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Vacation-time foodways. About the practice of children's participation

The present article is part of the reflection on children's exploration of boundaries, their definition of agency, and their negotiation with the surrounding world. My research interests fall within the scientific discipline of new childhood studies, the anthropology of food and the anthropology of travel. The new childhood studies have been gaining increasingly more ground, also in Poland. The discipline puts emphasis on the often-disregarded issue of children's agency, creativity and the importance of the social position of children. In this perspective, a child is seen as an autonomous social actor, deserving to be understood and described from a sociological and ethnographic perspective (Radkowska-Walkowicz 2019). New childhood studies implement the requirements enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (especially Article 12), giving children the right to express valid judgements in all matters, including about themselves and their situation (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989). They also embrace the theory of 'silent voices' in tourism and hospitality research, aimed at promoting children's rights and participation in the tourism industry, and implemented as part of a broader social justice agenda (Canosa, Schänzel 2021). Another discipline, the anthropology of food in travel, stems from the anthropology of food, conceived as "a cultural reflection on food as a universal social fact around which different metalanguages and different discourses can be gathered: identity, ludic, ethical, aesthetic" (Krupa-Ławrynowicz 2014). The anthropology of food in travel is a combination of the anthropology of travel and the anthropology of food. The meta-languages mentioned above and discourses thus address the question of what and why tourists eat or do not eat, how they react to specific foreign dishes, what culinary experiences they accumulate while travelling, and what place and role do cuisine

and culinary culture play in their itineraries (Buczkowska 2016). In theory, the existence of this sub-discipline is fully justified, but in practice, in the Polish relevant literature it has emerged only recently.

This article addresses the issue of children's participation in food choices and children's culinary attitudes and desires during travel and holidays (broadly understood as 'vacation-time foodways'). My aim is to describe the nature of children's participation and children's attitudes, based on statements made by children and their parents from the urban (capital city) upper middle class. Such participation occurs at different levels and takes different forms: from repeating and accepting, through negotiating, processing, to challenging adult decisions and attitudes. Children experience in their own individualised way, while constantly being disciplined by various cultural norms and patterns (Krawczak, Maciejewska-Mroczek, Witeska-Młynarczyk 2023). Undoubtedly, this is also the case of their dietary choices and behaviour. In this text, I wish to introduce children's voices to the public space, especially concerning such a vital issue that impacts health, vacation-related experience, the creation of eating habits, as well as social and cultural relations. As various international studies demonstrate, children's eating habits are formed early in life, and all culinary experiences from that period can influence eating preferences and behaviours in adulthood (Lupton 1994; Sandell et al. 2016). It is thus important to study the eating habits and attitudes to food within families, including among children, and during school holiday periods. Habits which translate into particular negotiating power while travelling, become a continuation of children's food-related negotiations with adults occurring daily at the family table, at school, while watching TV and through relationships with relatives. In Poland, these have been researched by, among others, Zofia Boni (2015, 2018) – and one of the important conclusions of her research is that "parents' ideas and plans are often altered under the influence of many external factors, actors and social interactions. Most important are children, who, intentionally and unintentionally, more or less consciously influence how they are fed and what they eat" (Boni 2018: 183–184). The issue of children's nutrition while travelling is also worth analysing, given that children can talk about food with remarkable curiosity and perceptiveness.

In this article, I present the results of my research among Polish children and their parents. I recount "personal micro-histories and unique biographies of children situated in a specific historical moment" (Krawczak, Maciejewska-Mroczek, Witeska-Młynarczyk 2023). I discuss them in relation to theories that have emerged in international literature on the subject, based on anthropological and sociological papers on child and family tourism.

The findings presented in this text are part of a larger research project, entitled: "The role and importance of tourism in the process of building children's culinary identity and awareness", funded by the National Science Centre, awarded under contract: 2019/03/X/HS3/00251, as part of which I conducted research with children and families during holiday trips, as well as with 5–6 year old children in three different kindergartens (urban, suburban and rural).

Vacation-time foodways

The vacation-time foodways in the title of this article is a concept that refers to two important issues: holidays and broadly conceived food-related practices. The English word foodways, encapsulates all “relations between food-related behaviours and activities and ways of participating in a given community” (Mroczkowska 2019: 219). In particular, these involve “consumption, preparation and presentation of dishes and foodstuffs, cuisine, meal arrangements, menus and menu planning, dietary rules, eating techniques, food customs, food ethos, food taboos, recipes – their use and writing them down, attendance at cooking courses, as well as eating styles characteristic of cultures other than our own” (Long 2010: 21, 23). The concept of foodways also reflects the fact that food itself is “a network of interconnected systems: physical, social (communication), cultural, economic, spiritual and aesthetic” (Long 2010: 23). These systems tend to operate differently when people are on vacation, i.e. as they take time off from school and work and from their daily responsibilities (the word ‘vacation’ derives from the Latin noun *vacatio*, meaning ‘release, liberation’, and the adjective *vaco*: ‘free’). This kind of variety and a different pace is also relevant to foodways. For example, the family of one of research participants always stops at a well-known fast-food chain during long car journeys, because: “the children need to remember that holiday is relaxed, also in terms of food” (W8K).

