



1 - Welcome thanks to ECTN 9th International Conference

2 - Med Diet Route: a cooperation strategy for the cultural and economic appreciation of the Mediterranean Diet

3 – Key concepts

Med Diet

Mediterranean Diet is an ancient lifestyle with expressions at multiple levels (cultural, social and territorial). It's dynamic and diverse, with many local expressions, but has some transversal key-elements:

- popular genesis
- results from the self-sufficiency and survival strategies of local communities
- implies a great respect for Mediterranean natural resources (land and sea)
- tight integration with MED agricultural cycles and the coastal dynamics
- deep knowledge of the terrestrial and marine environment
- conditioned by long and dry summers and stormy winters
- restricted by the lack of fertile soils and limited marine resources
- ancient tradition of commercial exchanges
- ancient reciprocal cultural influences on both sides of the Mediterranean
- strong values: Camaraderie, Family, Honor and Shame, Hospitality, Conviviality around food, Tolerance
- food plays a role of "total social fact" (Marcel Mauss)
- integrates a healthy food regime recognized by World Health Organization as of excellence

The Food Patterns associated with the Mediterranean Diet are marked by:

- Frugality and simple kitchen that has in its base preparations protecting nutrients such as soups, casseroles, stews and stews;
- High consumption of plant products to the detriment of consumption of food products of animal origin, including vegetables, fruit, bread quality and little refined cereals, dried and fresh legumes, nuts and oleaginous;
- Consumption of vegetables locally produced or coming, fresh and seasonal;
- Consumption of olive oil as the principal source of fat;
- Moderate consumption of dairy products;
- Use herbs to season, reducing the use of spices and salt;



- More frequent consumption of fish compared to lower and less frequent consumption of red meat;
- Consumption of low to moderate wine and only in main meals;
- Water as main drink throughout the day;
- Conviviality around the table.

Pedro Graça, "Mediterranean Diet: a multifaceted reality," in *MM dimensions*, UAlg 2015

4 - The Mediterranean

With the 2013's enlargement of the Mediterranean Diet (MD) inscription on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the international commitment for Med Diet safeguard and enhancement was assumed immediately and vigorously at various levels and this has pressured public entities for active roles and public policies aimed for the protection and safeguarding of this lifestyle, given its urgency and pertinence facing known risks:

- intensification of acculturation processes;
- unsustainable patterns of consumption;
- decreased food sovereignty;
- strong threats to cultural identity of small communities
- dramatic changes in traditional food regimes - with a strong impact in terms of public health

6 – National and regional Partnerships

In Portugal, the representative community is the Municipality of Tavira, in Algarve, a region where the Mediterranean cultural influences are more visible.

7 – Algarve

In this region, the Regional Committee for the Enhancement of the Mediterranean Diet – joining together a wide range of public and private bodies - have been doing significant efforts to endorse this ancient way of life and its fundamental principles: research, publications, education, large events, intervention projects, marketing campaigns, have brought to the forefront the Mediterranean Diet issues and have made significant contributions to the dissemination of its fundamental principles in the local communities, the media and the general public.



In Loco Association, a 30 year NGO, is a member of the committee and took the responsibility to complement the Med Diet public safeguard policies with the mobilization of local economic operators, committed to create and promote products, services and places having for distinctive and identity factors the interpretation and experience of Med Diet principles and values.

We have a clear notion that in periods of decline in public investment - like in the present - the important role of public authorities necessarily have to be complemented with private agents actions (with profit goals or not), under penalty of losing capacity and intervention range.

For geopolitical reasons, Portugal in general and Algarve region in particular are witnessing a significant growth in tourism demand, not only by the traditional mass low-cost tourism but mostly by visitors interested in life-enriching experiences. This demand pressures and stimulates the emergence of complementary products and innovative responses from operators (eco-tourism, creative tourism, cultural, gastronomic, responsible tourism, voluntourism, among others).

However, the difficulty in giving a quality response to the growing demand for tourism products "with character" and the scattered offer have been chronic problems in the Algarve region, traditionally specialized in short-term products (Sun and Sea). To mitigate the strong seasonality generated by the regional specialization, it is urgent to diversify the offer of tourism products, which happened in the past with the Golf, is starting with eco-tourism and - this is our bet - is being done by Mediterranean Diet.

8 - Cooperation Network

However, we know that there are structural and systemic limiting factors that have decreased in the past the scope and effectiveness of the organizational strategies of economic actors, especially in the South, (paradoxically, the region where Med Diet identity features are more present and available):

- predominance of fragile micro enterprises;
- weaknesses in their business models;
- low entrepreneurs and employees skills in areas complementary to production (communication, design, management...);
- hard time for networking.

