

## Exploring the role of traditional food in developing tourism in Kazakhstan

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines how Kazakhstan can enhance its tourism industry by leveraging its rich traditional food heritage. Gastronomic tourism, a rapidly growing sector focused on immersive culinary experiences, allows travelers to connect deeply with local cultures through food. Positioned at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Kazakhstan offers a unique culinary landscape shaped by its nomadic traditions, Silk Road history, and diverse ethnic influences. Traditional dishes like beshbarmak, kazy, and boursak provide authentic experiences that showcase the nation's heritage, while urban centers such as Almaty and Nur-Sultan feature a modern fusion of culinary techniques, adding a dynamic layer to Kazakhstan's food scene. The article highlights the role of traditional food in driving tourism development, with efforts from the government and private sector to promote Kazakhstan as a culinary destination. By focusing on traditional food as a key attraction, Kazakhstan holds strong potential to enrich its tourism offerings and appeal to an international audience seeking culturally rooted travel experiences. This study employs an applied qualitative research method that integrates a comprehensive literature review, thematic analysis, and comparative analysis to explore the potential of traditional Kazakh cuisine in enhancing tourism development. The findings reveal that Kazakhstan's unique food practices ranging from innovative methods such as drying, fermenting, and smoking to the fusion of multicultural dish influences offer significant opportunities for immersive gastronomic tourism experiences. These insights suggest that by strategically promoting its traditional cuisine through culinary tours, food festivals, and interactive cooking demonstrations, Kazakhstan can elevate its profile as a distinct culinary destination, thereby enhancing tourist experiences and supporting sustainable economic growth.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Upon exploring a new country, people will immediately have immersed in its culture (Nova et al., 2022). Undoubtedly, food and the traditions surrounding its consumption represent the most significant aspect of any nation's material culture (Hendra et al., 2021). This assertion is evidenced by the varying eating habits of people, who, as natural omnivores,

consume food differently within different national cultures. There is a proverb that goes, "Taste a country to learn about its culture" (Vinokurov, 2018), capturing the essence of gastronomic tourism a rapidly growing trend that connects travelers to the soul of a destination through its cuisine (Gheorghe et al., 2014).

Given its significant contribution to GDP and its influence on the labor market, it goes without saying that tourism has a significant impact on social and economic growth (Intiar et al., 2024). Every country has the potential to develop gastronomic tourism, as each possesses a unique cuisine that reflects its identity (Hendra et al., 2021). Kazakhstan, located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, is particularly well-positioned to grow as a culinary tourism destination. Kazakhstan's rich culinary heritage, shaped by its nomadic traditions and Silk Road history, makes it a compelling destination for food-focused travelers (Gheorghe et al., 2014).

Gastronomic tourism has emerged as a significant and rapidly growing sector within the global tourism industry, reflecting an increasing desire among travelers to engage with the culinary heritage and food cultures of their destinations. This form of tourism goes beyond mere sustenance, offering immersive experiences that connect tourists with local traditions, history, and lifestyles through food. As travelers seek out authentic and enriching experiences, gastronomic tourism has become a vital component of cultural exchange and economic development (Medina-Viruel et al., 2019).

Sampling traditional food offers a sensory gateway into a new culture, enriching the tourist experience beyond intellectual engagement. Local cuisine, as a hallmark of a destination, enhances the overall perception of the visit, making food an essential element of tourism. It connects cultural heritage with travel by promoting well-being, sustainability, and high-quality experiences. This integration underscores the evolving role of gastronomy in cultural tourism, contributing to both visitor satisfaction and the broader development of the tourism industry (Aktymbaeva & Trifonova, 2021).

In recent years, Kazakhstan has emerged as a captivating destination for gastronomic tourists, offering a rich and diverse culinary landscape shaped by its unique geographic location. Situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Kazakhstan boasts a rich and diverse culinary landscape shaped by centuries of cultural exchange and its historical role as a key hub along the ancient Silk Road. The nation's vast steppes, vibrant cities, and enduring nomadic traditions provide a backdrop for a culinary journey that is both diverse and deeply rooted in heritage (Sandybayev, 2019).

Gastronomic tourism caters to travelers seeking a balance between fulfilling basic culinary needs and enjoying enriching food experiences that leave lasting impressions. According to Aljanova et al., (2016) this type of tourism includes visiting notable locations,

participating in traditions, and sampling local cuisine. It accommodates diverse interests, from exploring countries with deep culinary traditions to attending vibrant food festivals like Ireland's Oyster Festival, Munich's Oktoberfest, or France's Beaujolais Nouveau. These experiences highlight the cultural and sensory appeal of gastronomy in global travel.

Kazakhstan's gastronomic scene is a tapestry woven from various ethnic influences, including Kazakh, Russian, Korean, Uighur, and Uzbek cuisines, among others. Traditional Kazakh dishes such as beshbarmak, kazy, and boursaks highlight the pastoral heritage and nomadic lifestyle of the Kazakh people, emphasizing the importance of meat and dairy in their diet. The contemporary culinary landscape in urban centers like Almaty and Nur-Sultan showcases a fusion of these traditional elements with modern culinary techniques, creating an innovative and dynamic food culture (Sezgin et al., 2022).

The current state of gastronomic tourism in Kazakhstan is one of rapid development and growing international interest. According to recent statistics, Kazakhstan welcomed over 1 million international tourists in 2023, a significant portion of whom expressed a keen interest in the country's culinary offerings. The government and private sector are increasingly investing in promoting Kazakhstan as a gastronomic destination, with initiatives aimed at enhancing food-related experiences and infrastructure (Sadykova, 2019). Food markets like Almaty's Green Bazaar provide a sensory feast of fresh produce and local specialties, while food festivals and immersive experiences such as yurt stays and cooking classes offer deeper connections with Kazakh traditions and hospitality (Tagmanov et al., 2024). The interplay between food and tourism is vital, as it enhances a destination's appeal and attracts visitors from diverse regions (Au & Law, 2002). Authentic and distinctive cuisine not only draws tourists but also offers them an immersive cultural experience, linking the flavors of a destination to its historical and cultural heritage. Culinary tourism enables travelers to connect deeply with the essence of a place, making their visit both memorable and culturally enriching (Nafarin & Oktavio, 2021).

