. We are talking about those elements and experiences acting in an understated manner on a guest's perception, on the pleasure of their stay, on a tourist's sense of belonging (almost of 'citizenship') to the destination and, with time passing, on the memory of it. So, events should at least be absorbed and assimilated by the fabric of the hosting destination, by its landscape, by the values of a territorial system that is able to attach to itself a visitor, and which awakens desire and pleasure in being experienced.

> In the same way that the *terroir* of a region gives wine its distinctive regional characteristics, the unique combination of the physical, cultural and natural environment gives each region its distinctive touristic appeal, its *touristic terroir*.
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> (Hall *et al.*, 2003)

Marketing professionals know how difficult it is to control the many variables that shape and affect the tourism phenomenon in a wide-ranging and often unpredictable way. Among them are: situations, trends and impacts on space, resources, geographical tourism markets; the various expressions of tourism adapted to different contexts and to different actors; the effects and redistribution of tourist spending; the interaction between tourism and other sectors, between public and private organizations; factors related to socio-economic trends and acts of God. Furthermore,

one should not forget the inevitable characteristics of tourism services, which by their nature are heterogeneous, transversal, intangible, perishable and seasonal and show a strong element of the subjective and conceptual components along the various stages of the production chain (from both the supply and the demand side).

But it is the coincidence of spaces (places), time and actors in the production, distribution and consumption process that more than any other factor deserves attention in the tourist industry. Such coincidence, together with a reversal in the common direction of marketing (in tourism, in fact, the market demand has to go towards the product), underlines and affirms the geographical significance inherent in tourism. The tourism product is in the place: the product is part of the place, it overlaps with it and is incorporated into it. It is difficult to distinguish between provided services/products and the supply system: processes, structure, company, organization and territory are blended. The tourism production process and the supply of facilities and services, therefore, are confused with regional organizations and end up being identified with them. Through a single specific experience in a restaurant or in a hotel or in a museum within a destination, tourists tend to perceive and to judge the entire destination that welcomed them. This explains the importance of territorial resources, which are the first tourist resources.

It should now be clear to public administrators and private operators that the elements demanded by a discerning tourist are beautiful landscapes, an 'unspoiled' environment that is brought to life by its residents' cultural and productive heritage, all helped by a coherent and good-quality local gastronomy. Those elements are the ones that give real added value to tourist facilities and services located in the destination and they take nourishment for their business and their image from the destination itself. At present, hoteliers, restaurateurs and tour operators need to know and deal with issues that go beyond their own income and their specific activity (which is no longer enclosed within the four walls of an individual business). It is necessary that strategies and marketing assume, as essential prerequisites, the acquisition of geographical and territorial sensitivity and an interdisciplinary vision, so that the meaning of a place's identity can be read, examined and dissected. This approach will help to distinguish the product from the vast range of proposals and tourist destinations available on the market. The contribution from a land identity and an interdisciplinary approach – in particular the one required by food tourism – can avoid the risk that destinations and tourist companies supply holiday options that are either similar or are repeatedly offered without significant changes. A regional and multidisciplinary approach together with themed proposals may be an antidote to uniformity and banality.

In tourism, analysis of demand and consequent adjustment of supply are strategic and operational tasks subordinated to critical evaluation of the locality and to the explicitness of the locality's meanings, the values on which it is based and its vocation. Once again, in contrast to the logic that shapes the traditional marketing of material goods, one should discard theories that consider demand as the main engine for building an ad hoc supply. When planning, in responsible and environmentally friendly tourism – the only kind able to ensure a long-term economic vision – regional values of each destination must be understood, respected and valued, even if not appreciated by some market segments. It should be a strong regional identity that appeals to tourists, rather than the tourist making a place successful only on the basis of their personal needs. That is why developing a correct perception and awareness of the culture of the destinations from insiders' and outsiders' viewpoints helps to pair the characteristics of destination with actual and potential demands. In this way, it is more likely to attract demand segments that

express motivations and willingness to pay suited to the place and to its identity.

'Geographical' significance must be explained and narrated. A mature or declining product may be re-launched through a themed and innovative supply that might also and above all take into account food and wine. Tourist organizations, accommodation establishments and services, in addition, must always respond adequately, updating and varying their proposals in a professional way. Food itself and places of production, processing and distribution become a filter or a pretext to broaden our perception of other regional expressions (Fig. 1.1).

The attentive guest asks for involvement, pleasure, culture, learning, relationships, a sense of belonging, well-being, a unique and irreplaceable special relationship with territories to observe, walk through, breathe, enjoy – in a bite that tastes of *genius loci*.

FROM ANCIENT ORIGINS TO MODERN TRENDS

Food and wine have enhanced people's lives ever since our ancestors developed a taste for good food and good living. The ancient Romans, who were without doubt masters of the art of *bien vivre*, still have something to teach us today about the importance of eating, drinking and living well. Take the rich and influential Mecenate, for example, living in Rome in the 1st century AD, accustomed to drinking top-quality prestigious wine. His friend, the poet Horace, knew all about Mecenate's educated tastes and wrote, almost excusing himself, that he was not in a position to be able to drink the same nectar: 'At home you will drink Caecuban wine and the grape which is squeezed in the Calenian press; my cups are not graced with vines from Falerno nor from the hills of Formia' (*Odes*, I.20). Horace also mentioned oil and vinegar in his writings, referring to 'the olive oil of Venafro obtained from the first pressing' and to the vinegar made from Methymnean grape juice (*Satires*, 2.8). Classical literature can take us on a virtual tour of convivial banquets and food-laden tables, divulging ancient pleasures and tastes.

Fig. 1.1. Harvesting saffron at dawn, Navelli high plain, Abruzzo (Italy).

Over time, intellectuals, writers, poets and chefs gradually created a geography of taste and, although the appreciation of fine food and wine products was initially confined to a small group of wealthy connoisseurs, a growing awareness began to emerge of the strong and direct links that a geographical region has with its products and its cuisine.

It would be interesting to know if Mecenate and personalities of the same calibre, other than enjoying Falerno wine and similar culinary delights, would have been prepared (or would maybe even have entreated) to leave their place of residence with the idea of arriving in a destination noted for its prestigious agro-alimentary production, understanding its cultural heritage, making direct contact with producers, visiting the area to see the process of transformation of the primary material into the final product, tasting the product in its place of origin, eventually buying supplies of the delicacy and returning home enriched by the experience. In synthesis, this is a description of what gastronomic tourism entails. As an academic subject it is relatively new and it is difficult to give a precise date to its origins.

Food and wine tourism activities are triggered by the delicate mechanism that combines produce with its production area. The activities focus primarily on agro-food companies, places and events that are intended to interpret and give value to the resource (e.g. restaurants, wine bars, museums and festivals, events, courses, workshops, farmers' markets, etc.). Then food and wine tourism affects and involves shops, accommodation establishments, services and all tourist supply operators working in a destination. Tasting a specific food resource will hopefully take place in the restaurants located in its *terroir*, as well as within the production company. Coming into contact with the producer or agribusiness should be considered essential for a gastronomic tourist, except when food resources require processing or to be savoured within a recipe at a restaurant, or when perhaps a picking, breeding or production process is unsuited to being visited (as in the case of production processes that cannot become tourist attractions because of specific hygiene rules, or delicacies such as truffles, whose hunting and picking are often done at night and are shrouded in secrecy). This is true if food is either the main motivation of travel and fits into the core of the tourism product (see Chapter 4), or it is an add-on to a holiday motivated by broader or diversified purposes.

