

GASTRONOMIC DIRECTION IN TOURISM: INTERNATIONAL REQUIREMENTS, NATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE “KARIMBEK” RESTAURANT

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Abstract. *This article analyzes the practical drivers of gastronomic tourism development in Uzbekistan through the lens of service standards for foreign tourists, the appeal of national cuisine, and the operational experience of the “Karimbek” restaurant (LLC “Erkin Shirin Taom”). It systematizes requirements for service provision—facility infrastructure, hygiene and fire safety, access/egress logistics, ramps and multilingual wayfinding, menu formats (buffet/“Swedish table,” table d’hôte, à la carte), and contract–voucher procedures. The country’s multinational culinary heritage, festivals, and gastro-routes are assessed via a SWOT approach. Based on Karimbek’s 2023–2024 indicators and the 2024 quarterly service volume, the article offers recommendations on managing seasonality, occupancy, and the adoption of digital services.*

Keywords: *gastronomic tourism, foodservice, buffet (Swedish table), table d’hôte, à la carte, voucher, national cuisine, service quality, SWOT analysis, “Karimbek”.*

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomic tourism is among the fastest-growing areas of contemporary travel and largely shapes a tourist’s overall impression of a country through the quality of its foodservice. Food is not merely a consumer good—it embodies national identity, norms of hospitality, and cultural codes. Accordingly, restaurants and cafés function not only as service venues but also as sites of cultural diplomacy. In Uzbekistan, two vectors are crucial for the sustainable growth of gastronomic tourism: (1) fully implementing international requirements expected by foreign visitors; and (2) harmonizing the diverse heritage of national cuisine with modern service and digital solutions.

MAIN TEXT

Foodservice enterprises serving foreign tourists—restaurants, bars, canteens, and cafés—must first ensure appropriate location and access: clear signage, smooth ingress–egress flows, and ramps for guests with special needs.



Entrance areas should include a canopy, waste bins, payphone (or equivalent), and designated advertising/decor elements; loading/unloading, storage of containers, and handling of empties must follow strict order. Compliance with sanitation and hygiene, fire safety, and ventilation norms is imperative; unpleasant odors (from kitchens or restrooms) must not reach dining rooms. Multilingual internal wayfinding and visible display of category certificates are integral to service culture.

Three service formats are widely used: prepaid meal plans (breakfast/half-board/full-board); menu-priced service for additional charges; and self-service (buffet/“Swedish table”). Buffets increase satisfaction thanks to speed and freedom of choice and are most effective at breakfast (typically 08:00–10:00), lunch (12:00–15:00), and dinner (17:30–19:30). Table d’hôte (a pre-set, group-oriented table) and à la carte (free choice from the menu) allow tailoring to different segments. Voucher procedures make settlement with the tour operator transparent: notifications, requests, statements of fact, and dual-copy vouchers confirm services rendered.

In staffing, a brigade-link method that includes a maître d’hôtel, waiters, and bartenders with foreign-language skills is key to speed and quality. Uniforms, name badges, corporate emblems, and a clear division of roles (e.g., brigade leader as floor coordinator) support discipline and enhance guest experience. Menus should be multilingual, include allergen and halal/HACCP markings, and be complemented by digital tools such as QR menus, online booking, and electronic payments.

In the Uzbek context, the appeal of gastronomic tourism is directly tied to the country’s multinational culinary heritage. Through diasporas and historical ties, the national table blends numerous variations of pilaf (palov), somsa, norin, manti, shashlik, laghman, dumplings, and desserts with elements borrowed from neighboring and European cuisines. This creates a natural foundation for building gastro-routes, festivals, and tasting programs. SWOT analysis shows that strengths (rich resources, basic infrastructure, multiculturalism) outweigh weaknesses (transport gaps, skills shortages, limited ICT uptake); opportunities (growing market demand, regional branding, youth employment) outweigh threats (currency and crisis risks, competition). Therefore, with systematic management, marketing, and higher service standards, gastronomic tourism can become a driver of regional economic growth.

As a practical example, the “Karimbek” restaurant in Samarkand (LLC “Erkin Shirin Taom”) is examined. Operating since 2004 at the Amir Temur–Gagarin intersection near the “Tomaris” hotel, it enjoys steady footfall. Opening



hours are 08:00–23:00; the menu covers Uzbek and European dishes—palov, shashlik, jiz, more than ten kebab varieties, and others. The interior and halls (a European-style hall, oriental sections, and a corporate events area) are enriched by “gastro-experience design” (ambience, live music, bar, shows). Standard meal packages (breakfast/lunch/dinner) simplify segmentation.

Operational indicators clarify the restaurant’s dynamics. Guests increased from 2,870 in 2023 to 3,540 in 2024 (+23.3%). Average revenue rose from 1,114.8 million UZS to 1,657.5 million UZS (+48.7%); occupancy increased from 50.35% to 62.11% (+11.76 p.p.). Tables per employee decreased from 2.11 to 1.97, indicating a shift toward strengthening staffing to uphold service quality. Quarterly distribution of 2024 service volume reveals seasonality: Q1 ~30%, Q2 ~20%, Q3 ~35% (peak), Q4 ~15%. Thus, capacity and speed should be managed in summer; spring–autumn can be leveled with gastro-events; and winter loads can be balanced through corporate functions and domestic tourism packages.

Policy recommendations derived from the analysis: (1) standardize fully multilingual menus with allergen/halal markings; (2) link QR menus, online booking, e-payments, and guest-feedback analytics; (3) deploy buffets at peak times while aligning table d’hôte and à la carte to segment needs; (4) strengthen branding via gastro-festivals and master classes; (5) align seasonal capacity and staffing plans to quarterly demand profiles; (6) establish packaged partnerships with travel agencies (e.g., breakfast + tasting + mini-tour).

CONCLUSION

In Uzbekistan, gastronomic tourism is not a mere add-on to the tourism product but a central avenue for value creation. International service standards (infrastructure, hygiene, safety, multilingualism), modern service formats (buffet, table d’hôte, à la carte), and digital solutions increase tourist satisfaction and the likelihood of repeat visits. The country’s multinational culinary heritage, festivals, and gastro-routes constitute a durable competitive advantage under a SWOT lens. The Karimbek case demonstrates that combining operational discipline, seasonal management, and service innovation can sustainably increase revenue, occupancy, and guest flow. Going forward, standardization, workforce development, and integrated marketing will secure a stable growth trajectory for gastronomic tourism.



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