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## **EVALUATION OF PARTICIPANTS' GAINS OF COOKING COMPETITIONS**

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### **Abstract**

Cooking competitions organized by institutions and organizations have an important place in gastronomy activities. Cooking competitions provide that the creation of unique flavors in terms of gastronomy, and the emergence of young talents. At the same time, gastronomic students are able to express themselves, to hear their names in the field, and to communicate with people in the gastronomy. In this respect, cooking competitions are important tools that contribute to participation in many ways. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there is a significant lack of this issue. The aim of this work is to show the gains that the cooking competitions provide for the participants. For this purpose, the answer to the question "What are the gains of participants for cooking competitions"? Qualitative research methods were used in the study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants participating in the contest through a semi-structured questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was performed with the data obtained at the end of the interview. As a result of the study it was seen that the participants had gains in terms creativity, motivation, social, cultural, and career. It also turned out to be a positive contribution to the competitors' careers.

Key words: Gastronomy, cooking competitions, gains, International İstanbul Gastronomy Festival.

### **Introduction**

With the increasing popularity of gastronomy, many people have begun to develop themselves. Gastronomy education schools, courses and activities in the field of gastronomy have increased. Food preparation practices have changed dramatically in the past fifty years (Soliah, Walter and Altosh, 2006). Thus, the activities and competitions related to food started to be organized more.

Yangın and Kirca (2013) found that students who did not participate in social and scientific activities were dissatisfied among students. In this context, it can be said that students taking gastronomy education affect the satisfaction levels of the competitions they participate. In their study, Gül, Erdemir and Gül (2017) stated that competitions play an important role in revealing and developing the skills of university students related to cookery.

Gatenby et al. (2011) argue that cooking activities in schools improve students' cooking skills, gain healthy eating habits, and increase their respect for different local and international culinary cultures. Fisher et al. (2011) also suggest that activities related to cooking with a similar approach stimulate students' imagination, inspiration and abilities. Petruzzelli and Savino (2014) also argue that researching the old dishes and their contents in such competitions triggers the innovation of the food

inventors. Svejnova et al. (2010) emphasize that individuals who can better use external activities, organizations and resources based on individual interests and motivations are able to gain gains such as income, fame and competence more easily.

Frey and Gallus (2016) claim that award-winning competitions have the potential to raise the intrinsic motivation of competitors. In a similar approach, Rudd (2015) also states that cooking competitions increase the number of participants, competition and curiosity about what the champions do. Şanlıer (2005) emphasizes the importance of cooking competitions in introducing Turkish cuisine abroad and draws attention to the role of cooking competitions in the preservation and sustainability of Turkish culinary culture. In this context, the participants provide double benefits with cooking competitions. Participants can also learn about other cuisines while promoting their kitchens. Professional activities and competitions improve participants' skills, creativity, productivity, motivation and research spirit (Büyükparksız, 2013). From this point of view, the aim of the study is to reveal the gain of cooking competitions for the participants.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative approach to understand the cooking competitions participants' opinions about the gains. Qualitative researches stand out with their characteristics of revealing the viewpoints and semantic worlds of the subjects (Unisen and Kaya, 2015). The study population consists of the participants of 16th International Istanbul Gastronomy Festival. Data were collected through the festival between 22-25 February 2018. A total of eight responses were received. Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. The questionnaire used in this study was developed through literature review. The questions in the form were as follows:

1. How do participating in cooking competitions affect your artistic and creative development?
2. What are you influenced when preparing for cooking competitions?
3. Will it be effective to participate in your meals competitions?
4. How do you influence your motivation to enter a degree in cooking competitions?
5. How do food contests affect your social life?
6. How do food contests affect cultural development?
7. How do food contests affect your career?
8. What did the cooking competitions personally add to you?

Descriptive analysis method was utilized for data analysis. According to this approach, the data obtained are summarized and interpreted on the basis of pre-determined themes. In order to conspicuously reflect the opinions of interviewed or observed individuals, direct citations are frequently used in descriptive analysis. The purpose of this type of analysis is to present the findings in a revised and interpreted manner. For credibility of the study, the data were first presented without any interpretations, and the data were analyzed by more than one researchers. The researchers of this study adhered to the hypothetical circle through continuous comparisons during data analysis (Ersoy and Anagun, 2009).

The study used each question as the main theme: motivation, cultural, social and personal gains. The data was processed in accordance with these four themes, and the results were presented and discussed. In the quotations, respondents were labeled as K1, K2, K3...K7 to ensure their anonymity.