In the French regions of Alsace and Burgundy, where gastronomy has been embedded in the regional culture for centuries, the custom of going direct to the producer to purchase wine seems to be rooted in the local population's DNA. In Italy, Robiola cheese from Piemonte is an inherent part of the cultural landscape, cited and praised by the great Italian writers of the neorealist movement in the 20th century.

In some areas today, food and wine tourism is well developed and in demand; in others it is still a niche market attracting a small number of curious visitors; and in some cases it remains an untapped source. For a food or wine production area to transform itself into a tourism destination, and to excite interest on the part of visitors who are moved by a desire to get to know a product and its region better (and enjoy themselves at the same time), the area must create the right type of 'cultural atmosphere'. It is possible to identify some key points that are essential for the creation and development of a successful gastronomic tourism destination. As each place is unique, however, each individual locality gradually becomes more aware of its role as a tourist destination over time, and develops and matures in different ways and at a different pace.

To get some idea of how a small group of pioneers can gradually over the years leave space for an ever-increasing body of gastronomic travellers, we shall pause here and take a look at how food and wine tourism has evolved in Italy. From a didactic point of view, Italy is an ideal case to study: not only is it famous worldwide for its extraordinarily rich gastronomy, it also ranks as one of the world's top tourist destinations.

To begin with, there is an enormous amount of documented evidence – from manuals about regional specialities to tourist guides and other publications – that has stimulated readers with an interest in food and wine to set off on journeys of gastronomic discovery.

As long ago as 1841, *L'Italie confortable, manuel du touriste* by Valery (pseudonym for A.C. Pasquin) was a French guide expressly written for tourists giving practical information to assist them during their travels in Italy. The guide included information about the climate, gave the names of doctors, and provided advice on food and customs in different destinations, hotels, means of transport and connections, tariffs and prices, book shops and libraries, jewellers, dressmakers and tailors, and a multitude of other useful details. There were also suggestions about which dishes to try and which gastronomic products to sample and purchase, with the names and addresses of the best shops to visit to find local delicacies.

It was not until 1931 that the Italian Touring Club (TCI) published its *Gastronomic Guide to Italy* (*Guida gastronomica d'Italia*) (Touring Club Italiano, 1931). Described as being 'above all a tourist guide, and therefore packed with practical information', it was written and compiled with the explicit aim of presenting Italy's rich patrimony of *specialità* to 'those Italians who travel to become better acquainted with our country' and to 'those foreign tourists who come to Italy to admire its beauty, its art treasures and its history'. In the preface, we read, 'as here stands one of the most useful aspects of the Guide, in other words, it will accompany tourists on their own quest to discover a local speciality, that they may have heard mention of or even tasted, but without ever really knowing precisely where it is from'. Another distinct aim was to endorse the practice of sampling product *in loco*, but the Guide did not mention product transformation or invite tourists to seek out places where it might be possible to view raw material being processed and transformed into an end product. There were no suggestions either as to where tourists could buy food or wine products. Today's gastronomy guides, on the other hand, are full of suggestions about where visitors can go to see the full cycle of food/wine production and where they can buy gourmet products and local specialities. Animated by a lively and patriotic spirit, the Touring Club Guide was, however, an invaluable record of different places and destinations of great culinary interest, in that they all offered a product of high gastronomic worth. The Guide also served as a precious resource for later guides and publications. What is more, the role it played in educating the public about the links between culture and gastronomy in Italy was no less important than the one played by Pelligrino Artusi's enlightening book, *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene* (*Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*), published in 1891.

More or less around the same time, the Italian Tourist Board (*Ente Nazionale Italiano per il Turismo*) commissioned the publication of a map detailing the principal gastronomic specialities in the different regions of Italy (*Carta delle principali specialità gastronomiche delle regioni italiane*). The map was 'artistic' rather than being a useful geographical reference: the Italian peninsula was invaded by all kinds of pictures of local dishes and products printed on each region. Each region was identified by a scroll, leaving the tourist with the challenge of choosing where to start their journey in a country entirely painted with dishes of steaming pasta, flasks and bottles, cured meats and all other kinds of culinary delights.

An important step towards defining gastronomic tourism, as we know it today, was journalist Mario Soldati's book *Vino al vino* (*Wine to Wine*) published in 1971. The book was actually a collection of articles written by Soldati referring to three exploratory journeys around the Italian peninsula to search out the best locally produced wine, as opposed to big-name industrially produced wines. His comments and observations are still useful in that they highlight the cultural significance of the gastronomic experience:

> Because, knowing more about a particular wine entails much more than having two or three sips or even a large glass. Above all, it means having a few basic notions about the area where the wine is produced; we should therefore have some knowledge about its geology and geography, its history and its socio-economic conditions. It means going to the place in person and managing to be taken to *that precise vineyard* where *that specific wine* comes from. It also means walking and walking, attentively observing the surroundings, following the quality and direction of the wind, noting, with the passing of the hours, the evolving shadows on the hills, contemplating the shapes of the clouds and scrutinizing the distinctive architecture of the farmhouses and buildings; and perhaps even more important, it means talking to the winemaker, to the workers in the vineyards and in the cellars, to the oenologist and so on… It means exploring at length the wine vaults, the underground cellars, the warehouses and the vinification rooms amid

> the concrete vats: inspecting the ways the barrels are made up, smelling the wine while it is still fermenting, seeking out concealed appliances used for cooling or, even worse, pasteurization; and finally patiently tasting, alternating slowly from one to another, at regular intervals, the different vintages.
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> (Soldati, 1971)

As we can see from Fig. 1.2, from the 1920s onwards in Italy (and other Mediterranean countries famous for their gastronomy), evolving social and economic conditions tied to food production and the land eventually provided the right conditions for the growth of gastronomic tourism. It was only after people had experienced what it was like to live in a society where eating well was the norm, but paying the price due to the standardization of taste by mass food production, that the conditions were right for a younger generation of consumers, cut off from rural life, to go back to their roots and reclaim the authentic tastes of another era, while welcoming new trends and innovative products.

In recent years there has been an upsurge of interest in eating organic or biodynamic foods, or foods that are commonly deemed to be 'safe' or certified. This has partly been influenced by a growing awareness of the need for environmental sustainability, the pleasure of eating good food and the search for holistic well-being. It is also due to a number of food scares in recent times that have driven people to seek out higher-quality food products. Increasingly passionate about food and moved by a desire to discover more about the *terroir* of particular products, changing consumer behaviour has had a decisive impact on food and wine tourism. The desire for a healthier lifestyle has also led to people wanting to find out more about the production cycles