This article explores the potential for Kazakhstan's traditional food to drive tourism development. Through a focus on culinary heritage, Kazakhstan can become a unique and emerging player in global gastronomic tourism, offering tourists culturally rich experiences and fostering economic growth.

The exploration of traditional food as a catalyst for tourism development in Kazakhstan can be framed within the theoretical constructs of gastronomic tourism and cultural heritage. Gastronomic tourism, defined as travel that focuses on experiencing the local food and drink of a destination, plays a crucial role in enhancing tourist experiences and promoting local culture (Bramantyo et al., 2023). This concept is supported by the assumption that tourists are increasingly motivated by the desire to engage with authentic culinary experiences that

reflect the cultural identity of a region (Adam, 2024). The hypothesis that traditional foods can significantly influence tourist attraction and retention is grounded in the understanding that food serves as a medium for cultural expression and identity (Niedbala et al., 2020).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of traditional food in driving tourism, particularly in regions rich in cultural heritage. For instance, research conducted in Indonesia and Vietnam indicates that tourists' intentions to consume local food are positively influenced by their attitudes towards traditional cuisine and their perceived control over food choices (Lutz et al., 2019). This aligns with findings from Sabah and Selangor, where traditional food has been identified as a significant factor in attracting foreign tourists, thereby enhancing the tourism sector's growth (Kantureeva, 2018). Furthermore, Sukerti and Marsiti emphasize that culinary tourism not only increases tourist spending but also extends the tourism season, underscoring the economic potential of integrating traditional food into tourism strategies (Karandashev, 2024).

The theoretical framework of this study also incorporates the experience-economy theory, which posits that memorable experiences, such as those derived from culinary tourism, can enhance tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Niedbala et al., 2020). This theory is particularly relevant in the context of Kazakhstan, where traditional food can be leveraged to create unique and immersive experiences for visitors. The empirical evidence supports the notion that local food consumption is intrinsically linked to the overall tourist experience, as it fosters a deeper connection to the local culture and community (Niyazbekova et al., 2019).

Moreover, the role of traditional food in tourism is not merely economic; it also encompasses social and cultural dimensions. The preservation of culinary heritage is vital for maintaining cultural identity, particularly in regions undergoing rapid globalization. The integration of traditional food into tourism strategies can thus serve as a means of cultural preservation while simultaneously promoting sustainable tourism practices (Saparbekova et al., 2015). This dual focus on economic and cultural sustainability is essential for the long-term viability of tourism in Kazakhstan, particularly as the country seeks to position itself as a unique destination in the global tourism market.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Interventionary studies involving humans and others require ethical approval must list the authority that provided approval and the corresponding ethical approval code. This study employs a qualitative approach to explore how traditional Kazakh cuisine can enhance tourism development in Kazakhstan. A literature review systematically explores and evaluates academic and non-academic sources relevant to a specific topic or research question. A comprehensive review of academic articles, books, and credible online sources was

conducted to examine the geographical, climatic, and cultural factors influencing Kazakh cuisine. Key sources included works on Central Asian culinary traditions, ethnographic studies, and reports on Kazakhstan's tourism industry.

The initial step involved defining the research topic and objectives, focusing on how Kazakh cuisine could contribute to tourism development. Key subtopics such as geographic and climatic influences, preservation techniques, ethnic cultural impacts, and the uniqueness of Kazakh cuisine were identified to structure the article. Also, it involved key search words such as "gastronomic tourism in Kazakhstan", "culinary tourism in Kazakhstan", and "traditional food". For the second step, a comprehensive review of relevant sources was conducted, including academic articles, books, reports, and online resources. These sources provided insights into Kazakh culinary traditions, environmental and cultural influences, and global trends in gastronomic tourism. Information was categorized under thematic subheadings, ensuring a clear framework for the article. The review only includes studies relevant to the search terms, while those unrelated to the paper's focus were excluded. The third step ensured that the collected data was critically analyzed to identify key themes and connections. Each subheading was addressed in detail, discussing factors shaping Kazakh cuisine and its potential for tourism. The findings were supported with credible citations, and comparisons with successful culinary tourism models were integrated to provide actionable insights.

In the context of this article, the literature review serves as a foundation for exploring how traditional Kazakh cuisine can contribute to tourism development. It examines diverse sources, including studies on Kazakhstan's geography, climate, and cultural diversity, as well as global trends in gastronomic tourism. By synthesizing information from these sources, the literature review provides a holistic understanding of how food traditions can enhance Kazakhstan's appeal as a tourist destination.

"In the process of writing this article, a total of 27 scholarly articles were reviewed and analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of traditional Kazakh cuisine in enhancing the country's tourism potential. Out of this 27 articles, 8 articles were related with the keyword "gastronomy tourism in Kazakhstan" and remaining 19 articles were related with the keyword "traditional food of Kazakhstan". As a result, a total of 27 relevant sources were relevant for this study.

A literature review goes beyond summarizing previous works by critically analyzing them to uncover connections, inconsistencies, and areas for further research. It situates the study within the broader academic context, ensuring it builds upon and enhances existing knowledge. For this article, the literature review includes key themes such as: (1) The influence of geographic and climatic conditions on the development of Kazakh cuisine; (2) The

role of preservation techniques in shaping traditional food practices; (3) The influence of ethnic cultures on the development of Kazakhstan's culinary heritage; and (4) Insights into how global food tourism models can be applied to Kazakhstan.