What do we know about children’s vacation-time foodways?

The interdisciplinarity of tourism means that research on children’s participation and their experiences of travel and holidays has been the focus of many academic disciplines (including the humanities, including ethnology and anthropology). Experts in child and family tourism (such as Small 2008; Poria, Dallen 2014; Khoo-Lattimore 2015; Rhoden, Hunter-Jones, Miller 2016; Canosa, Graham 2016, 2020; Canosa, Schänzel 2021) seem to agree and for years have been suggesting that there is too little research on travel explored from a child’s perspective, with researchers almost exclusively exploring the perspectives of adults. There is also a marked lack of specialist publications addressing, e.g., the meaning and practices related to food consumption in the context of holidays (Therkelsen 2015) based on research conducted with children (Schänzel, Lynch 2015). This has led to a gap in understanding children’s complex travel (and vacation) experience (Lehto et al. 2012; Poria, Dallen 2014; Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag, Cheah 2015). Researchers emphasise that research focusing on children’s voices, rather than just adult or expert ones, may be crucial for insights into children’s experiences of holidays and travel, and lead to the elaboration of a more inclusive overall perspective on tourism and its developments (Poria, Dallen 2014; Canosa, Graham 2022).

So far, studies of children’s vacation-time foodways have mainly been conducted among Western middle-class subjects (Schänzel, Urie, Lynch 2022) and only

recently has the concept of childhood and eating become more nuanced, including the perspective of Asian, mainly Chinese, children as well (Wu et al. 2019). Such a predominantly singular perception of childhood in tourism reflects the sore lack of intersectionality (i.e. gender, ethnicity, age and class diversity) in the relevant literature.

Among the main findings in the existing (albeit scarce) studies, I wish to stress one – that children consider food, especially novel and local food, as well as family meals, to be an important part of a memorable holiday experience (Wu et al. 2019; Schänzel, Urie, Lynch 2022). Furthermore, for most children, eating out and eating well, is – along with beaches, nice weather and entertainment – synonymous with travel and holidays (Cullingford 1995; Blichfeldt et al. 2011; Hay 2017, 2018). However, according to the children, there is a gap between their expectations and desires in terms of food or dining choices and what they get in the places they visit (Hay 2017, 2018). We also know that factors determining children and young people's food choices and behaviours are complex and often incongruous. They vary according to gender and socio-economic factors and change as the child grows older, along with changing degree of peer and parental influences on these choices (Ludvigsen, Scott 2015). It is also noteworthy, that children's culture and eating habits are also influenced by other adult groups: teachers and marketers (Sandell et al. 2016), as well as restaurant staff. Children are also influenced by many other social, mediated, religious and cultural forces. All this means that children's culinary culture is not homogeneous, but full of contradictions and tensions. To some extent, it arises in opposition to the hegemonic adult world and its dominant norms, i.e. in contrast to what, how and when adults eat, and to their ideas of how children should eat. Thus, children's culinary culture, including their vacation-time foodways, is also constituted by the adult's culinary culture (Boni 2017; Hay 2018).

Methodology: research, location, methods, research protagonists

The ethnography I present tells the story of contemporary Polish pre-school (5–6 years old) and early school (7–11 years old) children and their families who participated in an eight-day 'Mum and child' holiday camp in the summer of 2020, at a popular agrotourism farm on the border of Kurpie and Masuria regions in Poland. I explored the experience (and the resulting knowledge) as well as the role of children in vacation (tourist)-time participation and culinary choices. I paid particular attention to issues such as children's food preferences during trips, the holiday food model adopted by families, children's decision-making in terms of culinary choices, holiday culinary education and experimentation undertaken by families and children.

I chose this specific research site for several reasons. First, the summer camp offered animation activities for children (six hours a day), including the thematic sections that were key for my research: cooking workshops, farmwork and field

and garden work. The daily schedule included three meals, served as a richly varied buffet, with Polish and regional cuisine, and sometimes the cuisine of the Kresy (eastern borderlands) region. One evening, guests were treated to an outdoor regional dinner with flatbreads baked in an outdoor clay oven where they could see the flatbreads being made. Most of the food served at the camp is made from a variety of organic produce from own farm. The hosting site is certified as a 'Culinary Heritage' establishment and is part of the National Network of Educational Homesteads. As they had been making their vacation arrangements, all the families in the study paid special heed to the food: "For us, food here is a major factor, on a par with peer contact" (W2K). "The home-made food they have here was 50 per cent of my decision. The reassurance that it is homemade, healthy, of a certain quality. I explained to my son that we were going to T. to eat those tasty, healthy products that we don't eat on a daily basis. He wasn't thrilled, but he didn't complain, as he usually does" (W4K). "Yes, we definitely took it into account that there is good food here. When we came for the first time. Now we know, it has become a standard" (W1M).

The agritourism farm is located away from the road, fenced off, giving absolute privacy to the camp participants (in 2020, with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, it was particularly important). The camp was quite expensive. Eleven families (mostly mothers with children – fathers joined them on the weekends) took part in the specific camp covered by the research. Nearby, by the road, the hosts also run a restaurant with local cuisine and a farm shop. Both are popular with tourists travelling from Warsaw via Kurpie to Masuria.