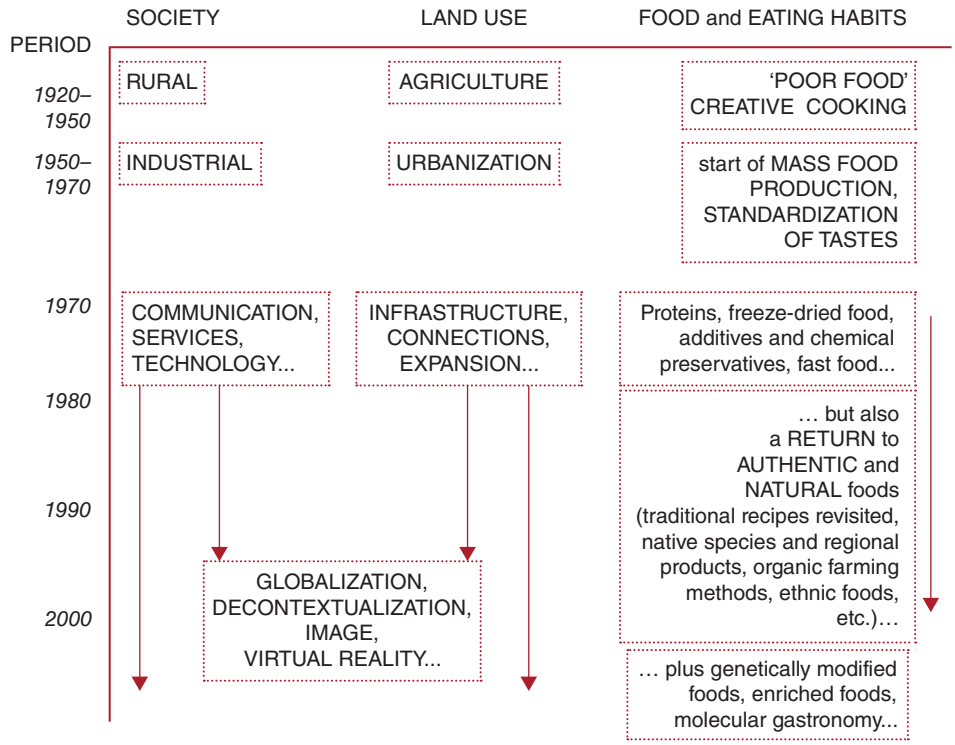

Fig. 1.2. Evolving social conditions and changes in attitude towards land use and food in Italy between 1920 and 2000.

of food products. Food producers have gradually begun to respond to consumer interest and engage directly with habitual clients as well as potential customers by opening up and inviting visitors to step inside and experience the production process at first hand (in this respect it is worth noting the amount of public interest aroused in 2004 by Jonathan Nossiter's award-winning documentary *Mondovino*).

Changing attitudes to mass food production also provided the impetus for different movements in the 1980s both in Italy and abroad and gave new dignity to the pleasures of the palate. A plethora of food and wine guides and gastronomy reviews came on to the market, satisfying a growing number of connoisseurs, while tasting seminars and exciting new events added a cultural dimension to food/wine production, appealing to the non-professional public.

Slow Food was set up in 1986, the very same year in which there was an enormous scandal over Italian wine being contaminated with methanol. It was the first association to champion the joys of slow eating, rejecting 'fast life' (Slow Food, 1989), and its mission was to raise public awareness about the pleasures of good food, respect for nature, natural life cycles, the dignity of farmers, biodiversity and eco-gastronomy. The Slow Food movement was immediately acclaimed in Italy and is still growing, having thousands of international members. In 1987, the association, in collaboration with Gambero Rosso, published the first edition of a guide to Italian wines (*Vini d'Italia*). This was followed 3 years later by *Osterie d'Italia*, a guide to Italy's traditional small restaurants. Apart from organizing taste workshops, seminars and other initiatives aimed at educating the public's palate, it also continues to organize a number of high-profile media events such as the 'Salone del Gusto' (since 1996), 'Cheese' (since 1997) and 'Slow Fish' (since 2004). In 2000 it set up 'Presidia' in order to protect endangered products, and since 2004 it has been the driving force behind 'Terra Madre', a huge international event organized every 2 years that brings together all those directly involved in food production and supply, providing a platform to share and exchange experiences, hopes and aspirations. Also in 2004, Slow Food founded the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the first of its kind (though unfortunately its Food and Wine Tourism course, an essential subject to gastronomy, is no longer available).

Gambero Rosso, working alongside Slow Food, is a leading multimedia organization promoting the culture of taste. Apart from publishing magazines, books and guides, it has its own satellite television channel dedicated to gastronomy with guest appearances by food and wine celebrities. Gambero Rosso's purpose-built 'City of Taste' in Rome also organizes cooking classes.

No less important in shaping public opinion and transforming the way people view and consume food are food writers and critics, as well as award-winning chefs. Through the media, they have passed on their passion and concern to both existing and potential clients about the importance of supporting locally produced products and taking a regional approach to creating recipes. Then there are all those who work in taste education, from sommeliers to oil, cheese, coffee and chocolate tasters, who organize national and local events and courses for professionals in the field, connoisseurs and curious amateurs. Whatever the level, these courses provide participants with a precise framework and lexis to describe a specific product and to carry out a sensory analysis of its organoleptic qualities while reinforcing the crucial concept of *terroir*.

In the past few years, knowledgeable consumers have gradually learnt to recognize the various acronyms printed on product labels, certifying them as being recognized by the European Union as regional quality food products, such as PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication), as well as those used to indicate wine denomination of origin such as AOC (*Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*), DO (*Denonimación de Origen*), DOC (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata*), etc.

It was not until 1993, however, that food and wine tourism in Italy officially moved into the mainstream, with perhaps the most ambrosial and evocative product of all: wine. This was thanks to the Wine Tourism Movement that managed to persuade a number of Tuscan wineries to adopt an open-doors initiative called 'Cantine Aperte' ('Open Cellars'). From just a few dozen wineries in 1993, the number has now grown to hundreds scattered over the length and breadth of Italy, each welcoming visitors on a guided tour every year on the last Sunday in May. This initiative has met with such success that some wine producers have decided to remain open to the public all year round.

In 1999, legislation was introduced to regulate the Italian 'Wine Routes' (France already had its own system of wine itineraries from the 1950s onwards). At the same time, other product routes and discovery trails began to open up at an international level, in search of quality extra-virgin olive oil, or artisan bread products, or beer (e.g. in the Czech Republic), or spirits (e.g. the 'Malt Whisky Trail' in Scotland), etc.

On a local level, in Italy a number of associations were created to promote regional products. One of the first was Wine Cities, which was specifically established to counter the terrible damage done to the reputation of Italian wine following the methanol scandal. It was a combined effort by 39 municipalities to help and support winegrowers and producers in their areas. Subsequently, other associations came to be established: Bread Cities, Olive Oil Cities, Cherry Cities and so on.

Food and wine tourism continues to attract an ever-increasing number of aficionados and is instrumental in identifying products with their areas of production. At the heart of food and wine tourism are the producers and their businesses; radiating out from this heart are the places and events that enhance and optimize the core resource, e.g. restaurants, wine bars and shops, museums, local food or wine festivals, tasting sessions and cookery courses. Finally, it spreads out to include points of sale, accommodation facilities and tourist services; indeed all the actors that are part of the tourist supply (and those who are not) of a destination.

Apart from having the experience of tasting a product where it is actually produced, visitors learn to appreciate the link between a product and its area of origin, even more if they can try the product at restaurants, cafés or bars in the immediate vicinity. When a product is an essential ingredient of an exquisite local dish, tourists not only enjoy a gastronomic experience but also enter into contact with the host community's culture. Not all specialities are 'easily visited' however. Hygiene regulations may not allow tourists into a production area or extremely rare delicacies have to be treated with particular care, away from curious groups of visitors. If visitors do not have the opportunity to come into direct contact with a product, they must have the chance to interact with the producer. This is a fundamental characteristic of gastronomic tourism.

The current boom in gastronomic tourism is also a demonstration that the significant attributes that are given to food in the Western world have grown in correspondence with changing lifestyles and living standards. From initially being a form of sustenance to satisfy a primary need (as well as being a trading commodity), the role that food plays in today's society is essentially about social pleasure, about gathering around a table or pleasing the taste buds. Food has become an object to analyse critically at tasting courses; it has become an object of art. In food and wine tourism it is a transmitter of culture, an important economic factor and the embodiment of regional identity.

Today, everyone seems to be talking about gastronomic tourism (indeed there seems to be more talk than action). It has become a trend. Films are made about it; articles and books are dedicated to it; television programmes proclaim it. But like all fashions and trends, it could easily just fade away and die. We believe, however, that it is still an untapped resource in many parts of the world and, if managed and planned properly, has the power to bring recognition, wealth and prestige to many areas that have a real vocation for food or wine production.

