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School food and the city

Chair Patricia Lysaght

Bio see Welcome 21 September

> **How can school food be tasty, healthy, popular, attractive and exemplary**

Báti Anikó

Réka Várkonyi-Nickel

Cultural and economic differences influence the type and quality of school food provided for children throughout Hungary. It makes a substantial contribution to children's total energy and nutritional intake. The possible health-deteriorating effects of nutrition, and one of its subforms, school food, is a widely-disputed topic among experts and consumers. Based on nutritional-health surveys of school cafeterias to date, the cafeteria in most cases did not meet required healthy dietary guidelines, either in terms of the conditions of dining or in terms of the amount and quality of the foods served. In practice, there is a lot of waste, an indication that children do not like the foods provided. Therefore, there are efforts being made amongst governments, schools and parents, to improve the nutritional value of school food.

These negative results formed a basis for the questions raised by the author in her research project, which has approached school food, cafeteria and meal habits, from the perspective of the ethnographic interpretation of food culture. This paper explores the social context of food practices in a primary school in the 20th district of Budapest (as part of a larger project) based on ethnographical research conducted in 2012–2014, and on a new nationwide one in 2018–2020(-2022).

The aim of the paper is to investigate the social embeddedness of the state-endorsed “healthy” diet programme, through a case study in Budapest compared with other settlements from Hungary, exploring the urban family food culture of children at selected sites, as well as their views and experiences of school cafeterias, the circumstances, mechanisms, and the results and problems of school meal programmes. The foodways research approach – which focused on eating, personal preferences, and the school and urban family food-culture of children – sought answers to questions about how the school canteen works,

Ghent, Liège and Namur), albeit with different degrees of success (sustainability, reaching target groups, obtaining a genuine co-operative mode, etc.). All were deeply integrated into broader left-liberal networks of urban reform associations (workers' education leagues, mutual aid societies, other co-operatives, etc.) and added an oft-forgotten alimentary side to an encompassing “progressist” approach to the de-proletarianisation of the working classes.

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how food practices are related to wider aspects of individual well-being, and the social culture of schools in the capital. The paper seeks an answer to the question of whether school meals can become a sustainable model contributing to the spread of healthy eating habits.

Anikó Báti, Ph.D. is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) since 2009. She received her Ph.D. in Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology from the Eötvös L. University, Budapest, in 2005. She has written three monographs and several scientific articles and papers, especially on food culture, and she is editor of *Ethnography*, a journal of the Hungarian Ethnographical Society. Her current research includes questions concerning recent foodways, lifestyle, and eating habits. She is leader of the interdisciplinary research group focused on school canteens in Hungary. The project is supported by the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund of Hungary.

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Mrs Réka Várkonyi-Nickel is a junior research fellow at the Institute of Ethnology of HAS since 2015. She received her Ph.D. in History from the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest in 2015. She has written a monograph and several scientific articles and papers, especially on everyday life and workers' lifestyle in North Hungarian industrial centres. She is now a member of the interdisciplinary research group focused on school canteens in Hungary. The project is supported by the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund of Hungary.

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> **Urban and rural attitudes toward food in a suburban town by Budapest**

Katalin Juhász

In 2019-2020, the interdisciplinary research project was launched by the Research Centre for the Humanities (Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Research Excellence) focusing on school canteens in Hungary. Csömör was also included in addition to several other school canteens in cities and in countryside towns. As a settlement of residents with Slovakian and German national backgrounds, Csömör's native inhabitants have kept their ethnical traditions (e.g. women born before 1925 wearing traditional ethnic costumes during their life, and still reserving it for younger generations; or families keeping livestock and tilling their vegetable garden). One of the reasons for this may be Csömör's location in Pest County, Budapest metropolitan area – thus not having a road-crossing with high traffic volumes and being able, therefore, to preserve the original town layout and street structure.

From the 1980s onwards the population doubled, reaching 9,671 in 2018, due to suburbanisation, and consisted mostly of families and individuals moving from Budapest to Csömör; consequently, at the present time, the coexistence of rural and urban culture and lifestyle can be observed.

Attitudes toward food and social events are well-represented examples of this dichotomy. The paper reviews and analyses the two types of culture detailing the rural and urban duality's correlation, the interaction through the cases of school catering, and the generational differences in eating habits of native inhabitants and newcomers.

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Her main fields of research are: present-day and urban ethnography (urban and contemporary folklore, folk revival and calendar customs); way of life; anthropology of the body (body care, hygiene, food); Hungarian history in folklore. She has published 14 books, about 100 articles and research papers.

Moreover, she has edited five thematic folk music records during which she also featured as a folk singer.

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> **Student food, good food? An analysis of the menus and healthy food policy of the Alma student restaurants in Leuven**

Laura Danckaert

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In February 2019, the Alma restaurants of KU Leuven (Leuven University, Belgium) celebrated their 65th birthday. This anniversary raised the question about how the menus in the student restaurants evolved in the previous decades, and more precisely how Alma's definition of a sound student meal changed through time. Offering a good and inexpensive meal was the most important objective when Alma was founded, in order to be able to serve the less well-off students as well. Over time, Alma's priorities evolved and in the early twenty-first century, the Alma offering had to meet the 'five G's', namely: Goed, Goedkoop, Gezond, Gemak and Genieten (Good, Cheap, Healthy, Convenient and Enjoyable).

This paper examines how the menu offerings in the Alma student restaurants evolved and examines to what extent and in which way aspects such as health and affordability were taken into account. This article is based on annual reports and the archives of Alma, articles in student magazines and newspapers, and the archives of Leuven University and some student organizations. Alma grew from