

Gastro-Experiences for Children: Practical Kitchen Workshops, Gastro-Museums and Events

 Muhammet Erbay¹

 Fatma Nur Urganci²

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Abstract

Gastronomy is a valuable field for children of all ages, fostering a sense of responsibility, teaching teamwork and healthy eating, while also developing survival, art, craft, numeracy, and motor skills. Including children in this area in their daily lives and holidays will enhance their self-confidence and abilities, enabling them to become social and active individuals. The controlling parenting style in society has gradually given way to supportive parenting, and as a result, children's role in the purchasing process has become more active. An example of this approach's reflection in the tourism sector is "child-friendly" hotels. A part of its cultural reflection is children's museums and trips that incorporate local culinary elements. This study focuses on the aspects of gastronomy activities carried out for children. In this context, the research question was determined as "To what extent are activities available for children to experience gastronomy?" By focusing on institutions such as museums, farms, hotels, and workshops that offer experiences for children to access and interact with gastronomy, and by examining their websites and Instagram accounts, as well as conducting some phone calls, the hypothesis was established: "There are events and opportunities for children to experience gastronomy, but they are in a developmental stage and need to increase." In light of the obtained data, the aim was to compile the gastronomy-related opportunities offered by child-friendly hotels, gastronomy museums, local culinary tours, and cooking activities for children, thereby creating a resource for literature. While many countries such as America, Germany, and France have diversified and designed innovative approaches in this field specifically for children, it has been observed in Turkey that a large majority of innovative initiatives in terms of gastronomy activities for children, both in hotels and tours, and in events and museums, are carried out in the Istanbul destination. There is a need for these activities to increase.

Keywords: Gastronomy experience, Gastronomy museums, Food workshops, Gastronomy events, Children and Gastronomy

¹ Selçuk University, Faculty of Tourism, Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Art, Konya, Türkiye.

Corresponding Author: merbay@selcuk.edu.tr

² Selçuk University, Institute of Social Science, Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Konya, Türkiye.



1 Introduction

In addition to travelling with their families, many children's travel experiences are shaped by activities such as school trips, field visits, and ski courses conducted within the context of formal education (Kotíková & Schwartzhoffová, [2016](#)). Childhood is a critical developmental period during which individuals can learn and internalize information most easily (Speyer et al., [2021](#)). The activities offered during this period both excite children and make them open to learning (Lau & Lee, [2021](#)). Indeed, such activities continue to be developed in various areas that attract children's interest (Skalstad & Munkebye, [2022](#)). Gastronomy stands out as an important discipline among these areas, appealing not only to adults but also to children, integrating learning with entertainment (Balderas-Cejudo et al., [2021](#)). Gastronomy-based activities, with content adaptable to all age groups, offer individuals the opportunity to have a good time, acquire new knowledge, and experience different things (Yıkımlı et al., [2024](#)).

Especially gastronomy events organized for children contribute to the development (Ares et al., [2024](#)) of their cognitive and motor skills by supporting gamification, interaction, and application-based learning (Dean et al., [2021](#)). According to Erdoğan and Kuşoğlu ([2024](#)), active games are among the effective learning methods that contribute to children's individual development by physically and mentally engaging them (Kaimara et al., [2022](#)). In this context, the creation of gamified kitchen environments in the design of gastronomy events for children is of great importance (Santos et al., [2025](#)). Arranging the decoration to appeal to children's visual perception (Itzhak et al., [2022](#)) and designing event venues as both play areas and real kitchens, restaurants, or patisseries, facilitates children's active participation in this process. Gastronomy museums, in this regard, offer children the opportunity to establish interactive contact with cultural heritage (Daga et al., [2022](#)), transforming food culture into an enjoyable learning experience with interactive exhibitions that support tactile, visual, and experiential learning (Feliu-Torruella et al., [2021](#)). These museums allow children to explore culinary traditions from the past to the present while also introducing them to cultural diversity (Park et al., [2022](#)). Similarly, cooking workshops specially organized for children offer both practical and social learning opportunities, imparting basic kitchen skills such as measuring, mixing, cooking, and presentation, as well as teamwork and a sense of responsibility.