A TYPE OF INTEGRATED CULTURAL TOURISM

Food and wine tourism shares many of the same features as cultural tourism. Once upon a time, cultural tourism meant visiting historic centres, admiring art treasures and sightseeing famous monuments. Over the last few years, it has come to mean more than just an interest in art and history and now includes an enthusiasm for folk heritage, for gastronomic production, for learning more about different communities, traditions and ways of life. It is clear that there is a very strong link between the two types of tourism: a holiday that is based around offering a gastronomic experience will necessarily include one or more components of cultural tourism.

One of the most positive aspects of food and wine tourism is that it integrates so easily with other types of tourism, as can be seen in Fig. 1.3. When elementary or middle schools go away for a school trip, for example, it is easy to insert a visit to a model farm into their programme of activities. High-school students could easily be taken on a tour of a food production centre to learn about the technical side of food processing. Monasteries clearly appeal to religious tourists, but the artisan jams, wine and beer produced by the monks also attract people with a passion for natural foods and products. A hike in the mountains could easily include a stop at a dairy hut to see how alpine cheese is made and to taste it, ideally while sitting at a table overlooking herb-rich meadows and savouring the aromas of those precise herbs in the cheese. A cultural visit to the medieval town of Montepulciano (Tuscany) could easily be extended to visit some of the wine cellars in its historic palaces. Tourists enjoying a health and leisure break at an elegant spa can sometimes be pampered with treatments made from locally produced products, such as wine, grapes, extra-virgin olive oil, milk and yoghurt.

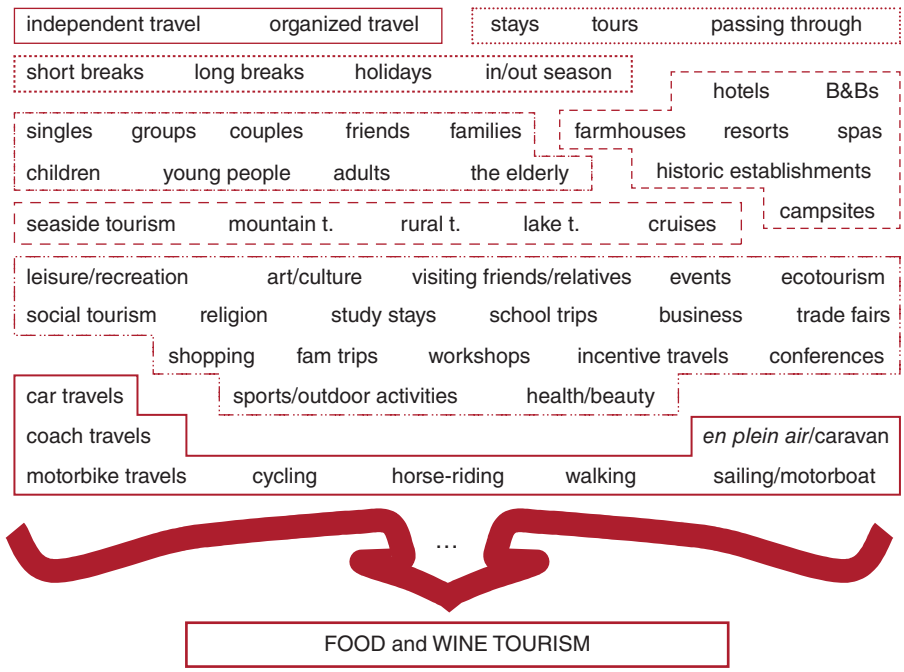

Fig. 1.3. Integrating food and wine tourism with other types of tourism.

There are obvious links between gastronomy and rural tourism, making it particularly easy to integrate food and wine tourism, especially if we think of the type of settings where people usually enjoy a gastronomic holiday experience But we can also combine gastronomy with other types of tourism that are quite removed from food and wine production. Take cruise holidays, for example. Numerous gastronomic experiences can be organized aboard the ship: tasting courses and workshops, food and wine pairing seminars, cooking classes with a celebrity chef, lessons on using herbs in cooking and organic food with well known names leading the classes, and so on. It is often possible to organize an excursion to a winery or farm or olive mill while the ship is in port. For passengers, activities like these give added value to the cruise experience, while the companies themselves gain a competitive edge over market rivals. In New Zealand, visitors to Marlborough can enjoy a day-long gastronomic experience by first visiting a winery and then taking part in a wine-tasting session comparing different wines from the surrounding areas. The difference with this experience is that the tasting session takes place on board a boat with a skipper, and passengers can relax and enjoy the scenery, or even do some fishing.

Non-motorized travel exists in several countries where special routes known as 'greenways' have been created. Greenways follow tracks and trails, old trade routes and disused railway lines. When a greenway crosses an area known for its food or wine production, it offers obvious opportunities to integrate gastronomic tourism (Fig. 1.4). The existence of these traffic-free routes is a key factor of strength for the territories they cross, and can also be an incentive to safeguard and protect the rural environment and landscape.

Fig. 1.4. Hiking in the vineyards.

Some examples of European greenways include the following.

- Vìas Verdes. Spain has converted over 1500 km of disused railway lines into cycling and walking paths. The greenways are an invitation to everyone, residents as well as tourists, to get to know Spain, its culture and landscapes, in an environmentally friendly way. No one is excluded. The greenways are accessible to people of all ages, including people with mobility problems where certain tracts have been adapted for wheelchairs. Walking and cycling along viaducts and tunnels once built for rail travel, greenway users get the chance to discover previously little-known areas and communities. The 120 km 'Vìa Verde del Aceite', which runs in the provinces of Jaén and Cordoba, crosses the very heart of the olive-growing region of Andalusia. The landscape dotted with *pueblos blancos* surrounded by olive groves is an intrinsic part of the Vìa verde cycling or sports experience. As one of Spain's foremost oil-producing regions, with large cooperatives for olive grinding and pressing and sales of olive oil, the area has given this particular greenway its distinctive name: 'The Olive Oil Greenway'.
- The Vienna–Prague Greenway. The two cities are joined together by a network covering hundreds of kilometres of paths, tracks and country roads. The greenway users can choose from a series of different themed itineraries and discover castles, lakes, forests, Renaissance towns and country villages along the way. Traces of the Iron Curtain are still apparent and serve as a warning for future generations. The greenway also includes a wine route in the area between Znojmo and Mikulov (South Moravia in the Czech Republic). Touring maps explicitly invite visitors to discover the wine production area by cycling 'towards wine and history'.
- Visitors can take a slow and rhythmic cycle ride to discover the sceneries and production areas of Burgundy through *Le tour de Bourgogne à vélo*, which offers several itineraries along greenways and cycling paths.
- The French region of Alsace is criss-crossed by numerous 'wine footpaths' or winery walks, giving visitors the chance to stop every now and then at a local *winstub* (literally 'wine lounge', or wine bar) and discover its villages and churches as well as its magnificent white wines. Visitors to the area can pick up brochures with information about the wine footpaths from the local tourist information offices.

Canal holidays are another way of combining the pleasures of gastronomy with a slower pace of life. There are many fine production areas such as Armagnac (France) or parts of the Camino De Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage route in northern Spain, that can be visited by navigating the areas' waterways in a houseboat. Along the way there are plenty of opportunities to stop off and enjoy a gourmet meal or visit a local winery or distillery.

TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT: FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

The impact of tourism on a destination is necessarily felt in a number of ways. It leaves its mark on the geographical, visual and relational space, with consequences on the environment in its natural, social, economic and cultural components (Fig. 1.5).