Through this structured approach, the literature review underscores the potential of Kazakh cuisine to attract international travellers and positions it as a vital aspect of the country's tourism strategy. This comprehensive methodology ensures a well-rounded analysis of how traditional Kazakh cuisine can be effectively utilized to develop tourism, positioning Kazakhstan as a unique and competitive destination in the global market.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Geographical Factors on Kazakh Cuisine

The long cultural history of the Kazakh people has influenced the characteristic types of products, the way they are prepared, the variety of dishes and recipes, and the preference or limitation of certain types of foods. The customs of meals and their etiquette, related to food consumption, are curious and diverse. Geographical factors have played a significant role in creating the national cuisine of the people of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan, situated at the heart of Eurasia, is predominantly located in Asia with a smaller portion in Europe. Kazakhstan, the ninth largest country globally, boasts a diverse and expansive geography that significantly influences its culture, agriculture, and even its potential for gastronomic tourism. Kazakhstan, encompassing 2,724,900 square kilometres, extends from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Altay Mountains in the east and from the West Siberian Plains in the north to the Central Asian deserts in the south. Kazakhstan is the largest landlocked nation globally. Kazakhstan's natural environment is remarkably diverse and full of surprising contrasts. The country's landscape is an impressive blend of varied terrains. (Aktymbaeva & Trifonova, 2021). The main types of terrain in Kazakhstan are: deserts, semi-deserts, steppes, mountains, and forests.



Figure 1. Geography of Kazakhstan

The location of the southern regions of the plains of Kazakhstan in relatively low latitudes gives their climate an arid character, leading to the development of desert landscapes in the south. To the north, aridity decreases, and in the main, plain areas of Kazakhstan, the desert climate and landscapes transition to semi-desert, then steppe, and in the far north, forest-steppe landscapes (Issanova & Abuduwaili, 2017).

Kazakhstan's diverse geographic landscape including deserts, semi-deserts, steppes, mountains, and forests has profoundly shaped its traditional cuisine. This varied terrain has influenced the ingredients available, cooking techniques, and food preservation methods that characterize Kazakh dishes today (Sala & Deom, 2013). Here's how each of these geographic features has contributed to Kazakhstan's culinary traditions:

- a. **Deserts and Semi-Deserts:** The arid deserts and semi-deserts of Kazakhstan have led to the development of food preservation techniques essential for long journeys and harsh climates. In these dry regions, nomadic Kazakhs historically relied on methods like drying, salting, and fermenting to preserve food. This need for durability is evident in staples such as kurt (dried cheese balls), kazy (a type of dried horse meat sausage) which are nutrient-dense and long-lasting, zhal-zhaya (a traditional Kazakh specialty made from horse meat), and irimshik, a type of traditional Kazakh cheese, are key components of the nation's culinary heritage. These preserved foods became ideal for nomads traveling through Kazakhstan's vast and sparsely vegetated deserts.
- b. **Steppes:** The expansive steppes of Kazakhstan are well-suited to livestock grazing, fostering a meat- and dairy-centered cuisine. Livestock, particularly sheep, horses, and cattle, thrive in these open grasslands, which historically supported the Kazakh people's nomadic herding lifestyle. Consequently, traditional Kazakh cuisine features an abundance of meat and dairy products, including dishes like beshbarmak (boiled meat served with noodles) and beverages such as kumis (fermented mare's milk), shubat (fermented camel's milk), ayran (a traditional yogurt-based drink made from cow, sheep, or goat milk), and talqan (a traditional Kazakh food made from roasted and ground grains). These staples are rooted in a pastoral lifestyle, with dishes that are hearty, simple, and able to sustain energy during physically demanding activities.
- c. **Mountains:** Kazakhstan's mountainous regions, particularly the Tien Shan and Altai ranges, provide unique wild ingredients and have influenced certain cooking techniques. Mountain forests supply wild herbs, berries, and mushrooms, which are sometimes incorporated into traditional dishes. The mountainous climate is also favorable for certain preservation methods, like smoking and air-drying, which help extend the shelf life of meat and dairy products. Additionally, in these cooler areas, herders often rely on preserved meats that sustain them during long winters.

d. **Forests and Woodlands:** In Kazakhstan's limited forested areas, particularly in the northern regions, wild game, fish from nearby rivers, and berries add variety to the Kazakh diet. For example, the abundance of wild berries and herbs has allowed Kazakhs to incorporate natural flavors into some dishes and beverages like compote (a fruit drink) and many types of fruit jams. These ingredients contribute subtle but distinctive tastes that reflect Kazakhstan's biodiversity, although the diet remains heavily centered around meat and dairy.

Kazakhstan's geography has led to a cuisine that is resourceful and adaptable, emphasizing preservation, high-energy foods, and a reliance on pastoral ingredients. This connection between the land and traditional Kazakh food reflects a deep respect for nature, practicality, and the historical nomadic lifestyle that has shaped the country's culinary heritage (Issanova & Abuduwaili, 2017).