I carried out the ethnographic research in line with the "Code of good practice in social sciences research with children" developed by the Interdisciplinary Childhood Studies Research Team (Interdyscyplinary Zespół Badań nad Dzieciństwem, 2019). I used two research methods. The first was non-covert participant observation (I participated in the camp together with my son, the host had informed other guests about my research). I paid attention to the children's behaviour during meals and culinary animation activities, as well as the behaviour of their parents in the context of their children's food choices. In this paper, I also present the excerpts and conclusions that have emerged from the second of my selected methods, i.e., semi-structured interviews, which I conducted with eight parents: seven mothers and one father, and eight children: four girls and four boys (one each aged 5, 7 and 11 years, the rest were 10 years old) – these were individual interviews. I would first interview the parent and then the child, without parental supervision of the child's statements. The children gave verbal consent, and I respected the instances where they changed their mind (the youngest child preferred to go and play in the middle of the interview). Narratives were fully subjective. These research methods worked well, since they are "adapted to the world and the way children communicate, allowing them to express themselves" (Reimann 2018: 139). Furthermore, during individual interviews, "the children become subjects, not objects of study, and their experience, knowledge and point of view are valuable data for the researcher" (Maciejewska-Mroczyk 2015: 257).

The families participating in the study have between one and three children. They reside in Warsaw or in metropolitan suburbs. Most live in a block of flats, and only two families have a house or a flat with a garden. All parents have a university degree and are professionals (representatives of such professions as programmer, psychotherapist, coach, legal advisor, finance specialist, engineer, analyst, translator, physiotherapist, entrepreneur, accountant, office worker). With one exception (a single mother), all families are well off and travel several times a year: they usually take two longer trips in the summer (2–3 weeks), a trip during the winter holiday and several shorter (some extended) weekend trips around Poland. The families also travel abroad. All parents are keen to provide healthy, varied nutrition for their children: at home and at school. Three families joined the camp at this location for the first time, one for the tenth time and others have participated in 2–5 camps. Five of the children in the study experience no eating problems, while one girl, Rozalka, is allergic to selected foods (W2D10), Iga lives with an eating disorder (W6D10) and Adam is on the autism spectrum and experiences severe food-related barriers (W3C10). Michał (W1C10), and Karol (W8C10) are referred to by their parents as ‘non-eaters’ (Pl. *niejadek*). Due to their considerable commonalities (representatives of the urban-capital city upper middle class, holidaying in the same resort and displaying similar eating habits in their daily lives), the described group is by no means representative.

I talked to children and their families about a variety of topics relating to ‘vacation-time foodways’, but in the following section I discuss those most pertinent in terms of participation in foodways, food preparing, choosing, and the perception of food.

Snacks and other tastes on the go

Each of the families in the study takes different snacks on their journeys and has different motivations for doing so. They make their own selection and prepare their travel supplies in a different way. It is noticeable that children are involved in different degrees: from preparing food or observation (less frequent) to total lack of participation in food preparation (most cases) and have different degrees of say in what food is packed (from a high degree of decision-making or a complete lack thereof). The aspect is not insignificant, since according to a study by B.S. Blichfeldt et al. (2011), the choice of food on the trip (and thus impact on the trip) and in a restaurant is usually considered a critical part of the holiday. Children sometimes decide what the family will eat and where they go for dinner, which they value highly.

An example of participation and involvement is Karol, who bakes his Nigella Lawson’s favourite non-crumbling dark chocolate and banana muffins with his mum for their journeys. Rozalka’s family mainly packs healthy food: sandwiches made with wholemeal bread with grilled or roasted meat, which they prepare in advance on the home gas grill, an activity in which Rozalka is happy to participate. They also pack vegetables as snacks. They are the only family

in the study who also take hot food – such as such as *gnocchi*, meat with pasta or potatoes (Rozalka's favourite dishes) – packed in thermal boxes, to be eaten with a spoon during a break in the journey. The packed food provided by Michal's family includes, in addition to the standard sandwiches, dried fruit, crackers and finger food, also the home-made beef jerky, which the dad, assisted by Michal as observer, prepares well in advance, and which both his son and daughter enjoy. "It's a protein carrier, prepared mainly for my son, a non-eater, so that he eats something nutritious as we travel" (W1M).

Apart from muffins, Karol's family also packs fruit, but only the kind that "won't make a mess in the car" and desserts in squeeze pouches for his sister "because they are not messy on the go" (W8K). The aspect of messiness is also important for the family of the boy named Stasiu, whose mum while travelling brings cooked broad beans, pieces of bread, cooked beans, cut apple pieces. There is only water to drink, although Stasiu says he would prefer juice. On long trips, Zuzia's mum packs apples, sandwiches and puffed corn snacks, not because of their taste, but mainly to keep the children occupied. In view of such parents' attitudes, the children do not participate in the preparation of the food for the journey and do not decide what to bring.