Studies undertaken to determine tourism impact have all pointed to the fact that, all too often, the negative impacts outweigh the positive. Many geographical, ecological, economic, social and anthropological studies clearly illustrate that far too often tourism organization is banal and that mass tourism generates negative effects (as it is

Fig. 1.5. The main impacts of tourism.

based on the short-sighted premise that it will bring immediate economic benefits to the destination).

Tourism is widely held to be responsible for the abuse and overuse of resources and for creating social tensions and loss of cultural identity as a result of unequal distribution of economic gains. The local economy is often crowded out and is replaced by a monoculture. The destabilization or loss of destination identity and authorized forms of economic colonization is, however, due to inadequate tourism planning, not to tourism itself or to spontaneous tourism development – a factor not helped by the widely held but erroneous belief that tourism is the only possible solution to reignite economic wealth in regions that have seen other production sectors shrink and stagnate.

The tourism industry needs to respond to a social need for pleasure and relaxation, but at the same time it needs to acknowledge that different types of clients are looking for a cultural experience as well, or have high self-affirmation needs. Only by creating different and varied products can the industry respond to and satisfy demand.

Tailor-made or customized tours, however, are often as guilty as all-inclusive packages in giving tourists just a fleeting acquaintance with a destination. No matter how brief the relationship, it is still invasive for the environment and the host community. This usually happens when the tourist product is based

on familiar images and preconceived notions about the destination. Even before departure, the tourist feels secure in the knowledge that they already know all they need to know about the destination (e.g. through the media or tourist guides). All that remains to do when they actually arrive there is to quickly verify their preconceptions.

Other tourist products respond to demand from independent travellers for exclusive discovery tours by offering adventure or exploration holidays (often not nearly as adventurous as they would like to make out). These types of holiday are usually to faraway destinations that are considered to be exotic and full of cultural meaning, much more so than destinations favoured by mass tourism. In reality, the tourist who embarks on this type of holiday is hoping to come into contact with something outside their own experience, to discover a completely new culture and way of life that they can live intensely just for a brief moment, before they return to the safety of their home comforts and reassuring daily routine.

Clients often buy into promises that have no connection with reality, but instead are nostalgic versions of a way of life that has long since disappeared. Images such as a man and donkey on a narrow mountain path, or a woman balancing a basket of food on her head, or a lone fisherman hauling in his meagre catch come to mind. They may well reflect real situations but, more often than not, are merely romanticized views of other people's lives. And yet, the tourist is searching for an authentic experience which is strangely contradictory, in search of isolation and a complete experience, in the hope of finding places that do not remind them of the socio-cultural conditions to which they belong.

The tourist industry anticipates and launches new trends, satisfies needs that often the industry itself creates, and projects stereotyped images of places and destinations specifically created to attract demand. It is often the case that where geographically marginalized countries or destinations (not always because they are distanced from the principal tourism markets) have been able to maintain more traditional and authentic ways of life, they seem to be more exposed to the dangers of tourism. This happens because they do not have the ability or the necessary measures in place to be able to resist the enormous wave of social, psychological, economic and environmental impacts that tourism brings with it. With tourism policies based purely on satisfying visitor needs and desires, they succumb to the illusion that tourism will bring quick, easy and painless growth. The risk then is that these places become merely surreal cultural representations of themselves.

The tourism industry and visitor behaviour, therefore, do not always bring the positive effects that in theory tourism should generate. Technically, tourism should raise awareness about the cultural identity of a destination and be responsible for enhancing the lives of the host community. It should foster cultural exchange and provide greater opportunities for leisure and entertainment. It should generate new job opportunities, attract investment and stimulate new business approaches and a desire for growth and innovation.

Seen in this light, food and wine tourism should be seen as an ideal opportunity and occasion to revisit the past and appreciate its values and traditions in the present day. In essence, the past is a rich resource of cultural, economic and managerial elements from which the entire tourism system can draw on.

Once upon a time, the classic or romantic meaning of a journey ideally signified open and curious travellers (who left behind any preconceptions or prejudices) actively seeking to establish a rapport with the people and places they visited during their travels. In today's media-savvy world, with everything at our fingertips, with so many choices and an overwhelming input of images and information about other people's experiences, travel in the original sense of the word no longer exists; it has been supplanted by tourism.

From a logistical, psychological and experiential point of view, the meaning of travel today is totally different from travel in the

past. However, something of the original spirit lives on in the minds of those tourists who set out to enjoy themselves but are ready to embrace the unfamiliar and learn something new, so that they return home enriched by the holiday experience. This is as true for the single lone traveller as it is for a group of senior citizens out together on a day trip. Actors in the tourism industry can help to keep the original character of travel alive in the products they construct for their clients, receiving visitors with warmth and hospitality, guiding and sharing the pleasure of the travel experience with them. The host community also plays an important role here, as it needs to welcome visitors with an open mind but also be capable of managing tourism in the long term. This entails a delicate balancing act between defending and protecting the destination's natural resources and cultural identity and opening up to new and exciting possibilities. On the other hand, the tourist should be open to an awareness of the needs of the destination and have a desire to experience emotion, savour new tastes and play.

What then are the ingredients for a positive approach to tourism in a destination? How can negative impacts be minimized? How can we link food and wine tourism to sustainable development?

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

A premium food or wine product transmits flavour and taste, it reflects traditional or innovative production methods, it is capable of exciting emotions, it is an expression of regional culture and history, and generates wealth for that region. Food and wine tourism generates many opportunities and gives added value for destination development, but it must be managed and organized in a responsible and sustainable way.

What is sustainable development?

- 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of "needs", in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).
- Sustainable development is about 'improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems' (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, United Nations Environment Programme and World Wide Fund for Nature, 1991).
- 'Sustainable development is development that delivers basic environmental, social and economic services to all residents of a community without threatening the viability of the natural, built and social systems upon which the delivery of these services depends' (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 1994).

The definitions given above are just three of many that have been put forward from the 1980s onwards to explain what is meant by sustainable development. They help us to understand how a sustainable approach can be applied to tourism.

No matter at what level sustainable practices are implemented, from individual citizens to large companies, from micro areas to macro areas, from a single product to an entire range, there are three fundamental elements that have to be carefully balanced to underpin sustainable development. These are the protection of the ecosystem and the principles of social justice and economic efficiency.

- Protecting the balance of ecosystems means guaranteeing biodiversity and production, in terms of energy flows,

food chains and interactions between biotic and abiotic components, etc. It also signifies understanding at what point damage becomes irreversible and respecting the limits of resilience; in other words, the capacity of an ecosystem to renew itself.

- The principle behind social justice is that everyone has a natural right and should have equal access to environmental patrimony (intragenerational equity) and that the environment should be protected and preserved for the enjoyment of future generations (intergenerational equity).
- Economic efficiency goes beyond the principle of striving for economic growth; it means maintaining a correct balance between the economic system and the environment, with the idea that environmental capital and social capital together constitute a rich resource for collective well-being. In practical terms, this means activating production methods that use renewable resources, improving wealth distribution, raising living standards, investing in technological innovation, aiming for more product diversification, defending cultural identity, developing economic potential at a local level and preventing all forms of economic colonialism, meritocracy, etc.

In tourism, respecting and maintaining the ecosystem balance implies taking account of the carrying capacity of a destination. This means that tourism policy makers need to analyse the maximum number of visitors a place and its resources can support, in that a tourist consumes space even though it is not always that evident. Once visitor numbers go beyond this point the impact of their presence will be economically, physically and socially damaging to the destination. This holds true for all visitor destinations, whether they are historic city centres, museums, churches, beaches or even wineries or dairy farms. 'Damage' is in the sense that the systems in place, e.g. transport and infrastructure, begin to cease functioning properly and the costs of tourism begin to outweigh the benefits.