### **Climatic Factors on Kazakh Cuisine**

Kazakhstan lies in the southern part of the temperate climatic zone. The country goes through four clearly defined seasons (summer, autumn, winter, and spring). During winter, severe Siberian frosts are predominant. During summer, tropical air masses originating from Kazakhstan and Central Asia dominate the region. The significant temperature variations between summer and winter further accentuate the continental character of the climate (Sala & Deom, 2013)

The vast territory of Kazakhstan, with its diverse terrain, the amount of absorbed and reflected radiation, and atmospheric circulation patterns, influences the air temperature and temperature regime. The entire country experiences significant temperature fluctuations both daily and annually. In the plains and low mountainous areas, average annual and monthly temperatures vary from north to south, while in high mountainous regions, they change with elevation above sea level. Kazakhstan spans multiple climatic zones, each influencing local agriculture, biodiversity, and human activities. The country's climate is primarily continental, characterized by significant temperature variations between seasons (Admc, 2019)

Kazakhstan's climatic conditions, marked by extreme temperatures and seasonal variations, have had a profound impact on its traditional cuisine. With cold winters, hot summers, and relatively low precipitation across much of the country, Kazakh cuisine developed in ways that prioritize sustenance, preservation, and resilience to weather conditions (Wang et al., 2022). Here's how these climatic factors have shaped traditional Kazakh food:



- a. **Harsh Winters:** Kazakhstan experiences long, cold winters with temperatures that can plunge well below freezing, especially in the northern and central regions. These harsh conditions have influenced the Kazakh diet by creating a need for calorie-dense, warming foods to provide energy and sustain people through the winter months. Meat, particularly from livestock such as horses, sheep, and cattle, became a dietary staple due to its high protein and fat content, which helps generate warmth and maintain strength in cold weather. Dishes like beshbarmak, made with boiled meat and noodles, are hearty and filling, and naryn, a traditional Kazakh dish made from the meat broth of beshbarmak, incorporates extremely thin noodles mixed with finely chopped meat, and sorpa, a traditional Kazakh broth made from the meat of sheep, beef, or horse along with bones, quyrdaq, a traditional Kazakh dish made from fried meat, usually lamb, beef, or horse, combined with offal and various organs, providing essential nutrients and warmth during colder months. To prepare for winter, traditional Kazakh communities developed preservation techniques that allow food to last for extended periods without refrigeration. Meat was commonly dried, smoked, or salted, creating foods like kazy (horsemeat sausage), zhal-zhaya (a traditional Kazakh delicacy made from horse meat), sary mai (a traditional Kazakh dairy product which is a type of clarified butter made from cow's milk), kurt (dried cheese balls), and zhent (a traditional Kazakh dessert Made from a mixture of millet or wheat flour, butter, sugar, and sometimes nuts or dried fruits) that could be stored for months and provide a steady food supply during winter when fresh resources were scarce.
- b. **Hot Summers:** The summer months in Kazakhstan can be hot and dry, especially in southern and western regions where temperatures often exceed 30°C (86°F). In this arid climate, hydration is essential, and beverages like kumis (fermented mare's milk), shubat (fermented camel's milk), and compote (a fruit drink) became popular. These drinks not only offer hydration but also provide beneficial nutrients and probiotics, making them ideal for the hot season. Fermentation of milk into kumis and shubat also helps preserve dairy, which would otherwise spoil quickly in summer heat, enabling pastoral communities to make use of surplus milk (Нурлыбаев et al., 2023).
- c. **Low Precipitation and Limited Agriculture:** Kazakhstan's climate features low annual precipitation, making it challenging to sustain large-scale agriculture. As a result, Kazakh cuisine developed with a strong focus on livestock products over plant-based ingredients. Grains, however, such as wheat and millet, were grown and became important staples in the form of noodles and bread to accompany meat-based dishes. Boursaks (small, fried bread), tandyr nan (a traditional Kazakh bread), and shelvek (a traditional Kazakh flatbread) are popular, as they are easy to make and can be stored for extended periods (Abishov et al., 2024).

- d. **Seasonal Eating Patterns:** The extreme climate has fostered a reliance on seasonal eating. During spring and summer, when livestock give birth and produce more milk, there is a greater availability of fresh dairy products. This seasonality led to the creation of dishes like ayran (a cold, yogurt-based drink) and other fresh dairy products that could be enjoyed during warmer months. Conversely, in winter, the diet is heavier in preserved and cooked meats that can sustain through the season's low temperatures (Kemang et al., 2023).

Kazakhstan's climate has led to a traditional cuisine that is practical, resourceful, and centered on meat, dairy, and preserved foods. These culinary adaptations reflect a deep relationship between Kazakh people and their environment, where food choices and preparation methods are aligned with the demands of a rugged, often extreme climate. This climate-driven cuisine has not only sustained the Kazakh people historically but has also become a defining feature of the nation's food culture (Alymbaeva, 2020).

### **Preservation Techniques of Kazakh Cuisine**

In traditional Kazakh cuisine, preservation techniques were essential for sustaining the nomadic lifestyle and adapting to Kazakhstan's extreme climate. With long, harsh winters and limited agricultural resources, Kazakh people developed various methods to store food for extended periods, ensuring a steady supply of sustenance (Amirbayeva et al., 2023). These preservation techniques, which mainly focus on meat and dairy products, have become integral to Kazakh culinary identity. These methods have been passed down through generations, highlighting the ingenuity of Kazakh people in adapting to their environment. Here's an overview of key preservation methods in traditional Kazakh cuisine:

- a. **Drying:** Drying is one of the oldest preservation methods used in Kazakhstan, particularly for dairy products and meat. The arid climate of certain regions facilitates the drying process, allowing foods to be stored for extended periods without spoilage. Meat from horses, sheep, and cattle was cut into strips, salted, and left to dry in the open air or in well-ventilated places. This process created durable, lightweight products like kazy (a type of dried sausage made from horse meat and fat), before being stuffed into natural casings, kazy commonly seasoned with garlic, pepper, and salt, and dried, resulting in a flavorful and shelf-stable product and karta (dried horsemeat) that could last for months and were easy to transport. Dried meat is still highly valued in Kazakh culture and is often eaten as a snack or added to hearty stews and soups (Tagmanov & Ulema, 2023).
- Dairy products were also dried, especially during peak milking seasons. For example, kurt, a small, hardened ball of dried cheese, is made from fermented dairy that has been shaped,

salted, and air-dried. This product is nutrient-dense and provides a portable source of protein and calcium, ideal for nomadic journeys. (Tagmanov et al., 2024)

- b. **Fermentation:** Fermentation is a cornerstone of dairy preservation in Kazakh cuisine. It is a crucial technique for preserving dairy products and vegetables, providing essential nutrients during the winter months. Enhancing the flavor and nutritional value, this process also prolongs the shelf life of food (Bissenbayeva et al., 2013). Fermentation is a cornerstone of dairy preservation in Kazakh cuisine. Fermented dairy products such as kymyz (fermented mare's milk) and shubat (fermented camel's milk) are staples that were essential for hydration and nutrition, especially during the hot summer months. Fermentation increases the shelf life of milk, while also adding probiotics and beneficial enzymes that support digestion. Other fermented dairy products, like ayran (a yogurt-like drink) and irimshik (a soft, curd-like cheese), were often consumed fresh or dried for storage. Fermented dairy has a strong place in Kazakh culture, serving not only as a dietary staple but also as an expression of traditional hospitality.