### **Findings**

In this study, which aims to present the achievements of the cooking competitions to the participants, when the data were analyzed, five main themes were reached. These;

#### **1. Creativity Gains**

#### **2. Motivation Gains**

#### **3. Social Life Gains**

#### **4. Cultural Gains**

#### **5. Career Gains**

#### **1. Creativity Gains**

When the answers of the cooking competition participants to the effects of the competitions on their artistic and creativity are examined;

*"My friends increased. I meet more chefs. I got ideas from other chefs. Everyone introduces each other to their chefs." (K1)*

*"The competitions are affecting me well. I'm designing a plate. It also makes an artistic contribution." (K2)*

*"I think that the plates we see here open up our horizons, see and learn new things and create new things in our minds." (K3)*

*"Cooking competitions are a great opportunity for us. I apply immediately when there is a competition. These competitions make me very motivated. I have the ability to draw pictures. I see the plate as paper. For me food presentation is like a painting and I'm preparing my food. This is something artistic for me." (K5)*

*"We think of what we can add to our dinner plate presentations. Cooking competitions improve the human horizon. For those who are not chef but want to be chef, competitions are more important." (K6)*

*"Cooking competitions affect my creativity positively." (K8)*

When these findings are examined six participants stated that they had a positive effect on their creativity (K1, K2, K3, K5, K6, K8), while two participants did not declare any ideas (K4, K7).

#### **2. Motivation Gains**

The main theme of the gains for motivation has four sub-themes: preparation phase, decision-making process, degree and personal.

### 2.1. Preparation phase

When the participants were asked what affected them in preparing for the cooking competitions six of them (K1, K2, K6) from famous chefs. For example;

*"We give importance to plate presentations. We do research to find original ideas. We meet chefs. We make plates with the help of chefs who are in national team." (K1)*

*"I'm impressed by my chefs and my thoughts about the future" and K6 "I pay attention to what people in the field say." (K2)*

K3, K4, K5 emphasized that they were influenced by social media and the internet as well as the famous chefs. For example:

*"People's beautiful plate designs increase my desire. I examine the famous chef plates especially from the internet and the contributions of my chefs are huge." (K3)*

*"I get contributions from famous chefs, social accounts, photos and videos." (K4)*

*"I'm very much influenced by social media. I look at the plates of my teacher and the famous Michelin star chefs. I'm looking at the color harmony of the materials and plate I will use." (K5)*

K8 stated that only the internet affected him. and K8 "Doing research on the internet." On the other hand one participant K7 stated that he was impressed by the people around him by saying "I was impressed by the confidence of the people around me."

### 2.2. Impact of environment in the decision-making process

The question of "Do you think your environment will be effective for you to participate in the cooking competitions?" participants answered as follows:

*"My parents and school teachers are very influential." (K3)*

*"It is important to participate in such competitions. My chefs and family provided the biggest contribution." (K4)*

*"My teacher and my family supported me. I have an excellent teacher. I am very lucky." (K5)*

*"My family and my teacher supported." (K8)*

Four of the participants (K3, K4, K5 and K8) stated that they got the support for competitions from both their parents and their teachers. Two participants (K1 and K7) stated that they only received support from their friends in the decision to participate in the competition, and one participant (K2) his family only supported. Another participant (K6) stated that someone is behind me is good and that the environment is effective in joining the competition.

### 2.3. Degree

Seven of the participants (K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K6 and K7) mentioned the positive effect of the degree to the motivation of entering into competitions. Participants used the following statements to indicate the positive effect of entry in the competitions;

*"When we receive an award, our motivation is increasing. Getting a good rating allows us to be noticed in the businesses we work in." (K1)*

*"It increases my motivation." (K2)*

*"Motivation influences the degree, but we should not be too sad when we can not enter. The important thing is to gain experience." (K3)*

*"It affects both motivation and CV." (K4)*

*"Qualification is of course influencing positively. But it's important to come here and represent the school. Gaining experience." (K5)*

*"Important for motivation. If I could get this rating in this competition, then I think I would do better." (K6)*

*"It raises motivation. I am the first person to rank in my university and this will be a long time motivation source for me." (K7)*

One participant (K8) stated that it does not affect the motivation of "entering the degree by entering or not entering the degree does not affect my motivation."