The concept of carrying capacity can be applied to the environment (e.g. analysing visitor presence and any resulting damage to the ecosystem or to a monument, a farm or a winery); in a social sense (e.g. assessing effects on the social relationships and quality of life of the host population, or on workers in an olive mill open to visitors, or even on the internal harmony of tour groups themselves); and in an economic sense (e.g. measuring decline in demand – and consequent decline of tourism revenues – as a result of overcrowding and dissatisfaction with the quality of life in the destination and with the holiday itself).

Analysing and measuring carrying capacity is therefore an essential first step to successfully managing tourism impacts on a destination and its host community. Studies need to be conducted over fairly protracted periods of time, supported by statistics and analyses in social, economic and geographical indices (income, quality of life, impact on resources, etc.).

Sustainable policies to protect the environment are based on the cardinal principles of restoration, conservation, prevention and enhancement. If policies are to be effective in minimizing negative impacts on a destination, they need to be carefully planned and based on detailed research. Prevention, in particular, needs to be carried out by constantly monitoring and considering repercussions on the environment due to tourism presence. As an investment, prevention does not seem to give any apparent or immediate returns; however, in the long term, careful analysis of environmental impacts enables policy makers to develop environmental education and awareness-raising campaigns for both visitors and residents. These policies can naturally be applied to gastronomic tourism, with the aim of increasing knowledge about environmental systems within food and wine regions, disseminating information with regard to resource management and increasing awareness

about opportunities for development. Specific geographical regions, small precious areas and food and wine production enterprises all have the opportunity to develop new production methodologies to underpin sustainable development and maintain the correct balance between environmental and social issues and economic development.

It must be admitted that developing and implementing sustainable development policies is not always straightforward.

- It is not always easy to outline precise objectives for policy management.
- It can be difficult to identify the exact parameters for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of sustainable policies.
- Reaching a common consensus about what policies to adopt can be problematic, because multiple interests often prevail.
- Sustainable activities often entail higher costs, because initial investments into reducing consumption and waste can be quite considerable, particularly as effects are not felt immediately and require medium- to long-term planning.

Tourism planning must have a systematic and global vision of a destination and its geographical area. Tourism must avoid consuming those resources on which it depends, it must not alter cultural identity and it must not be responsible for creating social tensions. Tourism should bring added value without driving out other socio-economic activities in the destination. The success of tourism planning is based on whether it is able to achieve a dynamic relationship between: residents and the quality of life in the destination; tourists and the quality of their holiday experience in the destination; and the way both categories (residents and tourists) interact with the environment. The way the environment is used reflects the value given to it by its users. If this balance is to be achieved, all actors in the destination need to be involved, including the local community and local businesses, public and private bodies, education and research institutes and the media.

As stated in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (http://www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ECST_2015.pdf), sustainable and responsible tourism encompasses all types of tourism and aims for 'the protection of the natural and cultural heritage and the continuous improvement of tourism in terms of the environment, local population and businesses as well as visitors'. The core of these projects and activities should be 'working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to develop a common sustainable tourism strategy and an action plan on the basis of a thorough situation analysis'. It means implementing multilevel planning, integrating visions of regions, destinations and resources, to meet and suit market needs compatible with these environmental identities.

Hence prerequisites for any tourism strategy are:

- a well selected professional working team, based on both interdisciplinary and specific expertise, not necessarily composed only of local staff (thus mitigating the risk of a sense of 'native presumption' and of the loss of sensitivity for details that can bring one-sided and biased evaluations of resources and territories);
- appropriate timetables for aims and specific objectives, using different geographical scales of application;
- a qualitative and quantitative assessment of resources, themes and territorial actors; and
- historical analysis and constant statistical monitoring.

The creation process for a regional tourism product should also take into account the following issues: defining the network and system concepts; developing a large range of tourism opportunities with, where possible, some specialized product lines; providing quality of life for residents and an enjoyable and meaningful experience of stay for visitors; and making better places to live in and to visit.

In any destination system a tourism strategy is recognized as responsible and sustainable if:

- it facilitates and sensitizes the appreciation and respect for environmental, economic and socio-cultural identities and resources of destinations;
- it encourages connections between visitors and host communities;
- it generates collective and individual well-being for visitors and hosts; and
- it improves cultural, social, economic, recreational, but also structural, infrastructural and environmental regional factors (including nutrition, hygiene, safety, energy, waste impacts etc.).

The benefits resulting from adoption of common strategies towards the respect of the geographical 'essence' of destinations, would definitively be in terms of regional planning, resulting in positive effects on cost savings (utilities, supplies, waste disposal, etc.), on customer satisfaction, on appeal, reputation, reliability and credibility of places, on development of new tourist markets, on seasonality reduction, on enhancement of local production (including food), etc.

Thanks to a flexible and professional approach, it is possible to optimize various product development areas, in a sustainable way, even at different scales. In recent years many institutions and organizations have spread the concept of working for 'ethical tourism', by promoting information campaigns and professional coaching to industries, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) related to issues such as 'water equity, land grab, international volunteering, work conditions, sex tourism', etc. (http://tourismconcern.org.uk/about/how-we-work).

The tourist publishing sector itself is paying more and more attention to sustainable themes. More and more 'green' and 'responsible' information is available about locations, companies, events and behaviour patterns hoping 'to inspire you to try a new, far more rewarding, way of travelling' (http://www.lonelyplanet.com/about/responsible-travel).

In addition, 'green' best practices are rewarded with a growing visibility in travel catalogues, brochures and on websites, as in the TripAdvisor 'GreenLeaders' programme.

However, any hospitality operator can bring an important contribution to this vision, adding a strong element of sustainability to their business concept, while avoiding deceptive 'greenwashing' policies that can undermine ecotourism. Large hotel chains (e.g. NH Hotels, Accor, Hilton – especially with the Double Tree brand) have adopted actual strategies and procedures of 'corporate responsibility and sustainability'. More and more, in 'delicate and fragile' geographical areas there are private eco-resorts or hospitality projects self-managed by local communities, generally supported by the governments. In both situations, though in very different ways (for means, financial capitals, human resources, economic management, comfort, prices, etc.), sustainability challenges are met, with strong references to wine and food issues too (e.g. Belcampo and Toledo Ecotourism Association, in the rainforest of Belize). Eco-rating organizations such as Green Key or sustainable accommodation network brands like EcoWorld Hotel have established themselves in the tourism panorama.

Sustainable practices adopted by some major hotel chains are emblematic. They can be applied to different business areas, with appropriate modifications, and they can be oriented to the structure, the environment, the location and the host communities, to stakeholders and shareholders, employees, suppliers and supplies, but also to franchisees and to customers in general (who may be even more sensitive to this theme). They include:

- landscape protection, management and planning, architectural design, certified materials, green building;

- interior design (reception rooms, dining rooms, tasting rooms etc.) with high performance in a sustainable way (e.g. the 'green rooms' of NH Hotels);
- environmental impact assessment, evaluation and zoning compliance;
- certification (management, structure, environment, etc.);
- monitoring of tourism impacts, products and services, influx, customer satisfaction and residents' involvement perceptions and reactions (carrying capacity, evaluation of statistical sustainability indexes, etc.);
- energy saving and rational use of resources (water, electricity, gas, etc.), technological innovation and sustainable equipment adaptation and innovation (kitchens, bedrooms, laundry, etc.);
- responsible sourcing, supplies and materials certification (food and beverage, linen, amenities, beds and energy, water, but also decorations, e.g. guests greeted in their rooms by miniature plants instead of flowers);
- use of renewable energy, rainwater harvesting, reduction of impacts and harmful emissions into the environment, etc.;
- waste management and recycling, including mattresses, soaps, bulbs, participatory actions – hygiene, cleaning, maintaining appearance, etc. – in internal areas (accommodation establishment) or external areas (beaches, bays, forests, etc.);
- compost production for indoor or outdoor gardens and orchards;
- carbon dioxide (CO_2) footprint for accommodation facilities, rooms, supplies, even for the mobility of staff and customers (car sharing, electric cars and so on) and for events (CO_2-neutral practices, carbon credits, tree planting, etc.);
- healthy environments, diets and menus;
- partnerships with health services for the prevention of diseases such as HIV, malaria;
- training, rising awareness and sharing goals with stakeholders, stockholders, management, etc.;
- careful selection of suppliers and supplies, human resources;
- raising funds for social, cultural and territorial projects;
- involvement of companies and 'active citizenship'; and
- thematic communications campaigns, etc.