Fermented vegetables play a unique but significant role in Kazakh cuisine, adding diversity to a diet traditionally centered on meat and dairy. Due to Kazakhstan's cold winters and limited growing season, vegetables were historically scarce and thus less prominent than other staples. However, fermentation offered a way to preserve vegetables and introduce new flavors, textures, and nutrients into the Kazakh diet. Today, fermented vegetables are a popular accompaniment to many meals, often served as side dishes that complement rich, meat-based dishes and provide a contrast of flavors. For example, sauerkraut, or pickled cabbage, is one of the most common fermented vegetables in Kazakhstan. The cabbage is salted and left to ferment for several days, developing a tangy flavor that pairs well with hearty meat dishes like beshbarmak and grilled meats. Sauerkraut's probiotic content and sour taste add digestive benefits and brighten the flavors of the meal. Another popular fermented vegetable is pickled cucumber which made by immersing the vegetables in brine, which helps them stay crisp and flavorful over long periods. Pickled cucumbers add a refreshing, sour note to meals and are a popular accompaniment to plov (pilaf) and laghman (noodle dishes), as well as grilled meats. They add crunch and acidity, balancing out the rich, savory flavors typical of Kazakh meals. Though not as commonly seen, other vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, and beets are also sometimes fermented or pickled in Kazakh cuisine. Mixed vegetable pickles, often seasoned with garlic, dill, and other herbs, bring a variety of colors and flavors to the table (Tagmanov & Ulema, 2024).

- c. **Smoking:** Smoking is a preservation technique that enhances the flavor and extends the shelf life of meat products. The process involves curing meat with salt and then smoking it over low heat, creating a smoky aroma and taste. The smoking process not only adds flavor

but also prevents bacteria growth, making it possible to keep meat for extended periods. The cold, dry climate of Kazakhstan's mountainous and steppe regions was ideal for smoking meat without risk of spoilage.

Smoked meats were considered valuable and reserved for special occasions or long journeys, providing energy and a robust flavor that complemented the simpler staples in the Kazakh diet. This method is still used today and contributes to the unique taste profile of traditional Kazakh meat dishes. Such as, basturma is a type of smoked and dried beef, similar to pastrami. The meat is seasoned with spices, cured, and smoked, resulting in a savory product that can be sliced and eaten as a snack or added to dishes. Also, shuzhuk is a traditional smoked sausage made from ground horsemeat, sometimes mixed with beef or lamb. The meat is seasoned with salt, pepper, and other spices, then packed into casings and smoked. This sausage is a popular accompaniment to meat-based dishes, and its smoky, spiced flavor makes it a favorite in both rural and urban areas of Kazakhstan. While horsemeat is the most traditional choice, smoked lamb and beef are also enjoyed in Kazakhstan, particularly in regions where these meats are more prevalent. The meat is salted, sometimes seasoned with garlic and pepper, and smoked to create flavorful cuts that can be served on their own or as part of a larger dish like beshbarmak. Smoked lamb or beef provides a hearty, satisfying flavor and can be stored for extended periods, making it ideal for Kazakhstan's nomadic heritage (Vinokurov, 2018).

- d. **Salting:** Salting is used extensively to preserve meats and fish, particularly in regions with access to large bodies of water like the Caspian Sea. The natural preservative, salt, works by extracting moisture and preventing the growth of bacteria. Meat would be cut into pieces, heavily salted, and sometimes left to cure in its brine, enhancing flavor and shelf life (Wang et al., 2022). For example, salted fish, especially sturgeon and carp, is often salted and dried for storage. This method allows fish to be kept for long periods and rehydrated when needed for cooking. Zhaya is salted and cured horse meat, typically consumed as a delicacy during special occasions. The meat is seasoned with salt and spices, then left to cure for weeks, resulting in a tender and flavorful product (Vinokurov, 2018).

Preserved foods play a vital role in Kazakh cuisine, providing essential sustenance during the winter months and contributing to the country's rich culinary heritage. These foods are not only practical but also deeply intertwined with cultural traditions and social customs. Drying, salting, smoking, fermenting, and fat storage each played a critical role in ensuring food security and resilience. These techniques are still valued in Kazakh cuisine today, symbolizing the resourcefulness and rich heritage of Kazakh food culture. (Mkwizu & Kimeto, 2024).

Many preserved foods hold cultural significance, often associated with traditional Kazakh celebrations and hospitality. Sharing preserved foods with guests is a common practice, reflecting the nomadic values of generosity and community. Traditional methods of food preservation are taught from generation to generation, preserving not only the food itself but also the cultural knowledge and skills required for these practices (Nur et al., 2024). Traditional preservation techniques, such as drying, fermentation, smoking, and salting are not only crucial for maintaining Kazakhstan's culinary heritage but also offer a unique narrative that could be used to develop restaurant offerings. Integrating these ancient food preservation techniques into modern restaurant concepts would create immersive dining experiences that showcase the authentic flavors and historical ingenuity of Kazakh cuisine. Restaurants can promote these techniques through open kitchens, live demonstrations, and interactive workshops that educate guests about the traditional processes behind dishes like kazy, kurt, and beshbarmak. By highlighting the sustainability and cultural significance of these traditional preservation methods, food establishments can stand out in the competitive tourism industry, appeal to curious travelers, and contribute to the preservation and revitalization of Kazakhstan's rich gastronomic legacy (Mkwizu, 2024).