Other children took some part in decision-making, but by way of negotiation. When going on this particular holiday, Adam's mother packed broad beans and cheese, which her son had no control over (Researcher: "Do you like it?" – Participant: "Not so much," W3C10) and lollipops, which Adam demanded, while refusing to take sandwiches. Iga, on the other hand, when planning a long car journey, packs bread roll and a thin cured sausage (*kabanos*), as her previous nutritional problems have meant that she rarely feels hungry and does not eat many things (such as cheese, sweets or sandwiches). She is happy to have vegetable and fruit crisps and water while she is travelling. She learned to eat crisps at school and has been trying to persuade her mum to pack them as well when they travel. She usually succeeds. Thin cured sausage also features in Rozalka's family's travel provisions, as she has no allergic reaction to it, and according to her mum: "it's the only junk food that Rozalka can persuade us to have and we let her eat it, but only when we travel" (W2K).

Maja's family presents an entirely different model. As neither the girl nor her siblings are keen to eat the food prepared by their mum for the trip, the parents stop for meals as they travel and only bring sliced fruit, jellybeans, chocolate chips and dry snacks with them in the car. This is completely decided by the children, the parents only make decisions about where to stop along the route.

A stop on the way: the McDonald's kingdom (McD)

An important aspect of choices made at every family holiday meal is the presence of unhealthy, highly processed food included in children's menus. Parents occasionally let their children to eat such food during the holidays, of which

the children are aware (Gram 2005; Therkelsen, Blichfeldt 2012). Still, children also know that it is parents who have the final say when it comes to food choices (Connolly 2008; Boni 2017).

The families I interviewed do not regularly eat at the McD restaurants and similar food establishments (they only opt for them for trips or as a reward). The reason is that the food there is unhealthy, which all the children I interviewed knew. As Hay (2018) established in his research, these days children tend to be aware of the importance of healthy eating and diets and that some kinds of food, such as chicken nuggets, are not healthy (Hay 2018). Some of the children I interviewed may not even like the taste of the food served there: Rozalka would eat a burger with fries at McD, even though she doesn't like it and it makes her stomach heavy, but it is fun. She is allergic to other ingredients in the *Happy Meal* set, so she does not eat them. Adam, on the other hand, says that he likes French fries served in McD, but not other food on offer.

However, children mostly enjoy unhealthy food and drinks available during the holidays, though they would like to be in charge of how much they eat themselves, rather than be monitored by their parents (Hay 2018). Stasiu (whose food choices are very much controlled by his mum), on hearing about McD is enthusiastic: "Hmm... I like to go there" (W4C5). Michał and Karol are also happy when their parents suggest the family makes a stop at McD while travelling – Karol then eats quite a lot of different kinds of food there. Maja also stated: "I like McD, but my parents don't, and don't want to go there for lunch, they only agree to go when we are travelling" (W5D11).

Apart from Adam (due to his mum's strict views), all the families I talked to stop at McD while travelling. Notably, none of the parents choose the place for taste or pleasure, it is purely pragmatic. For most parents, their children's wish to visit McD are not a factor they take into consideration in making such a decision. Some see it as a kind of "unhealthy but familiar fast food," (W1M) a guarantee of safe food preventing food poisoning while on the go (W2K). Stasiu's mother mentioned a different kind of motive: "When the atmosphere in the car becomes very tense, we stop at McD, it saves the day" (W4K). Zuzia's parents' motives are different: "If there is nothing else to eat when we travel, we stop at McD. The same goes for when we get home and have nothing in the fridge" (W7K). Iga's long-standing eating-related issues mean that the family stops at McD when she requests it, to which the parents agree, as they know that their daughter will at least eat something. Karol's family approaches stopping at McD in yet another way – they usually order a tortilla, and all the family members pick their own ingredients, and for them it is more of a travel-time entertainment than satisfaction of their nutritional needs.

For the children, it is definitely key that McD is popular among their peers and that is why they want to go there, also during the holidays. Rozalka's parents stress that they go to McD because they do not want their daughter to feel excluded by the fact that she never eats at McD, while she knows children who go there frequently. For her, a meal at McD is part of a holiday adventure. It may also be a symbol of a relaxed holiday-time attitude, as for Karol's family.

McD beats local restaurants located along the family's route, because these are considered unfamiliar, suspicious, take too much time, children would be fussy if the family were to eat there. Only three families in the study opt for such places. One is Stasiu's family: they prefer such places, but they have to be recommended restaurants serving regional healthy food. Maja's family has also recently been going to recommended roadside inns: "my dad googles them up quickly, because we care about good quality food. We all like that kind of homemade food" (W5D11). The girl's words point to the children's changing food preferences – already noted by researchers in other countries – with children increasingly wishing to experience the culinary culture of their holiday destination and try new food options rather than standard *fast food* meals (Schänzel, Urie, Lynch 2022).