At a different scale, then, even independent agritourism or other small accommodation establishments can consider reducing their environmental impact, starting with furniture, even if only by opting for the rehabilitation, restoration or new use of environmentally friendly local recycled materials.

Responsible actions are communicated to their guests by the Apulian bed-and-breakfast (B&B), Trulli La Macina, via its website (www.trullilamacina.it), which states that 'Special attention is reserved to environmental impact', including:

- photovoltaic panels for heating water;
- air heating with biomass boiler (wood from prunings and coppiced hazel);
- collection of rainwater in tanks;
- natural shade (trees, pergolas and sunshade parasols);
- seepage irrigation for saving water;
- drinkable water from the Apulian Aqueduct;
- low-consumption lamps;
- class A electrical appliances;
- local natural products;
- natural soaps;
- reduced-flow taps; and
- home-washed and sun-dried linen.

The sensitive restoration of the La Macina *trulli* (traditional conical stone houses, perfectly integrated with the local environment) was carried out by local artisans and maintained the 'original charm through the use of recycled raw materials … without renouncing comfort and hints of contemporary style'.

A sustainability approach can also be applied when structuring and managing a food and wine tour or a visit to any food and drink company by:

- carrying out market research to identify and select the most appropriate target;
- making sure that visitor numbers can be accommodated comfortably in the spaces available for the visit;
- diversifying, channelling and disseminating information;
- giving a coherent and recognizable theme to a food and wine tour, making thematically coherent stopovers and visits;
- adapting the form of the routes to territories and travel themes (see Chapter 8);
- informing clients about the environmental strategies adopted by the individual enterprises involved in the tour (Fig. 1.6);
- providing enjoyment as well as educating, by devising a tour or visit that is both entertaining and informative;
- making the visit profitable from both the economic and the promotional points of view;
- monitoring effects and impacts on territory and productions;
- making travel experiences meaningful to participants, ensuring that tourists come away from the experience with an increased awareness;
- offering products (souvenirs) and participation in events that express the local cultural identity;
- selecting among regional local suppliers: environmentally friendly accommodation and facilities, particularly focusing on implementation of a food miles policy; appropriate means of transport (right size, low CO_2 emissions, non-motorized if possible or on foot, etc.);
- promoting cultural trips and journeys of discovery;
- culturally enriching any tourism product;
- properly managing human resources, fostering methods that value diverse people, talents and ideas (contracts, careers, employee involvement, sharing corporate and regional objectives);
- systematizing cooperation;

Fig. 1.6. At the farmers' market: good practices.

- facilitating local actors and the relationship between travellers and hosts for unique travel experiences;
- constructing a tour that ensures economic success and/or continued visibility in the market; and
- devolving a percentage of revenue for heritage care, maintenance and repairs (paths, churches, monuments, works of art, gardens, protected habitats, etc.).

From a strictly gastronomic point of view, some sustainability operations implemented by various operators in the travel and hospitality sectors should be mentioned, such as those aiming to:

- propose a seasonal cuisine, smart and balanced menus (themed, refined for ingredient sourcing and provenance, with dietary information, etc.);
- propose low 'food miles' menus with a fair percentage of local ingredients (preferably supporting local small-to-medium producers);
- propose 'clean' menus with a fair percentage of organic biodynamic or similar ingredients;
- propose '*terroir*' menus, inspired by particular regional identities (e.g. Slow Food Chefs' Alliance);
- optimize the practices of 'food cost';
- avoid the waste of food (e.g. the portion management 'No bin day' initiative by Hilton in order to decrease food waste at the canteen, with an invitation to employees to eat consciously by taking portions that are only as much as they require);
- produce ingredients 'in house', as in agritourism and in those restaurants that do raise their own vegetables and meat, or use fruit from nearby market gardens, orchards and farms (e.g. the Italian La Sangiovesa in Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna, Villa Maiella in Guardiagrele or even the Waldorf Astoria rooftop bee hives and garden in New York which help to supply the honey and some of the vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices used in hotel cuisines and bars and in the spa treatments);
- remove endangered species from the menu ingredients;
- create awareness of their food's geographical origins and of food production chains;
- organize themed events with regional tastings, presenting and supporting quality companies and interrelating food with regions and with cultural issues (monuments, works of art or other valuable features) through 'synaesthetic' guided approaches;
- manage food waste and recycle waste (e.g. convert cooking oils into green fuels; produce compost for vegetable gardens; use on-site eco-digester machinery to process and recycle organic waste, etc.);
- arrange collaboration with organizations and institutions for charity food provision; and
- reuse materials (e.g. Cork2Cork project by NH Hotels in conjunction with a leading producer of cork and cork materials that aims to collect used cork bottle-stoppers across many of the group's establishments for recycling and reuse for cladding and insulation purposes in hotels).

In the recent reorganization and renovation (from vineyard to accommodation) of Cincinnato cooperative winery, in Cori, Italy, the interiors – rooms, restaurant, tasting areas and event space – are decorated with wood and iron taken from used barrels and designed to make unique objects and furniture.

QUALITY

According to ISO standards (ISO 8042:1986, 3.1), quality can be defined as 'The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy

stated and implied needs'. In traditional marketing, this notion of quality is interpreted as an opportunity to overlap in a strategic way the specific characteristics of the supply with those of the demand, and to render a product more appealing than its competitors. Quality is therefore seen to lie within the specific characteristics of a product or service that are useful for satisfying a need.

However, when we speak about quality, we must consider the way a product responds to sustainable needs (environmental, social and economic) as well as its ability to perform satisfactorily, to be safe, pleasing and reliable.

There is no doubt that in today's world awareness about environmental issues, whether it is generated by grass-roots activists or filters down from governmental organizations, plays an important role in qualitative satisfaction when purchasing or using a product or service. In the case of tourism, this is even more true thanks to the strong relationship that exists between a journey or holiday and the environment in which that journey or holiday takes place. Among all the characteristics that distinguish tourist services from other types of products (e.g. immateriality, transversality, heterogeneity, perishability, strong subjective component), the one that stands out more than any other is the omnipresence of the environment. This is not simply linked to the fact that one of the principal motives for travelling is to enjoy the beauty, culture and resources of the destinations visited through the consumption of public and private goods.

In marketing terms, the strong presence of the environment in tourism is also due to an inversion in the production and distribution processes that are common to most material goods. In the case of tourism it is the market that moves towards the product (environmental resource–tourist destination) and not the other way round: the product is used and consumed in the holiday destination. To optimize tourism planning and management, therefore, it is necessary to develop a strong sensitivity to the geographical and cultural aspects of a destination as well as developing good hospitality practice.