In addition, gastronomy-themed events for children, such as junior chef competitions, local taste days, or family-child cooking workshops, offer significant contributions from both an educational and socio-cultural perspective (Göktaş, [2024](#)). These activities enable children not only to acquire healthy eating habits but also to develop cultural heritage awareness and express their creative skills through gastronomy. As a result, gastronomy activities for children offer multi-layered benefits such as gamified learning, cultural interaction, practical experience, and social development (Richards, [2021](#)). However, it is observed that activities in this field are still limited in number and regionally concentrated in Turkey (Gençer & Gençer, [2018](#)). While gastronomy-focused applications for children are being implemented more systematically and widely in countries such as the United States, Germany, and France, applications in Turkey are mainly concentrated in large cities like Istanbul and harbor potential for development (Deveci et al., [2013](#)). In this context, the primary objective of the study is to assess the scope and current status of gastronomy-focused applications within tourism activities designed for children, and to contribute to the literature by highlighting the development potential of this field.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Gastronomy Experience

People participate in various activities in their leisure time, apart from their responsibilities and work lives, for reasons such as resting, exploring different places, learning new things, experiencing new joys, and living new pleasures (Aktuna & Ünlüönen, [2017](#)). Gastronomy is a

beautiful and delicious food system beneficial for health, and can also be defined as the art of eating and drinking that allows individuals to socialize (Lee & Bucher, 2023). A gastronomy experience is when an individual explores different tastes in their free time, carrying the act of eating and drinking into a social context, performing it as an enjoyable and pleasurable experience (Eröz & Bozkurt, 2015). Nutrition is a basic need that ensures the continuity of life (Chee, 2024). Cooking has transformed into an artistic and scientific activity today. Activities for families are helpers that enable their children to develop and equip their minds and skills. Gastronomy as a children's activity is eye-opening and peer-interactive (Sheldon, 1986). It makes significant contributions to children in terms of continuing their lives healthily, ensuring their interest in art and science, and socializing. Talented children in the field of gastronomy find the opportunity to discover themselves in activities such as kitchen workshops.

2.2 Gastronomy and Children

Gastronomy is defined as a pleasant and delicious kitchen arrangement, well-organized and suitable for health (Hatipoglu, & Batman, 2014). Gastronomy researches, produces, and explains by prompting thought on the most beneficial and best forms of consumption habits for human beings, which vary according to cultures (Sarıışık & Özbay 2015). A child is in interaction with their environment from the moment they are born. In this context, the environment is the most important component directly affecting child development (Erdoğan & Kuşoğlu, 2024). Every child of primary school age receives a certain amount of pocket money from their family (though the amount may vary according to the family budget). One of the foremost items children of this age are eager to spend money on is food types (Chee, 2024). Children who receive financial education from their families learn thrift and money management. Similarly, children who have learned healthy eating from their families are more careful in their food choices when buying junk food and eating. However, not every child may have the opportunity to learn this information from their families. Children whose families are not yet aware of healthy eating, reading ingredients, and organic nutrition (McManus et al., 2021) will have to eat unhealthily until they encounter gastronomy and will think this is normal (McManus et al., 2021). This is because there is no existing education system that teaches children proper nutrition. The hyperactivity we often encounter in children is related to unconscious nutrition. It is necessary to pay attention to factors harmful to every human being, from genetically modified foods to additive foods containing substances harmful to the nervous system. Especially from the perspective of children, the harm of these to the developing brain structure can be much greater (Abalı, 2012). Childhood is one of the most important points in an individual's development. The foods eaten determine what kind of person we will be. While eating habits are effective in many physical illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, etc., nutrition is also very important in psychological illnesses (Raza, 2021). Especially in an age where such serious diseases are common in children, the importance of learning healthy eating from the ground up is better understood (Varela et al., 2024). In the last thirty years, obesity rates in children and adolescents have increased worldwide. The most important reason for this increase is the decrease in children's physical activity times and the negative changes in their eating habits and food preferences with developing technology (Deleş, 2019). For this reason, it is important to introduce children to gastronomy as early and as productively as possible. Gastronomy encourages people to cook at home, learn about food ingredients, and read labels. Parents who prepare meals with their children, take them to cooking workshops to encourage learning, revive the sense of discovery by touring gastronomy museums, participate in gastronomy tours, and ensure their children learn about food ingredients are parents who provide gastronomy education to their children. These educations result in physical and personal development. Receiving nutrition education and participating in gastronomy activities during childhood enables children to become healthy, social, self-confident, and self-sufficient individuals.