Regional cuisine

The food that children are given to eat, at home and elsewhere, is closely linked to the cultural practices of people and places, including those visited when travelling (Ludvigsen, Scott 2015). Depending on the journeys they have made with their families, in the country or abroad, the children I interviewed had memories of different tastes from very different places (from *oscypek* in Zakopane and *obwarzanek* in Kraków, to *kartacz* in Podlasie and Suwałki, cod in Karwia and eel in Mrągowo, to Marlenka cake with whipped cream and chocolate in the Czech Republic, chocolate, French fries and waffles in Belgium, fried shrimp and octopus in Croatia, steak and bacon in the US, escargot in Greece and *pina colada* in Cuba), so it is difficult to collate or systematise them.¹ What all these narratives have in common is the fact that children seem to remember much – tastes and their related stories – they are also relatively open to new experience and keen to try thing out. As was established by Hay (2018: 75), "on holiday children are more adventurous in their choice of food than at home, partly because holidays provide a temporary opening for them to experience the worlds of both the child and the adult." Wu et al. (2019) emphasised that children remember the local cuisine not only because it is different from their everyday meals, but also because it is associated with narratives that help them remember the place and its distinctive food. Also, children are interested in the places they visit, express curiosity about local differences in terms of food and customs, even if they only visit tourist spots. In fact, children are attentive to these differences and that is what they remember most (Cullingford 1995). Wu et al. (2019) also found that food is much more than just nutrition for children, and that new culinary experiences are essential to holiday memories and have potential influence over future food and travel behaviour.

When asked if eating food typical of a given place when you are on holiday is attractive, Michał said, with no trace of hesitation, that it is. He then added,

¹ I have collected extensive material on children's culinary knowledge and awareness, as well as home and family foodways and holiday culinary memorabilia, which will be discussed in a separate article.

"I like some food from elsewhere and for some, I find it hard to get used to it. I didn't like the Czech spaghetti, but in London, I ate everything, because there were different restaurants there." I know from his father that they did eat out in London, but the food was not a typical British fare. Apparently, the mere fact of eating out was sufficient to make a positive culinary impression on the child.

Rozalka shares another memory: "There were very good kinds of fruit in Greece, and I tried onions – they are better than in other countries. (...) I also ate a snail [escargot] there and it was an interesting taste. I wasn't sure if I could eat it. I like to try new dishes, in general – I mean, I may not like the taste, but I'm always willing to try it" (W2D10). Maja, on the other hand, tried seafood when on family holiday in Croatia. In her own words: "At first, I was disgusted, but I started to like the taste of octopus and today I like risotto with prawns and fried octopus" (W5D11). Talking about pizza in Italy, she said that the dough there is definitely better than in Poland. Both girls confirmed they were open to new flavours, even if at first they had mixed feelings about the dish. Moreover, they could appreciate differences that occur between various cuisines.

Zuzia did not speak about regional cuisine because, according to her mother: "yes, the children have been on various trips, but they have no culinary knowledge, they have not tried anything special. They have no culinary memories yet" (W7K). Similarly, Adam doesn't know anything because he doesn't travel much and according to his mum: "we need to deal with far more mundane aspects of food on a daily basis – just getting our son to eat at all" (W3K). When I asked Adam if he would eat a regional dish if his mum recommended it, Adam answered: "I would, maybe. But she doesn't recommend [anything], because she wants me to just eat something. And all the time she keeps saying that this or that is unhealthy" (W3C10) – the boy was clearly irritated with his mother.

Karol presented a completely different approach. According to his mother, the boy does not want to try new kinds of food and rejects them outright. He can get angry over his plate: "I don't want to, I won't eat it, don't make me! I said no!" (W8K). His dad sometimes tries to convince him that he should try, that it is something new, that it is delicious, but the son often resists. They once succeeded with the Polish dish called *flaki* (tripe stew) and it is now dad and son's favourite dish on every trip. When Karol talked to me about the new food he tried, called *kartacz*, he said: "I like this kind of food. Not everything tastes bad" (W8C10). This may indicate that the boy is not, in fact reticent to try any new dishes.

As I was talking to parents, I was curious about their involvement in recommending and presenting local flavours to their children and their impact on children's attitudes towards new cuisines. Parental influence seems invaluable, and previous research has shown that encouraging children to try unfamiliar food during holidays contributes to long-term changes in their eating behaviour (Organ et al. 2015) and that eating habits and choices during holidays are strongly influenced by parents' own choices (Koivisto 1999; Wilson 2016). The participants in my study, i.e., parents who are very much aware of the importance of food in their children's development – such involvement appeared to be quite

heterogeneous, ranging from explicit encouragement and inclusion of the child in new culinary experiences to a complete lack thereof and lack of any need to make such efforts.

For example, Rozalka's mother points out regional or national dishes to her daughter when they are abroad and can experience them, because she knows that despite her allergies, Rozalka is open to trying new kinds of food. But this does not happen very often, because the parents themselves report not paying much attention to such food. It is similar in Michał's family – during their holidays at the farm, his dad suggested his son tries *kartoflak*, but only praised the ingredients, without mentioning the name of the dish or its meaning. According to the father: "There needs to be something about the food for me to communicate it to the kids. I do so when we have *oscypek* for barbecue or I make beef jerky" (W1M). In other situations, he does not strive to make the children aware that the dish is attributed to the culture of the region. Just like his wife, he does not know, and he does not think it important. When they are travelling, Michał's family is not much involved in any culinary experimenting, they tend to select places and dishes that they have already tested. This is the case, for example, when they go to the seaside, where they "are not hooked on the fish" and where they eat Polish and Italian classics. Regional cuisine is also not the main focus for Maja's family, but the children "are keen to try new things," says their mother (W5K), adding: "us, adults started travelling late (we were at the university), so we explore different tastes together with our children." They made a special stop to try *kartacz* on their trip to the Białowieża Forest (following good reviews of that particular eating place), and since they all liked it, they went back there on their return journey. The children remember the dishes: "the regional ones rather stay in the children's heads" (W5K). When they visit the seaside, they eat fish all the time, because it tastes different there and "it is not the same at home" (W5D11). Maja said that her parents always let them try new dishes, but do not insist too much.

