

**Interreg
Danube Region**



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Culinary Trail

**Culinary Trail of the Ethnic and Local Cuisine in the Danube Region-
project**

DRP0200312

Culinary trail International competition

Rules and evaluation criteria (ONLINE competition)

1. Competition information

Main aim of the competition is developing and implementing an international culinary competition that celebrates innovation and excellence in culinary heritage tourism.

The competition features two main categories:

1. **Frugal Gastronomes** – Showcasing creative and resourceful culinary solutions.
2. **Ethnic Gastronomes** – Highlighting sommeliers who specialise in local and ethnic food traditions.

The competition is structured as a **single-round selection**. Candidates participate by **completing an online form** that has been prepared in advance. This document describes the assessment criteria and lists the elements required in the online form.

The deadline for submitting applications is March 31, 2026.

2. Frugal Gastronomes – Showcasing creative and resourceful culinary solutions

Objective: Encourage resourcefulness and sustainable practices in frugal gastronomy.

Participants will create an innovative and resource-efficient dish concept that **serves as a prototype for an adaptable model aimed at minimising waste in restaurant kitchens**. This model will integrate zero-waste techniques, cost efficiency and sustainability, demonstrating how frugal gastronomy principles can be systematically applied in professional kitchen environments. The dish concept should demonstrate how culinary excellence can be achieved with limited resources while also being affordable, nutritious, and environmentally friendly.

The competition will be structured as a single-round selection.

2.1 Concept Proposal Submission

In order to participate in the competition, applicants submit a written proposal outlining their **dish concept**.

1. Dish Name & Concept:

- A brief description of the dish, its cultural or social significance, and how it aligns with zero waste and sustainable restaurant practices.
- Explanation of how the dish contributes to cost-efficient and waste-minimising kitchen operations.

2. Sustainability & Social Impact:

- Explanation of zero-waste strategies (e.g., using entire ingredients, repurposing scraps, fermentation, preservation),
- Ethical sourcing or social benefits (supporting local farmers)

3. Preparation Method:

Detailed steps on how the dish is made, highlighting techniques that maximize resources and reduce waste:

- **Upcycling Task** – How to transform a **common kitchen waste product** (e.g., stale bread, bruised fruit, leftover rice, meat) into a **new dish or ingredient**.
- **Creative Substitutions** – Suggest **how to replace expensive or rare ingredients** with more accessible, budget-friendly alternatives.

4. Ingredient List & Cost Estimate:

- The dish must be made using low-cost, locally available, or surplus (leftovers or extra) ingredients, with a maximum budget limit per portion.

5. Adaptability

- Contestants design a **universal, adaptable culinary model**. Core concept or preparation process of the competing dish should be adaptable across different types of ethnic cuisines or restaurant models. Competitors should focus on method flexibility, cultural versatility, and how the dish can serve as a scalable model, not just a one-off recipe.

Table 1: Selection criteria (submission concepts)

Criteria	Total max	Details
Dish Concept & Innovation	5	Creativity and uniqueness of the dish, alignment with frugal innovation

		principles.
Ingredient List & Cost Efficiency	5	Use of low-cost, locally available, or surplus ingredients, staying within budget limits.
Sustainability & Zero-Waste Approach	5	Clear explanation of waste reduction, ethical sourcing, and environmental impact.
Social Impact & Accessibility	5	How well the dish supports food accessibility, community involvement, or social benefits.
Potential for Standardization and Integration into a Franchising System	5	How well the dish can be standardized, efficiently reproduced, and implemented across multiple restaurant locations within a franchising system
Total	25	

2.2 Elements for Concept Proposal Submission Form – [ONLINE FORM](#)

Section 1: Participant Information

Team/Individual Name:	
Affiliation (e.g., restaurant, culinary school, freelance chef):	
Contact information:	

Section 2: Dish Proposal

Dish Name and Concept	
Concept Overview (max 300 words):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the dish? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What cultural or culinary tradition does it draw from? • How does this dish serve as a model for zero-waste, frugal gastronomy? • Why is it suitable for restaurant franchising? 	
<p>Sustainability & Social Impact (max 250 words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero-Waste Strategies Employed: <i>[Use of entire ingredients, fermentation, scrap repurposing, etc.]</i> • Social/environmental value (e.g., supports local farmers, food access) 	
<p>Preparation Method</p> <p>Step-by-step process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques that maximise efficiency and minimise waste • Upcycling task (e.g., stale bread, bruised fruit, rice) • Creative substitutions for rare/expensive ingredients 	
<p>Photo/video material</p> <p><i>[optional]</i></p>	

Ingredient List & Cost Estimate

Ingredient	Source (Local / Surplus / Upcycled / Purchased)	Quantity	Estimated cost	Waste-saving note

Section 3: Adaptability

[Describe how your dish model can be adapted across different ethnic cuisines or food establishments concepts. Explain how the preparation process (not just ingredients) can be standardised and localised, allowing each food and beverage establishments to customise flavours while maintaining the core frugal and zero-waste method.]