2.3 Family Tourism

Family tourism refers to family members spending time outside their usual living environment, solely to spend time with each other, away from other work. Families' holiday expectations have changed compared to previous years, due to the shift in the classic family concept. The needs of a family with children on holiday differ from those of individuals traveling alone (Yılmaz, [2007](#)). Today, parents are more conscious than in the past about child-rearing, child development, and learning through activities. The conscious parenting approach requires dedication to providing good conditions for children and support from pedagogical science teachings according to the child's developmental stages in the journey of parenthood. It is also a model where awareness of the child increases, and the child's needs and desires are supported in all situations. The increasing importance given to children and the development in communication technology are also changing the child's role and influence on family purchasing decisions. Parents' attitudes towards their children guide their attitudes in fulfilling their children's wishes (İslamoğlu, [2003](#); Karalar et al., [1997](#)). Modern parents prioritize their children's holiday expectations and thus know that they can also have a productive holiday, comparing holiday options for this purpose. At this point, to make the offered tourism product stand out from others, customer desires and needs must be understood correctly. The concept of a child-friendly or family-friendly hotel is a package that offers all the needs of parents together. In such hotels, the comfort of the family and the children's tourism experience are prioritized together. When families embark on a tourism search, they consider the child-friendly quality and the opportunities offered under this umbrella. Investing in family tourism brings advantages to businesses in terms of diversifying the market, increasing holiday value, gaining a reliable image, and acquiring loyal customers.

2.4 The Concept of Family

In its general definition, a family is a social environment in which an individual is situated from the moment they are born, providing the necessary care and support for them to continue their life (Bayer, [2013](#)). Elements such as technological modern society, nuclear or extended family structures, industrialization, urbanization, and the understanding of democracy within the home have changed the family structure over time. Despite structural changes, the family's position remains the place where an individual establishes their roots in the world. The initial life experiences an individual has within the family will significantly affect their future life periods (Karataş [2001](#)). Many sources have avoided giving a clear definition of family and have instead focused on the functions of the family according to certain approaches. This is because the feeling, connotations, and place of the family in one's life vary for everyone in various measures such as social, economic, demographic, and psychological. According to Galvin et al. ([2006](#)) social constructionist definitions of family: it is a network of human relationships who share their lives for long periods through marriage, blood, cohabitation, formality, or other forms; who consider themselves a family, share a certain history, and exhibit working characteristics within family relationships (Pehlivan, [2017](#)). According to another definition, a family is 'A group characterized by cohabitation, economic cooperation, and procreation. It includes two adults of opposite sexes with a socially approved sexual relationship between them, and one or more children of their own or adopted children ' (Murdock, [1949](#)).

2.5 The Concept of Child

The definition of childhood, its duration, how children should be, what can be expected from them, and how we experience these as adults have been the focus of many fields of study (Erdiller-Yatmaz et al., [2018a](#)). A child is the foundation of humanity, and for this reason, understanding the concept of a child and knowing how childhood should be spent plays an important role for society. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every human being up to the age of eighteen, except in cases of early maturity, is defined as a child (Şirin, [2011](#)). According to the Turkish Language Association, the concept of a child, defined as a girl or boy of young age, is generally also defined as a human offspring (Karadağ, [2013](#)). The perception of

adults towards children varies from person to person. Sometimes a child is expressed with vulnerable and innocent emotions, while other times they are considered a passive being who undertakes great tasks for society. According to Wall (2010), childhood reflects purity, simplicity, and harmony with nature. Children are indicators of goodness. They should be appreciated, allowed to grow with care, and protected. This way, children can express the essence they possess in their nature and preserve their potential to rescue corrupted societies (Erdiller-Yatmaz et al., 2018b).

3 Practical Kitchen Workshops, Museums, And Events For Children

3.1 Gastronomy Museums

Gastronomy museums undertake the mission of exhibiting and promoting the culinary culture of their region, prominent gastronomic products, and food preparation and cooking methods. Some gastronomy museums can also be thematic, focusing on a single gastronomic product (Çekal et al., 2022). In short, gastronomy museums are areas where information about food can be obtained. The way food is exhibited in these areas is very diverse. Throughout history, cooking utensils have been exhibited, historical recipes and foreign culinary cultures presented, and nutritional facts and biological functions explained in various forms in museums and cultural areas (Rachel, 2022).

Children's museums, on the other hand, are continuous and independent non-profit organizations that, in line with the principles of traditional museology—collecting, preserving, documenting, and exhibiting collections—are based on child development, research, collect, and preserve information and materials about the present, past, and future life, acknowledging that children are part of their environment and culture, and exhibit them for the education of not only children but all humanity. However, children's museums differ from museums established for adults in terms of operation, purpose, spatial design, and physical characteristics. Supporting children's perceptual functioning with spaces that can activate multiple senses is one of the fundamental characteristics of children's museums (Ataci, 2020). Gastronomy museums allow children to look more closely at and interact with cultural cuisines, food ingredients, and their history.