### **Influence of Different Ethnic Cultures to Kazakh Cuisine**

Kazakh cuisine is richly layered with influences from various ethnic groups, reflecting the country's diverse cultural history and its location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. With over 130 ethnic groups residing in Kazakhstan today, including Kazakhs, Russians, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Tatars, and Koreans, the nation's culinary landscape is a vibrant tapestry of flavors, ingredients, and techniques (Turgambayeva, 2023). Here's a look at how some of these ethnic cultures have shaped and enriched Kazakh cuisine:

- a. **Russian Influence:** Russian culture has significantly impacted Kazakh cuisine, introducing ingredients, flavors, and dishes that are now widely enjoyed across Kazakhstan. Common Russian dishes like borsch (beet soup), pelmeni (dumplings), golubtsy (minced meat or vegetables wrapped in boiled cabbage leaves), and blini (pancakes) have become part of Kazakh households and restaurants. Russian pickling traditions also brought a variety of fermented vegetables, including sauerkraut, pickled cucumbers, and tomatoes, which are enjoyed as tangy accompaniments to many Kazakh meals. Russian tea culture has blended with Kazakh hospitality traditions, and the custom of drinking black tea with sweets has become a staple in Kazakh households (Yasin & Andjarwati, 2024).
- b. **Uzbek Influence:** Uzbekistan, as Kazakhstan's southern neighbor, has had a significant culinary influence, particularly through shared dishes like plov (rice pilaf) and samsa (savory pastries). Uzbek plov, a fragrant rice dish cooked with lamb, carrots, and spices, has become a favorite across Kazakhstan, often served at weddings and large gatherings.

- Uzbek samsa triangular pastries filled with meat, potatoes, or pumpkin are commonly sold in markets and bakeries in Kazakhstan, providing a popular and flavorful street food option. Uzbeks also introduced vibrant spice combinations, enhancing the flavors in Kazakh dishes with the use of cumin, coriander, and black pepper (Maikanov et al., 2020).
- c. **Uighur Influence:** The Uighur ethnic group, primarily from the Xinjiang region of China, has contributed unique flavors and dishes to Kazakh cuisine, especially in the southeastern areas. Uighur cuisine introduced dishes like laghman (hand-pulled noodles served with stir-fried vegetables and meat), which is now enjoyed nationwide. Known for its chewy texture and aromatic spices, laghman has become a beloved dish in Kazakh households and restaurants alike. Uighur spices and techniques, like the use of chili peppers, garlic, and soy sauce, have added depth and diversity to Kazakh cuisine, bringing influences from Central Asia's Silk Road traditions (Alymbaeva, 2020).
  - d. **Tatar Influence:** The Tatar community, with roots in Russia, has brought pastries, dairy-based desserts, and dumplings into Kazakh cuisine. Tatar chak-chak, a sweet made of fried dough pieces coated in honey, is a popular treat often served at celebrations. Additionally, Tatar manti (large steamed dumplings filled with meat or vegetables) are commonly prepared in Kazakhstan, with variations to suit local tastes. Tatars also introduced sour cream as a garnish, which has since become a popular addition to many Kazakh soups and stews (Saparbekova et al., 2015).
  - e. **Korean Influence:** Kazakhstan is home to a significant Korean diaspora, and Korean flavors have become part of Kazakh food culture, especially in the form of morkovka (spicy pickled carrot salad). Known locally as "Korean carrots," morkovka is made with julienned carrots, garlic, vinegar, and spices, resulting in a sweet, spicy, and tangy side dish that pairs well with many traditional Kazakh meals. Korean salads and pickled vegetables are often found in Kazakh markets and are enjoyed as refreshing accompaniments to meat-based dishes. Korean fermentation techniques have also influenced Kazakh approaches to preserving vegetables, enhancing the diversity of pickled options available (Marver-Kwon & Kangas, 2024).
  - f. **Dungan Influence:** The Dungan people, an ethnic group of Chinese Muslim descent, have introduced unique flavors and dishes to Kazakh cuisine, particularly in regions where they have settled. Dungan-style noodle dishes, soups, and stir-fries often incorporate an array of fresh vegetables, spices, and chili peppers, adding bold flavors and textures to Kazakh meals. Dungan cuisine in Kazakhstan include: laghman, manpar (pieces of boiled dough added to a thick, rich broth with vegetables), manty, and aromatic funchosa (glass noodle). Dungan food is known for its freshness and use of ingredients like coriander, cilantro, and

green onions, which add aromatic and herbaceous elements that are distinct from other Central Asian influences. (Saparbekova et al., 2015).

- g. **Middle Eastern and Persian Influence:** Due to Kazakhstan's location along ancient trade routes, influences from Persian and Middle Eastern cuisines have also left their mark. The use of dried fruits, nuts, and spices in dishes echoes the culinary traditions of Persian and Middle Eastern cultures. These ingredients add richness and variety to Kazakh dishes, and some modern recipes even incorporate Persian-inspired combinations, like lamb with raisins or pilaf with almonds and apricots, for special occasions.

These influences have not only introduced new flavors and dishes to Kazakh cuisine but have also fostered a spirit of cultural exchange and creativity, blending traditional Kazakh flavors with techniques and tastes from other ethnic groups. As a result, Kazakh cuisine today is a reflection of its diverse cultural history, with each group contributing unique elements that have enriched the nation's culinary heritage.