#### **2.4. Personal**

Participants in the question of "what did food competitions give you personally" gave the following answers:

*"Increases self-confidence. It's not easy to eat in front of so many people. You break out in a cold sweat at first. You're quite responsible. Because you're gonna design a plate alone. Materials have responsibility. As soon as he gets here, there's a responsibility. You get used to competitions. Experience is growing, and then you're having fun." (K1)*

*"It increases my motivation." (K2)*

*"In a short time we learned to work faster and tried new things." (K3)*

*"Self-confidence. I've learned to meet new people. I learned to talk to the chefs. I learned to work as a group." (K4)*

*"We had a great time and we learned to prepare something in time. If the jury likes the taste, it increases our confidence. I cry out of happiness." (K5)*

*"Adding nice friendships. Professional experience." (K6)*

*"It stretch my imagination. My self-confidence has increased. He made me use the time fast." (K7)*

*"My sense of responsibility has increased. I'm trying not disappoint people who trust me." (K8)*

### **3. Social Life Gains**

To the question of how cooking competitions affect your social life seven participants (K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K7 and K8) have responded that they have positive gains for social life as follows.

*"It makes it fun, I'm having a good time with others." (K1)*

*"I am developing my environment in my social life." (K2)*

*"I am from Izmir. I'm travelling and make new friends." (K3)*

*"I've met new people. I contacted people from social accounts. I took pictures." (K4)*

*"For example, I joined here with my friends from different universities. I meet the chefs." (K5)*

*"My friends increase. My family is proud of me." (K7)*

*"It has a positive impact on my social life. It is life experience for me." (K8)*

Only K6 from the participants said, "I have a negative effect on my social life because I have to cook constantly."

### **4. Cultural Gains**

All of the participants stated that there is a positive contribution to the cultural development of the competitions.

*"We see and learn cuisine of every region." (K1)*

*"Seeing the plates of people from all over the world contributes to my cultural development." (K2)*

*"I made meatballs, I made humus for the first time here. Getting something from the local cuisine of other cities." (K3)*

*"The kitchen is a versatile profession. Many local food is served here. I also review the plate of people from abroad." (K4)*

*"Affects culturally. We are trying to remove the delicacies that are used in Ottoman world cuisine recipes while researching. I made a raspberry souffle with tahini. The souffle and tahini are hardly used. I tried to make a difference using tahini. The Ottomans used too much of tahini. Thus, the blending of two cultures emerged." (K5)*

*"We are also affected by world cuisine." (K6)*

*"We find the opportunity to meet people from every country and culture." (K7)*

*"It definitely adds. I learned about the Ottoman cuisine." (K8)*

When the opinions of the interviewed participants about their cultural achievements were taken, they stated that they obtained cultural gain as a local and world culinary culture. Only one participant (K4)

stated that the competitions did not contribute to the careers of the people who are in the start-up stage.

## **5. Career Gains**

Seven of the participants (K1, K2, K3, K5, K6, K7 and K8) stated that they had a positive contribution to the careers of the competitions.

*"In a good way. I meet famous chefs, I communicate. I'm on the phone. He's supporting me in terms of career." (K1)*

*"I hope my career will benefit." (K2)*

*"I can get a good job because it contributes to a good degree of CV." (K3)*

*"Competitions don't have any contribution because I am at the beginning of work." (K4)*

*"I write especially on my resume. I'm gonna work at a five-star hotel instead of 4 stars." (K5)*

*"We meet chefs. Step allows me to jump." (K6)*

*"I got the opportunity to enter the national team for entering the degree." (K7)*

*"Have a nice effect. It's gonna work for me in the future." (K8)*

Only one participant (K4) stated that the competitions did not contribute to the careers of the people who are in the starting phase.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this study aims to show the gains of food competitions to the participants. According to the results of the findings of the participants; It was seen that cooking competitions contributed to the creativity, motivation, social, cultural and career gains of the participants. Participants emphasized their contribution to the creativity of designing plates and preparing for competitions. They stated that they obtained cultural gain as a local and world culinary culture. Also there had a positive contribution to their careers, professional experience and their CV. Besides, the competitions have helped the participants to increase their motivation, responsibility and self-confidence. The participants got acquainted with new friends and new chefs and achieved social gains. The participants stated that get awards was important for them. However, they emphasized that the most important thing was the experiences they gained. It was observed that the study was in parallel with the studies in the literature. For example; Frey and Gallus (2016) claim that award-winning competitions have the potential to raise the intrinsic motivation of competitors. Similarly, in this study, it was concluded that cooking competitions had an effect on increasing the motivation of the contestants. In addition, Fisher et al. (2011) stated that the activities related to cooking activities stimulate students' imagination, inspiration and talents. Şanlıer (2005) emphasizes the importance of cooking competitions in promoting Turkish cuisine abroad.

As a result of the study, it is seen that cooking competitions increase the cultural gains of the participants. After that, the participants in different themes can be examined as well as the participants can be examined with the dimension of organizational competence in order to evaluate the competitions as a whole.

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