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FLAVOR

QUICK SCAN OF
Regional Food Culture in
Hajdú-Bihar County

1. Definition



The regional food culture of Hajdú-Bihar has been shaped by pastoral livestock farming, agriculture and strong peasant traditions. Although cereals such as bread and pasta are important components of everyday meals, the defining character of the cuisine lies primarily in its meat dishes and shepherd heritage. In recent years, contemporary food and gastronomy initiatives have revitalized the region's food identity. Today, Hajdú-Bihar's cuisine combines its strong shepherd and puszta heritage with modern gastronomic innovation and a growing focus on quality local ingredients.

2. Famous Food Products

- Hajdúság horseradish – PGI-protected
- Hungarian Grey cattle meat – traditional heritage breed
- Debreceni páros kolbász – smoked paprika sausage
- Sheep and mutton products (Hortobágy grasslands)
- Cereals & field crops – maize, sunflower, wheat, barley
- Fruits & vegetables – apples, sour cherries, plums, sweet corn, green peas
- Traditional processed foods – sourdough bread, pickles, jams, handcrafted pasta



Outlook:

The cultural identity of Hajdú-Bihar is deeply connected to its agricultural heritage, pastoral traditions and rural way of life. Food in the region is not merely a source of nourishment but a symbol of historical continuity, community belonging and local pride. Traditional dishes prepared from locally produced grains, meat and dairy reflect centuries of farming and livestock breeding on the Great Hungarian Plain. The legacy of the Hajdú people and shepherd culture is embedded in iconic meals such as slambuc, mutton stew, and other meals prepared in cauldrons, which preserve the memory of a simple, self-sufficient way of life.

3. Activities & Practices



- **Pantry of Hajdúság – Community Food Hub**

Key community space connecting local producers and consumers

- **"Meet County Tastes" event series**

This series connects producers, restaurants, chefs and consumers to sample local products

- **Local Product Label Scheme of Hajdú-Bihar**

Promotes and certifies local artisanal and agricultural products

- **Local Treasures Day**

Opens Hajdú-Bihar farms and workshops to the public, offering free tastings and hands-on experiences that connect consumers with traditional food production

- **SReST project's "Slow Food" model**

This initiative tests slow food tourism concepts, combining trainings, community cooking and heritage food experiences

4. Actors & Stakeholders

Hajdú-Bihar's agri-food and gastronomy ecosystem is supported by a robust network of stakeholders spanning knowledge institutions, chambers, producers, government bodies as well as community actors.

- **The Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture** in Hajdú-Bihar County connects and supports farmer
- **The university** drives research, education, and innovation in the agri-food sector
- **Civil organizations** promote community engagement and help preserve cultural and gastronomic heritage
- **Government actors** establish the regulatory and policy frameworks that guide agricultural and food activities



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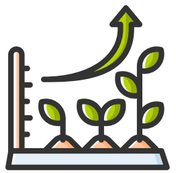
Picture: Shutterstock

5.Economy and Market of regional food

Hajdú-Bihar is one of Hungary's most significant agricultural counties in terms of land use, production capacity and economic contribution, representing 9.33% of national agricultural GVA, defined by large-scale arable crop production & livestock farming. **Agriculture forms a structural pillar of the local economy**, providing the raw material base for food processing, storage, trade and logistics. The sector contributes substantially to rural employment, income stability and related service industries, reinforcing its systemic economic importance. Hajdú-Bihar farms range from large-scale operations in extensive supply chains to small artisanal producers thriving on short, local value chains and regional branding.



6.Challenges and Opportunities

The following challenges are identified:

- Fragmented supply chains
- Price sensitivity
- Limited institutional procurement
- Knowledge gaps -awareness of seasonal, sustainable and healthy aspects remains limited
- Seasonal and infrastructure constraints
- Lack of skilled local champions



Promising Developments and Opportunities:

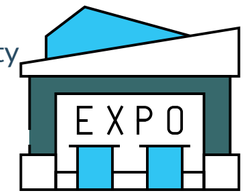
- Local initiatives and networks
- Policy support - national and regional frameworks
- Research and education
- Tourism and gastronomy
- Community capacity building, local trainings, heritage cooking workshops, international projects



7.Sustainability, Health and Social Cohesion



In Hajdú-Bihar, **local food choices are mostly driven by price and convenience,** while trust in producers is only beginning to develop, indirectly supporting fresh, seasonal, regional diets. **The county has a strong tradition of ecological farming**, with forums like **ÖKO Expo** and **Farmer Expo** sharing knowledge on soil management, bio-intensive horticulture, precision weed control and digital tools.
Social inclusion projects, such as **HBCG's SReST**, engage unemployed rural residents in preparing traditional foods and learning their cultural stories. These initiatives are still emerging, gradually fostering community cohesion, food quality awareness and connections between producers and consumers, urban and rural spaces.



8.Policy and Institutional Context

Hajdú-Bihar County's policy and institutional context offers a **supportive but complex framework for regional food systems**. National, regional and local policies promote agricultural competitiveness, public health, sustainability and tourism, yet a cohesive regional food strategy is still lacking. Initiatives such as **product recognition schemes, education programs, community projects** show multi-sectoral links, but better alignment and targeted implementation are needed to fully harness policy support. **Strategic frameworks collectively enhance the potential of Hajdú-Bihar's regional food systems**, supporting economic growth, cultural heritage and sustainable development.