**Table 1. Various Ethnic Groups of Kazakhstan**

Ethnic Group	Influential Dishes	Key Techniques/Ingredients	Cultural Contribution
<b>Kazakh</b>	Beshbarmak, Kazy, Quyrdaq	Drying, Smoking, Fermentation	Nomadic traditions and pastoral heritage
<b>Russian</b>	Borsch, Pelmeni, Blini	Pickling, Dairy processing	Introduction of fermented vegetables, tea culture
<b>Uzbek</b>	Plov, Samsa	Spicing, Stewing techniques	Flavorful rice dishes, vibrant spice blends
<b>Uighur</b>	Laghman	Hand-pulled noodles, stir-frying	Unique noodle preparations and aromatic spices
<b>Tatar</b>	Chak-chak, Manti	Dough-based sweets, steaming	Sweet treats and dumpling techniques
<b>Korean</b>	Morkovka (pickled carrots)	Fermentation of vegetables	Spicy, tangy side dishes, innovative pickling

As shown in Table 1, various ethnic groups of Kazakhstan have profoundly shaped its culinary landscape. Indigenous Kazakh dishes like beshbarmak, kazy, and quyrdaq reflect traditional nomadic techniques such as drying, smoking, and fermenting, while Russian, Uzbek, Uighur, Tatar, and Korean influences have each introduced unique flavors and preparation methods, creating a rich and varied food culture. This fusion of traditions not only deepens the country's culinary landscape but also boosts its attractiveness as a unique destination for gastronomic tourism.

These influences have not only introduced new flavors and dishes to Kazakh cuisine but have also fostered a spirit of cultural exchange and creativity, blending traditional Kazakh flavors with techniques and tastes from other ethnic groups. As a result, Kazakh cuisine today

is a reflection of its diverse cultural history, with each group contributing unique elements that have enriched the nation's culinary heritage (Turgambayeva, 2023).

### **Kazakh Cuisine**

The history of Kazakh cuisine is a fascinating journey that reflects the diverse cultural, geographical, and historical influences that have shaped Kazakhstan over centuries. From its nomadic origins to the modern culinary landscape, Kazakh cuisine has evolved through interactions with various ethnic groups, the impact of trade routes like the Silk Road, and adaptations to the country's diverse climates and landscapes (Sandybayev, 2016).

Kazakh cuisine is deeply rooted in the history, geography, and cultural practices of the Kazakh people, embodying the country's nomadic heritage and its geographic position as a bridge between Europe and Asia. From its nomadic origins to the modern culinary landscape, Kazakh cuisine has evolved through interactions with various ethnic groups, the impact of trade routes like the Silk Road, and adaptations to the country's diverse climates and landscapes. This unique cuisine emphasizes hearty, flavorful dishes made with ingredients that reflect Kazakhstan's steppe landscape and the livestock-centered way of life historically practiced by its inhabitants. While meat, dairy, and bread are foundational elements of Kazakh cuisine, the food culture is also enriched by influences from neighboring cultures, resulting in a diverse and flavorful culinary landscape.

Kazakh cuisine can be categorized as follows:

- a. **Meat-Based Dishes:** Meat, especially lamb, beef, and horsemeat, is central to Kazakh cuisine and reflects the country's pastoral heritage. Some of the most beloved Kazakh dishes are meat-based, including:
  - a) **Beshbarmak:** Known as the national dish of Kazakhstan, beshbarmak is a celebratory meal made from boiled meat (often lamb or horsemeat) served over wide, flat noodles and garnished with onions and broth. Traditionally eaten with the hands, beshbarmak symbolizes hospitality and is served at family gatherings, weddings, and other important events;
  - b) **Kazy and Shuzhuk:** These are traditional horsemeat sausages seasoned with salt, pepper, and garlic, then smoked or dried. Kazy and shuzhuk are often served as appetizers or sliced as part of a larger meal and are a symbol of Kazakh cultural heritage;
  - c) **Quyrdaq:** It is a traditional Kazakh dish made from fried meat, usually lamb, beef, or horse, combined with offal and various organs. Its name originates from the word meaning "to fry." Traditionally, it is made from the lungs, liver, neck, brisket, heart, kidneys, and intestines of freshly slaughtered livestock. It's a hearty and flavorful dish that is deeply rooted in Kazakh culture, often served as a warm, comforting meal during gatherings and celebrations;
  - and 4) **Syrne:** It is a slow-cooked stew, typically prepared with lamb or mutton, along with an assortment of vegetables and spices.



- b. **Dairy Products:** In Kazakh culture, "white foods" (also referred to as "aq tamak") hold a special place, symbolizing purity, hospitality, and abundance. These foods, predominantly dairy products, are integral to the traditional Kazakh diet and carry deep cultural significance, reflecting the nomadic heritage of the Kazakh people. Fermented dairy products are particularly prominent, both for their nutritional value and their long shelf life:
- a) Kymyz: A fermented drink made from mare's milk, kymyz is slightly tangy and mildly alcoholic, prized for its refreshing taste and health benefits;
  - b) Shubat: Similar to kumis, shubat is a fermented drink made from camel's milk and is a traditional beverage among Kazakhs in desert regions;
  - c) Ayran: A tangy, yogurt-like drink made from cow's milk, often enjoyed as a refreshing accompaniment to meat dishes, especially during the warmer months;
  - d) Kaymak: It is a rich, creamy dairy product, holds a special place in the culinary traditions of Kazakhstan. Often described as a type of clotted cream or thick sour cream, Kaymak is beloved for its luxurious texture and mildly tangy flavor. It is an essential component of many traditional Kazakh dishes and is enjoyed in various forms, from a simple spread on bread to a key ingredient in festive meals; and
  - e) Kurt: It is a type of dried cheese made from curdled milk. This traditional dairy product, which takes the form of dried curds, has been a staple food for the Kazakh people for centuries. It is a testament to the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the Kazakh nomads, who developed this food as a way to preserve dairy products for long journeys and during harsh winters.