However, in the past few years, a new generation of entrepreneurs is to overcome many of these barriers and to produce innovative products and services based on the resources of MD and are very interested in networking.



We explored first the capitalization of decades of community investments - much has been done in this area over the last 25 years - identifying and working primarily with a very significant number of small companies that have adopted Med Diet identity features as a basis for the development of its products and high quality services featuring unique personalities.

In addition, we mapped emerging, innovative companies, introducing a new fresh approach in traditional knowledge, old materials and ingredients. These are excellent partners, very interested in networking.

To close this group of "pioneers" we engaged the most active public authorities in the management of heritage resources, properly interpreted and accessible to the public.

The role of the regional commission has been very important because - even though In Loco's Association is responsible for the advancement of Med Diet Route - all the major options and strategies are widely discussed and receive numerous contributions from the University of Algarve, the Reg. Dir. Of Culture, Agriculture, Regional Tourism Board, CCDRALg, etc ...

In short, it is necessary to encourage stakeholders to further develop and improve products and services of touristic value, sustainable, responsible and integrated on a wide cooperation platform, drawn from the identity resources of the Mediterranean Diet. This approach can join together on the arena of conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, public and economic agents, interested in making of Med Diet their "core business".

This is the vision that guides the route of the Mediterranean Diet, shared with companies and entities responsible for over 140 features already integrated into the Mediterranean Diet Route, in five complementary types: **(9)** Local Products, **(10)** Restaurants, **(11)** Crafts, **(12)** Heritage, **(13)** and Activities/Events, joined together under a common brand: **(14)** - Med Diet Route – "Rota da Dieta Mediterrânica"

The path

For two years, a survey was conducted, evaluating and selecting "hot spots" of highest relevance to the interpretation of the Mediterranean Diet, in defined typologies, throughout the region. The prior definition of the membership criteria and a commitment agreement states the level of transparency of the process. A very fast and functional communication structure defined the involvement pace and the participation spirit of all partners. In parallel, a marketing campaign joined all members and the regional commission on building a strong and significant corporate image, welcomed with enthusiasm by the public and the media.



Images of the branding process (15-),

Achieved results

Med Diet Route (RDM) was launched in August 2015, **(30)** with twenty resources and a dozen companies. One year later, RDM includes more than 140 resources, more than seventy enterprises and twenty public entities.

RDM visibility is growing, as well as the interest of entrepreneurs in creating new products and services based on the fundamental principles of MD. **(31)** Internal cooperation is consolidated with the exchange of knowledge, products, cross-selling and the organization of complex tourism products, involving multiple partners. RDM products internationalization has also taken its first steps, on the London market. **(32)**

Entrepreneurs assume proudly being a part of RDM brand and will progressively focus their production on the Mediterranean Diet theme, instead of mass products and services. **(33)** Thus actively contributing to the conservation of intangible cultural heritage in a sustainable and innovative way, establishing the bridge with consumers. Public authorities continue to play its role, at several levels, enhancing the networking of companies and partner organizations.

Steps for the future

Earlier this year, at the annual meeting, **(34)** the diagnosis results were presented, compiled from the survey were network members expressed their needs. It was also presented an action plan for 2016. One of the goals already achieved for this year was to organize a tour by all the municipalities of the region, **(35)** carrying out awareness and information seminars for local entrepreneurs about the meaning of the Mediterranean Diet, the Med Diet business opportunities and the benefits of networking.

This year communication campaign run under the theme “Were is it? The best of the Mediterranean” **(36-37)**. With a strong presence in social media and supported by two bilingual promotion instruments, a “Discovery Map” **(38-39)** and a “Passport” **(40-41)**. Both are being distributed in all of the Algarve’s tourism offices. Digital versions are in wide circulation. We promoted several Show-Cooking in major events, like the Feira da Serra **(42)** and we organized a four day gastronomic demonstration event on the IV Med Diet Fair **(43)**, with outstanding success and more than 4.000 direct visitants, from the 40.000 that attended the fair.



We are presently working on the consolidation of the network, on the communication strategy for the low season and on the sustainability model for Med Diet Route network **(44)**.

The extension to other regions of Portugal has already begun and we have presented or are developing applications for projects where this concept can be implemented in broader geographical contexts (Iberia, European Mediterranean Arc, North and South shores of the Mediterranean).