It is completely different in Stasiu's family, who consider regional character of the food important. The parents always offer their children regional dishes, but do not force the children to eat them: "We explain that it is from the region, that it is local. Stasiu is still young and doesn't pay much attention to the food, although he knows that you eat different things, geographically speaking. That's why we show pictures of regional dishes that are on the menus in restaurants and explain them to the children" (W4K).

Zuzia's mum has adopted yet another approach: "It's not that if we are by the sea, we need to eat fish. Lately it is rather difficult to find good and fresh fish. But we sometimes go and then eat it" (W7K). She prefers to avoid unfamiliar eating spots and often cooks their own food when they are on holidays by the sea, such as string beans – she can then be certain that the children will eat their lunch and there is no need to leave the beach as soon as they get a bit hungry. In general, she advocates preparing her own food for the family wherever they go, which, by definition, limits the children's opportunities to experience regional cuisine, with which – as she admitted earlier – her children are not familiar.

Karol's mum, on the other hand, told me that when on holiday, the kids can eat pizza every two days, because "the kids should know that holiday is a relaxed time, food-wise too, so eating pizza every other day is OK" (W8K). During trips they prefer to barbecue rather than visit unfamiliar eating places, offering dubious quality food. Also, "the children eat so-so in restaurants during trips; Karol has his own list."

An important aspect in the context of regional cuisine is that it is most often attributed to rural areas. The countryside is associated with familiar tastes, naturalness, tradition and wholesomeness of the food. In their research, S. Frisvoll, M. Forbord & A. Blekesaune (2016) found that local food is a means used by parents to educate their children in the spirit of the [holiday-time] 'rural idyll' and that such a symbolic function of local food plays a socialising and an educational role. Moreover, they noted that consumption of local food, especially by tourists travelling with children, has an inherent element of cultural consumption as well. This was only mentioned by two parents. Stasiu's mum told me that they chose this particular agritourism farm partly because they wanted the children – especially Stasiu – to have a general experience of the countryside and nature: "So, that the kids are aware of where the food comes from, [when they see it] in a shop or online. For them to know the whole production chain (what comes from what, for what reason and how), to learn why we don't harm animals or insects, to experience the countryside and the human labour that the land requires, to understand that people work hard to produce food; and to know the different smells of the countryside" (W4K). Stasiu's mum sees the countryside holistically, addressing various aspects of living and working in the countryside, including the broader village culture. According to Michał's dad – in a statement that referred to flat-bread making demonstration to which all holidaymakers at the farm were invited – "it is important to show and watch the whole process of food preparation, from the initial products to the final dish, for consumption. The children will remember this. And they associate it with the place. In fact, we watch this process, the whole family, every time we are here" (W1M). There is clearly a socialisation and education-related aspect involved.

Quite unintentionally, our conversations about the place of regional cuisine in the family's vacation-time foodways provided several parents with an important educational element and triggered serious reflection. My interlocutors highlighted issues that they had not previously noticed or considered important, despite the fact that as parents, they have a real, significant impact on them. The father of Michał and Jagoda stated:

Participant: So, if we prepared something and pointed it out [to kids], it would have a tangible impact.

Researcher: You refer to a situation when you would stress the regional character?

Participant: Yes. I think this kind of education and awareness, that there are different kinds of food in different regions or parts of the world, it would be

much increased. They are aware, because they watch a lot of nature and travel documentaries. When we are travelling, Michał in fact pays attention to what people are eating (W1M).

This observation fits with the theory developed by S. Rhoden, P. Hunter-Jones & A. Miller (2016: 426), who found that “even on package holidays, children were discerning observers of differences in dress, manners, food and language”. Rozalka’s mother seemed to share a very similar reflection when she stated:

My daughter knows that pizza is from Italy because she ate it there, and she knows some Indian dishes, because her English tutor in the kindergarten was from India. But I don’t think she knows that sushi is from Japan, because we didn’t tell her about it. Only now I see there is a gap, a hole. I’m used to enjoy other culture’s cuisine on a daily basis, but it didn’t occur to me to tell Rozalka about this. (...) Rozalka would know more for sure, if I highlighted it (...) She is very open to such information (W2K).

Zuzia’s mother voiced a similar reflection: “I didn’t pay attention to telling them about it, about this regional character, but I think I have to change that – they could get curious about it and start asking: this is made of what? Why? Mum, do they only eat it there?” (W7K).