Kazakh cuisine is especially prominent during celebrations and special events, where food plays a central role in expressing hospitality and cultural pride. Dishes like beshbarmak are reserved for important gatherings, while foods like boursak, kazy, and kymyz are commonly served to honor guests and mark festive occasions. During holidays, such as Nauryz (the Kazakh New Year), families prepare an array of traditional dishes, symbolizing abundance, unity, and prosperity. Nauryz Kozhe, traditionally prepared during this festival, is a dish that embodies these themes of renewal and abundance. This dish holds a special place in Kazakh culture as it symbolizes renewal, prosperity, and the hope for a fruitful year ahead. Nauryz Kozhe is more than just a culinary tradition; it is a cultural emblem that reflects the values, beliefs, and history of the Kazakh people (Amirbayeva et al., 2023).

Nauryz Kozhe is a traditional dish that is prepared in every household during the Nauryz festival as a symbol of abundance for the coming year. According to folk tradition, it must include at least seven different ingredients and the number of ingredients can be increased while keeping them in odd numbers. Specially preserved parts of the winter slaughter (such as kazy, karty, shuzhyk, etc.) are also added. It is mainly prepared like wheat or millet porridge (briefly called Kozhe). Nauryz Kozhe is made from seven main ingredients, each representing

different aspects of life: water (life), meat (prosperity), salt (purity), grain (wealth), dairy (fertility), millet (joy), and fat (health). The number seven is considered sacred in many cultures, including Kazakh, and is believed to bring good fortune. The dish is a reflection of the Kazakhs' connection to nature and their reliance on its cycles for survival (Maikanov et al., 2020).

In recent years, Kazakh cuisine has evolved with influences from global culinary trends, modernizing the presentation and ingredients of traditional dishes while still honoring the essence of Kazakh food culture. Urban centers like Almaty and Nur-Sultan are now home to contemporary restaurants that blend traditional Kazakh elements with new cooking techniques and international flavors. However, the core elements of Kazakh cuisine meat, dairy, bread, and the values of hospitality and community remain integral, providing a taste of Kazakhstan's history and identity (Tagmanov et al., 2024).

Kazakh cuisine is a reflection of the nation's cultural heritage, geographic diversity, and nomadic past. It offers a blend of rich flavors and preservation techniques that have been adapted to Kazakhstan's vast landscapes and climatic conditions. The food culture is steeped in tradition and embodies the Kazakh spirit of hospitality, making it a crucial component of Kazakhstan's identity and a growing attraction for culinary tourism (Yasin & Andjarwati, 2024).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Kazakh cuisine is an embodiment of Kazakhstan's history, geography, climate, and cultural diversity, making it a powerful attraction for culinary tourism. Through this exploration, we see how geographic and climatic factors shaped traditional foods, from preservation techniques that adapted to the vast steppes and harsh climates to specific ingredients and methods born out of necessity and ingenuity. The landscape and climate encouraged practices like drying, fermenting, and smoking, which remain essential to Kazakh food culture today.

Kazakh cuisine also reflects a blend of various ethnic influences, with dishes like plov and manty bringing regional flavors to the country's culinary tapestry. These influences, alongside native Kazakh traditions, have created a cuisine that is both uniquely Kazakh and globally diverse. Traditional Kazakh dishes, like beshbarmak and kazy, carry the legacy of the nomadic lifestyle, emphasizing communal dining and hospitality, which hold universal appeal for travelers seeking authentic cultural experiences.

In developing Kazakhstan's tourism, traditional cuisine offers a significant opportunity to create immersive experiences that showcase the country's rich heritage. By promoting and preserving its traditional foods, Kazakhstan can attract food enthusiasts, cultural explorers, and those curious about Central Asian traditions. Continued investment in culinary tourism could turn Kazakh cuisine into a unique selling point, elevating Kazakhstan as an attractive destination where history, culture, and geography come together in every bite.

This study highlights the crucial role of traditional Kazakh cuisine in tourism development, offering key insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and the hospitality industry. By recognizing the deep connection between Kazakhstan's culinary traditions and cultural heritage, tourism authorities can promote culinary tourism through food festivals, gastronomic tours, and immersive cooking experiences to position traditional cuisine as a major attraction. For the hospitality industry, the findings suggest an opportunity to integrate traditional Kazakh dishes into restaurant menus, hotels, and tourism experiences to enhance cultural appeal and attract international visitors. Collaboration between local businesses, chefs, and tourism agencies can further elevate Kazakh cuisine, attracting both local and international visitors. Additionally, this study has academic implications, providing a foundation for further research on the intersection of food heritage and tourism development in Kazakhstan. Future research could build upon these results by investigating the economic contributions of culinary tourism, consumer behavior patterns, and successful marketing approaches to position Kazakhstan as a leading gastronomic destination. Highlighting its diverse culinary traditions would enable Kazakhstan to enhance its tourism industry while fostering long-term economic and cultural development.

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of traditional Kazakh cuisine in tourism development, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research primarily relies on secondary data sources, such as academic literature, reports, and online publications, which may not fully capture recent developments in Kazakhstan's gastronomic tourism sector. A more comprehensive study incorporating primary data, such as interviews with tourism experts, chefs, and tourists, would offer deeper insights. Additionally, the study focuses on qualitative analysis, meaning it lacks statistical data on the direct economic impact of culinary tourism in Kazakhstan.

Future research could include quantitative methods, such as surveys and economic assessments, to measure the financial contribution of traditional cuisine to the tourism industry. Addressing these limitations in future research could offer deeper insights into how Kazakh cuisine can be effectively promoted to boost tourism. Additionally, comparative studies with other countries that have successfully leveraged culinary tourism could offer strategic insights for enhancing Kazakhstan's position in the global market.

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