

The genesis of the “Black Sea Cuisine”.

The Black Sea has been the cradle of many civilizations, a historic melting pot of cultures, tribes, religions and ethnicities. On its beautiful shores people of different race and creed have toiled for millennia contributing decisively to the development of mankind.

Among other, the Black Sea was always a sea full of life and hosted a large variety of fish, from salmon to sturgeon, from turbot to bonito, from grey mullet to Black Sea anchovy: all constituted a first-class raw material that, together with the abundant products of the rich lands embracing the Black Sea shore-line, gave birth to a diversified, delicious regional cuisine that is second to none.

In this context, an initiative started in order to collect all common ingredients, spices and gastronomic traditions of centuries in order to systematically organize, present and promote the rich tastes, flavors and culinary traditions of the Black Sea; this effort was started by the *Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers of Russia (FRIO)*, with the contribution of experts from Bulgaria, Turkey and Ukraine. The first phase of the initiative was funded by the BSEC Organization through its “*Black Sea Project Promotion Facility*” (www.bsec-organization.org)

The objective was to build-up a coherent data base storing identified common dishes and local products with Geographical Indications, specific ingredients, spices and sauces, as a basis for the elaboration of the “*Black Sea Cuisine*” profile.

Some of the main results achieved so far are:

- More than 600 items have been identified and described. The relevant Data Base covers all of the Black Sea coastal area and relates to every littoral state (Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine).
- The *International Black Sea Cuisine Cluster (IBSCC)* was established to attract interested participants from restaurants, hotels, farms, manufacturers of regional products, aquaculture companies, wineries, tour operators and other small and medium-sized enterprises and civil society organizations in the region.
- A specially produced «*Black Sea Cuisine*» documentary film was awarded the First Prize in the Tourism category at the 2019 International Tour Film Festival.

The final objective is to formalize the “*Black Sea Cuisine*” profile as a particular and individual branch of world cuisines and reach for its recognition among the world’s top-15 most desirable cuisines. This will make the wider Black Sea region even more attractive for Tourism and Leisure.