A quality product does not necessarily have to be expensive. The concept of quality is often linked to loyalty towards a particular producer or to brand preference, and even in some cases to the name given to a type of product or service offered. A good example is the appeal that a prestigious wine estate or DOC region has for a wine connoisseur, or the effect that the name of the cultivar or species of the primary food materials (particularly if it is a rare speciality) has on a gourmet food lover. In both cases, the name of the product is synonymous with quality. Quality is always linked to the *terroir*, to the region of production. It can be traced back to the ancestry of the noble grape varieties or to the artisan production methods used to create a distinguished cheese. Quality can even be found in the personality of a producer who epitomizes the very nature of his products or the fascination of the productive landscape.

The preference or loyalty given to a product or service by the consumer-tourist even before it has been tried is connected with the instrumental quality of the product/service in question. This is because the quality is 'fabricated'; we can see this in food and wine tourism where quality is demonstrated by the characteristics of the product or services, but also by the nutritional and organoleptic attributes of the product.

In conclusion, if we are to apply the concept of quality to tourism, and in particular to food and wine tourism, giving value to the holiday experience, we must consider the ongoing interaction between product quality and environmental quality as a set and act accordingly, by integrating all the qualitative features that make up the subsets.

As Fig. 1.7 demonstrates, a lot of attention is given to assessing the correspondence between expected and experienced quality,

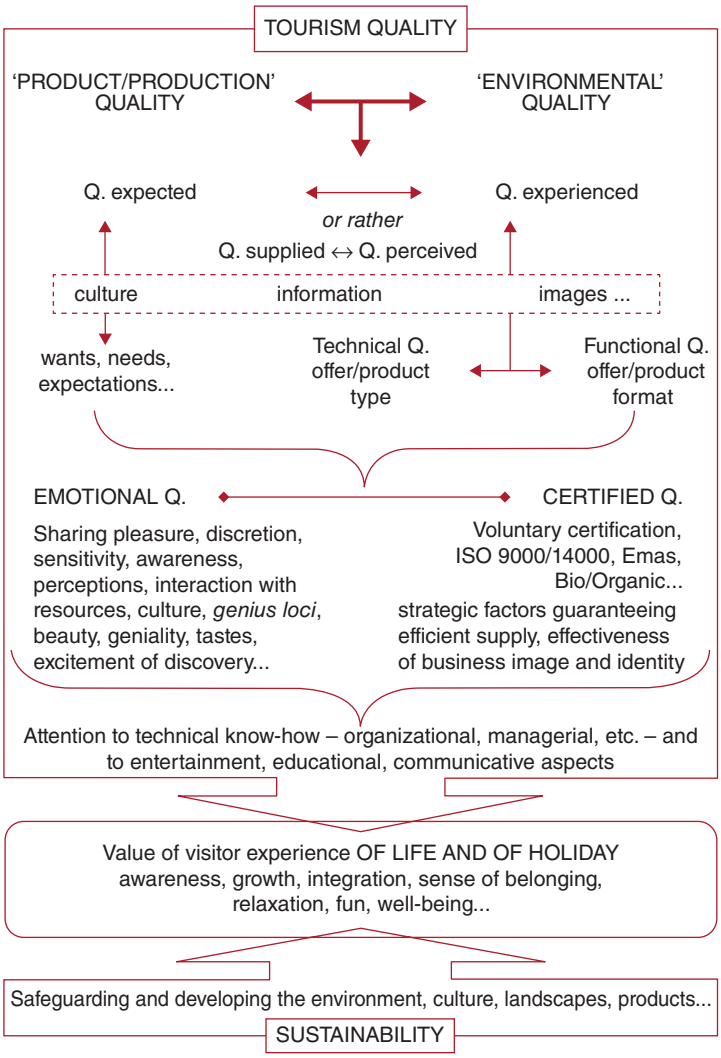

Fig. 1.7. Quality.

or in other words how the supplied quality matches perceived quality. These concepts are very much linked to the relationships that exist between the character and identity of the host destination, those of the visitors in the destination (with their needs and wants) and of the producers (with their sensitivity and their ability). Perceptions, experiences, ways of demonstrating hospitality and developing product potential are absorbed and emanated through the critical spirit of the tourist and the host destination or the tourist operator.

A tourist region, a food or wine production business, a restaurant, etc. can all demonstrate quality if they possess the correct characteristics and can show that they are in a position to provide all that is necessary for tourism from the point of view of infrastructure, the environment, production, social

conditions and sustainability. The price/quality ratio must also be correct, otherwise there is a risk of asymmetrical information. But this is not all.

Seen from this point of view, it is easier to consider the dual definition that is often given to quality: technical quality (how the offer translates itself) and functional quality (how the offer is given). The traditional marketing approach saw quality (expected–perceived, technical–functional) as being almost exclusively related to processes and products. Nowadays, it is necessary to integrate the 'technical' aspects (processes, production methods, management manuals, guides) with the value/role that people and their environment play and the emotional aspects linked to hospitality.

Quality can also be subdivided into two macro areas: certified and emotional. International quality certification for production procedures and environmental performance (e.g. Ecolabel, Emas, ISO 9000/14000) is useful for standardizing quality levels and confirming to stakeholders that the production methods used have minimal environmental impacts. As market demand becomes increasingly aware of the need for environmentally friendly business practices, certification is a bona fide guarantee of product quality for aware consumers. In fact, environmental certification is an extremely important marketing tool as client-tourists who would describe themselves as being 'responsible travellers' perceive it as adding value to a product. Certification on its own, however, is not sufficient. Contact with the destination and its environment and the impact that this has on the tourist have strong emotional connotations, due to the pleasure involved in getting to know a new place and the sensory experiences enjoyed during the visit. A tourist needs to relate to and interact with a destination and be moved by its beauty, its cultural and natural resources, its authentic flavour and unique spirit.

The human factor is equally important in contributing to the atmosphere and quality of a client's experience in a destination. As operators in the 'human contact industry', all sector workers need to be able to interact with their clients and communicate an enthusiasm for their work. As well as having excellent communication skills, tourism operators need technical know-how and must be naturally open to making contact with the general public. Attending professional training courses to consolidate and develop business skills while keeping abreast with industry trends is essential.

In food and wine tourism, tourism quality and sustainability join forces to enhance the visitor experience by improving overall planning and management and by safeguarding the natural beauty of the destination and its surroundings.

The carrying capacity of a destination (wineries, olive mills, churches, museums, vineyards, protected areas, a wine-tasting session, an art workshop, even a trek on horseback), as we have already mentioned above, is a determining factor in safeguarding a destination's resources, but it also has a significant impact on how successful operators are in being able to satisfy their clients. Measuring success, however, should not just be considered in economic terms. Supply-side actors must also take into account socio-environmental results. The technical and administrative aspects of their work need to be fully integrated with what goes into creating a satisfying and memorable psychological and physical experience of a destination. In order to guarantee a fulfilling and satisfying experience, operators need to be aware of certain essential key elements that, combined together, ensure a sense of visitor well-being. It goes without saying that fun and relaxation are important components of the tourist product, as are moments of emotion and pleasure, and opportunities to learn something new; but one of the principal elements by which the success of a product can be judged is whether it has given the client-tourist a sense of belonging to the destination and, as a result, an

increased sense of responsibility towards it and a more complete sense of well-being.

REVIEW QUESTIONS AND TASKS

- How would you define 'food and wine tourism' in your own words? Describe at least three essential activities typical of a visitor to a food-producing company or area.
- Imagine running your own business in food and wine tourism and list ten sustainable practices that you consider most important.
- How it is possible to combine technical, environmental and emotional quality?