The feeling of safety and independence and children’s approaches to food

Hay (2018) found that children, like adults, want to be seen as customers in their own right. They express their need for greater fluidity in the provision of services and different kinds of food offered to children, and a need for a safe space to make their own decisions about food. This is the feeling that Rozalka and her mother shared with me, as they told me they were happy that the farm offered Rozalka her own menu and the lady cooks try very hard and adapt the dishes to fit Rozalka’s allergy restrictions. Rozalka feels like a fully-fledged group member here. “The first time we came here, I discussed everything with the kitchen staff, but I didn’t think it would work so fine. Even though there is a lot of other food on the table that Rozalka could eat, she is always served her own main dish” (W2K). Unsurprisingly, the girl is enthralled by the food offered at the farm, she likes to eat a lot, but she is a disciplined eater and knows what food could cause her harm. She told me: “I know everything here is so fresh, and it makes me so happy too, because I know that food is made here, and especially for me too. And it is delicious.”

Hay (2018) discussed the safe space theory, stating that it is important for children to spend time in safe, comfortable places. Dining establishments with buffet meals appear to be such places, as they offer an informal, homely family

dining experience. In these places, children perceive behavioural norms as less restrictive than in formal restaurants. Moreover, children expect hotel food services to provide both nutritious food and a product that meets their emotional and social expectations. In the holiday resort where I conducted my study, the local ambience and individual approach to child guests, buffet offered at all meals and healthy local cuisine (children experience the production of meals during activities in the field, farm and garden and educational walks around the property), as well as children's participation in cooking workshops, all result in a situation where "coming here, the children keep saying that they like the food here" (W1M), where Jagoda eats everything that is available, Michał eats a bit less, but never fails to eat, telling himself that "it is made of the local pigs" and "I like it, I really like it. I don't eat everything here, but I also don't leave everything [on the plate]" (W1C10). Adam definitely eats more when he is here than at home. He said: "I'm a bit of a non-eater. But now, here, in the last few days I've been eating a lot" (W3C10).

Hay (2018) also writes about how enabling children to make their own food choices means recognising their growing power within family relationships. Stasiu told me with a smile: "I really like breakfast here. I make my own sandwich, I put sweet things on it. Because I really like honey" (W4C5). Maja is similarly happy, because she likes the fact that she can choose what she wants to eat. She accepts that she has to include vegetables (a requirement imposed by her mum). Maja's mother emphasised that her children choose what they want to eat during the trip. "They eat lunches, soups too. I don't keep an eye on the older ones, what exactly they choose, but I saw that they also ate regional [food]" (W5K). Iga has been choosing the food there herself for two years. Before that, her mum used to choose for her, but now she trusts her daughter will eat, though she knows the girl tends to eat the same things over and over again and is not keen to try anything new. Karol likes his lunches very much, he takes an extra helping of soup, although his list of acceptable dishes is usually pretty short. That's why his mum has given up and no longer objects to her son eating mainly sweet breakfasts here. Something else suits Adam – the fact that he can manage his own time, that activities are not compulsory: "I did not join the dumpling-making because I wanted to sleep. But tomorrow I'm going to bake cakes, because I may enjoy it" (W3C10). The power to make decisions and independent choices will also be evident in the way Stasiu prepares dumplings, as discussed below.

Culinary workshops: the "cherry on top" of holiday participation

Children's memorable culinary experiences are created through activities that involve them in cooking meals together. This enhances their enjoyment of food and provides added value to their overall holiday experience, including learning experience (Hay 2018). I was thus not surprised to find out that during their holiday on the farm, all the children took part in cooking workshops – some they enjoyed more, some less, but even children with eating disorders or those who had

been there before, tried not to miss out on these workshops. Each child, however, seemed to have a different idea of participation.

For some children, it was important to taste what they were cooking, not necessarily the activity itself. Iga has been at the farm for ten holiday rounds already, so she only goes to selected workshops. Talking about jam making, she said: "It was brilliant to taste it, but making it was not much fun" (W6D10). In contrast, she enjoys making cookies, but does not like eating them and instead offers them to her mother. The latter attitude: an activity being more fun than tasting the food, was also shared by Zuzia's brother, who made the dumplings but did not eat them, setting them aside them for his dad. Zuzia did not eat them either, but according to her mother, "it was all about making it" and "it suited them, they had fun." Stasiu, on the other hand, contributed amazing creativity and individuality to dumpling preparation - he made them in his own way, without the help of his mum or the lady cook - he was very clear, he did not want any assistance. His mother and I were to be mere observers. Stasiu formed large balls of dough, which he did not roll out, but kneaded flat and filled with berries that he pressed inside. They did not much resemble dumplings, but he was very proud of himself. Mum's reflection? - "Stasiu cooks with his whole self. That is his temperament. I cut him some slack there, so it came out the way it did. They were not great, but I didn't want to spoil his fun. And then he ate it all nicely" (W4K) (the outcome of the boy's labours visible in Photographs 1 and 2).



Photograph 1. Stasiu's dumplings



Photograph 2. Stasiu's dumplings side by side with dumplings made by other children

Source: Photo by the author.

Source: Photo by the author.