3. Ethnic Gastronomes – sommeliers specialising in ethnic and local culinary heritage

The Ethnic Gastronomes category focuses on the creation of a **wine list model** that highlights regional wines and supports local winemakers. This competition challenges sommeliers to craft a thoughtfully curated wine list that not only enhances the dining experience but also promotes sustainability and connects with the local tourism scene. It’s an opportunity to showcase how wine can tell the story of a place, blending tradition, innovation, and a deep appreciation for regional flavours. It may also include a brief profile of each winemaker, focusing on sustainable practices, heritage, or unique production methods, along with suggested food pairings from selected regional recipes.

3.1 Wine List Model Proposal Submission (Single Selection Round)

Participants will submit a digital proposal detailing:

1. **Wine List & Pairing Concept** – A well-structured model wine list showcasing regional wines and their best pairings with ethnic dishes.
2. **Cultural & Historical Significance** – Explanation of how the selected wines reflect local traditions, heritage, and terroir.
3. **Sustainability & Innovation** – Focus on winemakers using sustainable practices, innovative presentation, and eco-conscious business models.
4. **Scalability & Business Application** – A framework for how this wine list model can be easily integrated into restaurant operations within a franchising system.
5. **Visual & Technical Presentation** – High-resolution images of wines, suggested pairings, and a 3-minute video explaining the concept.

Table 2: Selection Criteria

Criteria	Total max 25	Details
Wine List Concept	6	Quality, coherence, and diversity of the proposed wine selection.

Cultural Authenticity	5	Representation of heritage, local traditions, and regional identity.
Sustainability & Innovation	5	Promotion of eco-friendly practices and creative presentation methods.
Business Adaptability	5	Scalability and feasibility for restaurant franchise implementation.
Storytelling & Engagement	4	Narrative quality, winemaker profiles, and connection to ethnic cuisine.
Total	25	

3.2. Ethnic Gastronomes – Concept Proposal Submission Form – [ONLINE FORM](#)

Section 1: Participant Information

Team/Individual Name:	
Affiliation (e.g., sommelier, culinary school, wine bar, restaurant):	
Contact information:	

Section 2: Wine List Proposal

Wine List & Pairing Concept	
<p>Concept Overview (max 300 words):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the central theme or concept of your wine list? • What ethnic or regional cuisine is it based on or designed to complement? • How does the wine list enhance the cultural and dining experience? • List 3 wines to pair with 3 dishes 	

<p>Cultural & Historical Significance (max 250 words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell us how does the selected wines represent local history, traditions, and terroir? • Are there any unique stories behind the winemakers or regions represented? 	
<p>Sustainability & Innovation (max 250 words) Step-by-step process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any wines sourced from producers using sustainable or organic practices? • How does your concept support the local wine economy? 	
<p>Business Adaptability (max 250 words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can this wine list be used easily in different types of restaurants and bars? • Can the concept be scaled for use in a franchising system or a chain of restaurants? • Is the wine model suitable for use in other regional or ethnic contexts? 	

Section 3: Presentation Materials

Visual & Technical Presentation

Please submit the following with your application:

- A PDF or slide deck with the full wine list and suggested pairings
- At least 3 photographs of the featured 3 wines
- A short video presenting the wine list concept (may include spoken explanation, visuals, and background context)

4. Application

Applicants must submit:

- **Personal/Team Details** (name, nationality, experience)
- **Category Selection** (Frugal or Ethnic Gastronomes)
- **Concept Proposal** Submission must follow the proposal guidelines and be aligned with the chosen competition category. Applicants should ensure that their proposal meets the outlined requirements, addressing all key aspects relevant to their selected topic.
- **Sustainability or Heritage Justification** (How does it align with competition goals?)
- **Photographs and video materials** (optional).

5. Evaluation & Selection Process:

- **Submission Process:** Applicants submit proposals digitally, including supporting images and a video.
- **Judging Panel:** A panel of sommeliers, ethnic cuisine chefs, cultural historians, and hospitality experts will review submissions.
- **Scoring System:** Judges rate contestants based on the criteria outlined in the category they are competing in. Below is the proposed scale for evaluation:

Scale Meaning	Description
5 - Excellent	Fully meets and exceeds expectations
4 - Very Good	Strong, only minor issues
3 - Good	Meets expectations, but with some minor inconsistencies
2 - Fair	Incomplete or not fully thought out
1- Poor	Missing key elements or unclear

- o Evaluated on a 25-point scale (Gold: 22-25, Silver: 17-21, Bronze: 13-16).
- o Selection of one winner based on the highest-scoring proposal.

In the event of a tie in scores, the judges will make the final decision based on their expert judgment. They will assess specific aspects such as creativity, level of detail, and overall quality of the application.

Winner Announcement: The top scorers in each category will be honoured at the **Culinary Trail Festival**.

6. Awarding procedures

- **Awards:**
 - The winning model will be officially integrated into the franchising system.
 - Each category announces a winner:
 - o Recognition as “Best frugal innovation model”
 - o Recognition as “Best Ethnic Wine List Model”
- **Implementation & Impact:**
 - Adoption as a standard practice for franchise restaurants.
 - Inclusion in training programs for restaurant owners and sommeliers.
- **Post-Competition Outputs:**
 - The winning wine list will be featured in a digital guidebook.
 - A documentary capturing the competition process will be released post-event.
 - The winner will present their model at an award ceremony in Novo Mesto. If the winning entry is a group, a maximum of three representatives may attend the ceremony in person.

