



## The future of food tourism: foodies, experiences, exclusivity, visions, and political capital

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**To cite this article:** Jeremy Schultz (2016): The future of food tourism: foodies, experiences, exclusivity, visions, and political capital, Annals of Leisure Research, DOI: [10.1080/11745398.2016.1238309](https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2016.1238309)

**To link to this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2016.1238309>



Published online: 07 Oct 2016.



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## BOOK REVIEW

**The future of food tourism: foodies, experiences, exclusivity, visions, and political capital**, edited by Ian Yeoman, Una McMahon-Beattie, Kevin Fields, Julia N. Albrecht, and Kevin Meethan, Toronto, Channel View Publications, 2015, 304 pp., £34.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-84541-537-2

*The Future of Food Tourism* delivers very creative content while thoroughly covering what is considered to be a relatively new focus of inquiry for tourism research. The editors' stated aim of the book was to 'present a systematic and pattern-based explanation of how and why change could occur and what the implications would be' (9). They successfully accomplish these goals through well-ordered chapters that give the reader a brief history of food tourism whilst transitioning into the future of food tourism, all the while describing current food tourism(ist) scenarios and finishing with an in-depth look at where food tourism research may take us. Recognizing the multiple notions of what food tourism entails, the editors also do a wonderful job opening and closing the book while compiling subsequent chapters that offer significant individual contributions to help explain the complexity and the progression of the subject.

The opening section of the book begins with Stephen Boyd's review (chapter 2) of the *past* in food tourism, circa 1970s/1980s/1990s, where he notes little academic interest nor cultural attention. He distinguishes that it was not until the twenty-first century that food tourism was taken more seriously by researchers as well as by society, creating the *present* scene. The 'post millennium' attention has led to significant increases in food tourism research and publishing, destination marketing for food, and the food experience economy; hence, the importance of this book.

Two of the editors themselves, Ian Yeoman and Una McMahon-Beattie, tackle the *future* of food tourism in a very creative chapter (3) that explores a Star Trek Replicator metaphor and the potential of emerging exclusivity for travellers looking for gastronomic experiences. Recognizing the world's exploding population, Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie offer two uniquely different scenarios. Their first potential scenario, referred to as the Star Trek Replicator, describes how science and technology may need to produce food for tourists (e.g. burgers grown in a lab) because resources have become too scarce and there is a lack of food security. As we (as a society) are becoming more accustomed to watching the actualization of science fiction, this scenario complements many of the conversations currently going on around genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the role of technology in food. In the second scenario, real food becomes an exclusive occurrence, only for those with the money to experience it. The example of Shanghai in 2050 is used to illustrate the separation of the classes, forcing local communities to be quarantined from gated resorts. If one looks at numerous high-end resorts around the world, this scenario may already be coming to fruition more often than not. Both scenarios are supported by their own set of driving forces that make the reader truly stop and think about what food tourism will look like in the future.

Thematically, the second set of chapters in the book is titled 'Food Tourism,' offering little clue to the content within. This section of the book is comprised of a series of chapters that explore very distinct topics including flavour complexity (4), the future of the food supply chain (5), public policy (6), architecture (7), agritourism (8), regional identity and the experience

economy (9), and intellectual property rights (10). The contributing authors for this section come from a variety of backgrounds and geographies – this is noticeable through the differing writing styles of each chapter. Indeed, it is also a great reminder of how we are all affected by food, whether we focus on it or not. This section, cumulatively, signifies how food has infiltrated virtually every aspect of our cultures, and how we as a society need to pay homage to the details of the food we survive (and thrive) by. Adaptation, by food and by tourist, will be needed as natural resources are pressured, food policies are leveraged, and our individual food performances take precedence, all being inherently related to tourism.

The third section of the book takes a turn for the future, offering five chapters that put forward visions into what is *trending* in food and tourism. To do so, the authors in this section discuss the tourists' imaginary (11), male foodies (and why they will not do the dishes! [12]), food explorers (13), the future of dining alone (14), and the varying dimension of the food tourism experience (15). Again, interesting individual reads, this set of chapters delivers thought-provoking dialogue for many of the factors that may affect food tourism down the road without making any shattering assertions beyond the readers' realm of potential belief.

In the final section of the book, the future research directions of food tourism are discussed. Recognizing the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of the subject, Eunice Eunjung Yoo (chapter 16) lays out what she refers to as the 'four spheres' of how food and tourism can be related, including 'food as a significant element of tourist experiences, food as a tourism product – attraction and marketing tool, food as a tool for regional development, and food as a sign of culture and cultural heritage' (229). These spheres are a great way of encapsulating the previous two sections of the book as they potentially lend inquiry to tourism scholarship. In the final chapter (17) of the book, editors Ian Yeoman and Una McMahon-Bettie along with Carol Wheatley give the reader multiple cognitive maps for each chapter of the book and an 'aggregate' cognitive map characterizing what the future of food tourism may resemble. This illustrative approach is a great method to summarize and extrapolate the content from the all of the previous chapters into what the editors characterize as the five 'drivers of change that will represent future discourse, actions, and behaviors' (238). It represents a very creative way of thinking to help the reader make sense of the systems theory that drives food tourism.

Overall, I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is researching or studying food tourism and to those who simply enjoy the world of gastronomy while traveling. The editors argue that fundamentally, 'food tourism has a history, is part of societies' culture and – because of the relationship between food, communities, and tourism – a topic of economic development to political leaders' (5). *The Future of Food Tourism* is an exciting read that embodies the importance and magnitude of such premise.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2016.1238309>