



Abstract (for the Arcos de Valdevez Meeting)

Title of the communication: The Importance of Food Tourism. A Case Study of Mealhada – A gastronomic village in Portugal.

The Food tourism is gaining importance internationally as well as in Portugal. However, while there are many case studies from around the world, this subject has not received much attention from Portuguese scholars (there are few exceptions, especially in the Minho region) who mainly study the subject related to the hotel and restaurant business. Also in the tourism Portuguese scientific community, the mainly part, faces gastronomy not as a product or a real motivation, but as complement of other products.

Based on a case study of Mealhada - Portugal, where food tourism is crucial for the local economy and the key reason of the development in the area, the purpose of this communication is to highlight the importance of gastronomy as the main reason for visiting a certain destination.

In the case of Mealhada, we can say that if it wasn't for the gastronomic factor, this small village would just be "another place" in Portugal, without the capacity to attract visitors, staying apart from the tourism guides and the main touristic fluxes. All the marketing of this place is related with the gastronomy and the famous "leitão à Bairrada".

On the first part of the communication, Mealhada will be described, his history and all his gastronomic relevance and offers. In the second part, based on the study by inquiry done in 2005, will be presented the profile of the gastronomic tourist that travels to Mealhada, their gastronomic motivations, the budget spent, other activities developed by visitors in the geographic area, their opinion about food tourism in Portugal, etc.

Finally, will be presented some suggestions to improve food tourism in the area, and in Portugal, some marketing strategies to be adopted and some synergies, specially the association between food and wine tourism in the region.

Simão Oliveira – Assistant teacher from the Instituto Politecnico of Leiria
simao_oliveira@estm.ipleiria.pt