Culinary workshops also have an aspect of creating memories, combined with enjoyment and recreating the taste of food in one's imagination. Michał's father emphasised: "The children looked forward to pickling cucumbers again. What stays with them is the dumplings and cakes they made themselves" (W1M). Rozalka shared similar thoughts: "Last year there was the dumpling-making

workshop, and I made my own [dumplings], with goat's cheese, a kind of *ruskie* [potato and cottage cheese dumplings]. I remember they were very tasty" (W2D10).

According to Hay (2018), children perceive cooking under the supervision of the hotel kitchen staff as extremely enjoyable and "providing added value to their holiday experience but also as a learning experience, which they could adopt at home" (Hay 2018: 85). Among other things, it triggers reflection on the differences in the ways food is cooked at home and during the workshop. Maja, for example, noted that: "Making dumplings was fun, but my mum teaches me to put the edges together differently, without using the cake cutter; she does it nicely, I can't do it as nicely as she does. But here, with this cake cutter, it is an interesting way to do that, I will try it at home" (W5D11).

Conclusion

The narratives by children and their parents about their vacation-time foodways, the first such record in the Polish anthropological literature, enable a basic conclusion forming a starting point for further research. While traveling and on vacations children co-create the social world together with adults in a very clear and extremely engaged way, having greater freedom of action and agency and a greater influence on the choices they make. Parents, themselves eager to surrender to the holiday rhythm, seem to readily accept such freedom and grant it to their children. Such agency is expressed in various ways: children often willingly repeat and imitate the culinary behavior of adults, e.g., during cooking workshops, visits to restaurants or when preparing snacks for the trip. Secondly, children constantly negotiate with their parents which dishes and snacks they really want to eat (such as fast food, sweets) or which they definitely do not want to eat during holidays (such as sandwiches, associated with school). In doing so, they are able to challenge adult decisions and attitudes by categorically refusing to eat a specific kind of food. Children also process, in their own individualised way, what parents say, e.g., about unhealthy food. They wish to make their own food choices, while knowing the limits and consciously accepting them. Their parents usually allow them to do this on holiday. Finally, children are open to novelties, but only in a safe environment and with full parental involvement in these initiatory participations. They are more open to it than parents may initially think.

The conversations about vacation-time foodways also tell us quite a lot about the attitudes of the families in the study towards food in general, in everyday family relationships, providing insights into these relationships themselves. They echo Hay's (2018: 71) conclusion that the food that children consume forms a lens through which adult-child relationships can be examined. Often, vacation-time foodways bring families together and are a source of memorable pleasure and shared experience, sometimes generating the need to change individual family members' attitudes, including their approaches to food (e.g., through parents' reflections on the need to emphasise regional character of the dishes during meals while

travelling). At other times, they may cause greater or lesser family tensions. However, they never go unnoticed, becoming an important part of any family escapade.

Holidays also turn out to be a good space for the development of culinary tourism and culinary education, as could be read between the lines in the statements of some of the participants above (especially Maja and Rozalka). However, there is a need for further research to investigate this topic.

The micro-histories I presented above show a certain consistency, which was mainly due to the group under study was entirely composed of upper middle class urban dwellers from the capital city (and thus displayed the same socio-economic and class characteristics), spent their holidays in the same resort (enjoying a certain renown) and presented similar eating habits in their daily lives. The conclusions I presented applied to all the children in the study (except for some specific aspects concerning Iga and Adam and related to the impact of an illness and the parents' experience of it). Gender-wise, children's vacation-time foodways demonstrate an aspect of the intersectionality emphasised in the childhood studies literature. I interviewed four girls and four boys. The girls (especially Rozalka and Maja) appeared to be more interested in new tastes than the boys, talked more about their culinary experiences, were less picky eaters, and required less attention from their parents in terms of food choices. However, these conclusions are not representative due to the fact that gender was not a variable that I assumed to be a dependent when recruiting research participants. Nevertheless, it is an aspect that deserves future attention.

tłum. Katarzyna Byłów

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SUMMARY

Vacation-time foodways. About the practice of children’s participation

The article is based on interviews with children and their families on various topics related to vacation-time foodways, in particular related to the phenomenon of preparing, selecting and receiving food. I present children’s voice on this issue, which is still little known. My aim is to describe the nature of the nature of children’s participation and attitudes participation and children’s attitudes, presented in the literature on the basis of the utterances of children and their parents from the urban upper middle class.

The narratives I analyze enable understanding that while traveling and on vacations children co-create the social world together with adults in a very clear and extremely engaged way, having greater freedom of action and agency and a greater influence on the choices they make. This happens in various ways: children often willingly repeat

and imitate the culinary behavior of adults, others constantly negotiate with their parents about the dishes and snacks they really want to eat or which they definitely do not want to eat on holiday. At the same time, they can question adults' decisions and attitudes, categorically refusing to eat some type of food. Children also process in their own individual way what their parents say, e.g. about unhealthy cuisine. Children want to make their own food choices, knowing the limits and accepting them. They are open to new things, but only in a safe environment and with the full involvement of parents in these initial participations. They are more open and willing to this than parents initially think.

Keywords: new childhood studies, anthropology of food in travel, children, holidays, foodways