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CONSUMER REQUIREMENTS IN FOOD SERVING

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Abstract

The existence of a wide range of food products has led to important changes in Romanian society. This is mostly reflected in the occupational structure of the population employed in the production sector and the existing percentage representation of the urban and rural population.

Keywords: Requirements, food serving, spare time, consumer dissatisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Food serving involves an array of processes intervening on the food product, which takes place between the completion of additional processing for consumption and the actual integration. Food serving processes are the final part of the food chain, essentially the micrologistics of transferring the product in the body.

Requirements regarding food serving refer to the nature and quality of processes, as well as the effect (outcome) obtained as a result. The most important requirements concern: the ease of food transfer in the body, which is determined by the presentation of those products, namely: physical state (liquid, viscous, hard) and preparation for ingestion (portioned, minced, etc.), and the utensils employed, namely the help they bring to the transfer process.

The preparation for ingestion, which consists of improvements, associations (for example seasoning) and others, is aimed at making anatomically and sensorially adapted portions served for one ingestion event. This also includes meeting the ambient conditions of the act of consumption, which refers to the building and furniture, auditory and visual ambient, consistency between the ambient, the service, consumed products etc. There are also hygiene requirements, in the sense that the innocuousness of

food services is particularly important, sometimes even more important than the innocuousness of foods, as this quality can be adulterated in a hygienic product during serving, just like a product that has certain hygienic deficiencies can be corrected, within certain limits, if the food service is well-designed and well-executed.

A better understanding of requirements arising from food serving is achieved if the act of preparation and consumption is interpreted as a professional occupation.

In this view, the issue can be addressed only for the limited scope of the actual consumer, for whom the work items (foods), the work means (furniture and utensils) and the work processes will be correspondingly organized, as well as for a group of jobs, such as the cooperation between consumers and the serving staff (4).

By breaking down the entire set of requirements for the completion of the act of eating, one can arrive at more appropriate solutions for each category and for the set of gratification factors called upon.

If the requirements concerning food processing and serving are not met, a series of imbalances occur for the two types of activities.

Failure to meet the requirements concerning food processing leads to deficiencies in food logistics, such as the consumption or offer for consumption of low-quality foods, or of some structures that have food-related pro-functions and anti-functions, which make

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them inappropriate. Essentially, these are irregularities regarding the degree of functional organization of the food in relation to the requirements it must meet and the need for greater efforts made by consumers, as a consequence of insufficient finishing of the products, their lack of preparation for ingestion, the use of inadequate material equipment (e.g. utensils) or the execution of processes correcting errors in preparation, or making those foods correspond to a certain specificity of consumption that the recipient of that gratification factor has.

To conclude, it may be shown that the failure to meet requirements regarding food processing negatively impacts food satisfaction (both physiological and psychological), and the necessary efforts, in the form of work and other expenses, are incomparably greater.

The failure to meet requirements arising from food serving has notable consequences in the area of transfer processes, where lifting the food towards the mouth for ingestion, using cutlery or by hand, is made with difficulty and losses, the bite or insertion into mouth are encumbered or take place in inadequate conditions.

The entire act of consumption is unsightly and unhygienic, which is unpleasant both for the consumer, if in his culture there are models regarding its appropriate conduct, and for the other diners or for the surrounding population, and the meal serving efforts are much greater, while the obtained results (physiological and psychological satisfactions) are sizably diminished.

Apart from the above-mentioned implication, the failure to meet requirements regarding food processing and serving also influences appetite, leads to a distorted image of food and alters eating behavior.

Given the lack of time of the contemporary man, the increasing involvement of women in socio-economic activities and the increased individual and collective interest in efficiency and effectiveness, desires regarding food processing and serving requirements are multiple. They are manifested in the area of processing systems, during the performance of services and upon consumption.

In relation to processing processes, desires refer to the marked reduction and simplification of processes and efforts they occasion (consumption of materials, manual work, time, equipment and other resources) or to making available fully processed products with functional structures for consumers and units providing food services, in accordance with the needs of the recipient population.

Other requirements concern the obtainment of products with the utility requested by consumers and

trade organizations, and the assurance of the wide range of products imposed by the variability and particularities of the food market that must be satisfied.

These desires should be analyzed particularly on the launch of new products. In this case, it is considered that the manufacturer is concerned with integrating, as much as possible, the new products he assimilates in production – in terms of equipment and technological conduct – into the utilized facilities and techniques, contributing to a better valorization of available resources and allowing the obtainment of an improved level of quality (4).

As regards food serving, the most important requirements are related to the organization of serving, which must be thus achieved so as to help make foods as suitable for actual consumption as possible, and the performance of serving should be made with ease promptness, without leading to material, human and other efforts, as compared to the obtained advantages.

During serving processes, esthetic satisfactions should also be provided, and the way in which they are conducted should consider the specificity and social restrictions of consumers. At the same time, serving systems should not introduce, through the technical conditions in which they are carried out, risk factors in terms of the hygiene state of the act of eating.

The level of performances should provide security in terms of compliance with hygiene prescriptions and adopt evolved serving and eating styles, while the services should help educate the population regarding the way in which the act of eating is practiced.

Food consumption is under the influence of the diverse types of requirements, including some that are closely linked to the actual eating processes, preparation for eating and ingestion of foods.

The transfer of foods in the body should entail simple processes, easily accomplishable by the consumer, and should not require utensils that are unavailable or difficult to handle; the same applies to desires regarding the accomplishment of the act of consumption under conditions of hygiene, and in the spirit of existing eating habits in that environment or, in a broader sense, in accordance with the rules for civilized behavior.

For some types of foods, especially those for which there is a large variety of sensorial values, which provides a wide framework for numerous styles of eating and refinement, some consumers prefer to assist in or perform the preparation of foods themselves; this desire also arises from additional stimuli which the cook/consumer obtains as compared to the variant of restricting his participation to the role of consumer, especially in agritourism.



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Foods served to the consumer should be thus prepared so as to provide an adequate framework for the valorization of available sensorial and nutritive utilities, and after eating consumers should obtain the sensorial satisfaction and satiety required to balance the organism (4).

For rural tourism and agritourism, the launch, promotion or consolidation of the "rank" of a local agro-food product are landmarks pertaining to the agritourism development strategies. Traditional products can be categorized as emblem/symbolic products – "communication brand".

CONCLUSIONS

The consequences of changes occurring in contemporary society, as well as nutritional needs, influence the management of consumers' spare time and income.

It is evident that a state of comfort is created with the acceptance of services/offers from specialized units, in favor of free time and to satisfy demands.

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