Table 1: Explanatory presentation of gastronomy experiences offered for children by some gastronomy museums in the world and Turkey.

Gastronomy Museums' Experiences for Children	Gastronomy	Description
Gastronomy Museum - Greece		Located in Psyri, Athens, this modernly adapted historical museum was voluntarily established to convey Greek culinary culture and history to its visitors. It features cultural cooking tools and an exhibition of foods used in dishes, along with a themed restaurant. An interactive children's program called 'A Museum in the Oven' is organized for children aged 5-11 to adopt Greek gastronomy cultural values (Museum of Greek Gastronomy, 2015).
The Children's Museum of Indianapolis - USA		Within the scope of the 'Taste of Greece' program, it offers activities such as witnessing meals in Greek life and celebrations, examining original ingredients of traditional cuisine, and obtaining recipes to try at home (Tripadvisor, n.d.a).
Choco Story Chocolate Museum Brugge/Belgium		School children are considered a separate group for the museum. This group has a chocolate workshop where they can draw with chocolate, make nut and chocolate confectionery, and take their handmade chocolates home. Stories and an interactive tour are organized to learn the history of chocolate. Chocolate making and tasting stages are observed with children. There is an opportunity to meet with chocolate experts and a library containing information about cocoa and chocolate (Choco Story Brugge, n.d.).
Hershey's Chocolate World		Located in New York, Las Vegas, Canada, and Singapore, this is a colorful and fun museum decorated specifically for children. It features a children's and family theater related to chocolate and sweets, a special wagon tour of chocolate, and confections where visitors choose their ingredients. It offers chocolate-designed mascots, self-creation of treats, special menus

	for children in the dining section including pizza, apple puree, macaroni and cheese, and creative food, dessert, and drink recipes made with chocolate (Hershey's Chocolate World, n.d.).
Schokoladen Museum	This chocolate museum in Germany offers guided tours for school groups, chocolate tasting, chocolate making workshops, and a garden to teach about cocoa cultivation (Schokoladen Museum, n.d.).
Discovery Museum	In the kitchen section made of toy materials in the Istanbul Bahçeşehir area, children can be chefs, waiters, or customers. In the greengrocer section, children can explore categorized fruits and vegetables depicted and explained on the display (Discovery Museum Istanbul, 2023).
MSA Museum	It serves as a gastronomy archive with over two thousand artifacts, ranging from Ottoman Turkish cuisine to Republican era Turkish cuisine. Additionally, 185 artifacts of the museum are published in three virtual exhibitions. MSA, which has many workshops for children, also offers children the opportunity to learn kitchen history (MSA the culinary arts, n.d.).
Pelit Chocolate Museum	Located within the Pelit Factory building in Esenyurt, this patisserie workshop offers various options for children, making them part of the production atmosphere as it is inside the factory. Architectural ideas such as glass areas have been designed to show children the manufacturing process. At the same time, scenes have been staged in the corridor to activate children's imagination. There are mini kitchens for children's pastry and kitchen chef workshops and special toilet areas for their needs. The chocolate museum was established inspired by a child who asked "how are the ingredients for the cake made?" as a result of surveys conducted with children visiting the factory. Here, the establishment of a brand is narrated, and there are exhibitions of ingredients used in chocolate making, chocolate fountains, and works of art made from chocolate. The Chocolate Museum presents masterpieces of world art, fairy tale characters, and sculptures of famous legends made from chocolate to chocolate and art lovers (Tripadvisor, n.d.e).

3.2 Food Workshops and Kitchen Workshops

Within the changing perception of our age, interdisciplinary workshops, as one of the most important reflections of intelligence and creativity, contribute to the development of alternative thinking skills in individuals. Workshop lessons, which provide students with multiple and optional learning areas, enable them to demonstrate their creativity in every field, and also lead to the emergence of original works (Öztütüncü, [2016](#)). As quoted from Perkins, the power of expressing thoughts is possible through access to different information and acquisition of experience (Perkins as cited in Özkök, [2005](#)). Kitchen workshops are sensory and social activities that enhance basic skills, self-confidence, productivity, and a sense of responsibility, while also developing healthy eating, self-sufficiency, and the discovery of tastes.

Table 2: Explanatory presentation of current kitchen workshops and food workshop examples for children.

Food Workshops' Experiences for Children	Gastronomy	Description
Kids & Us		Located in many countries worldwide, this workshop, which covers ages 3-10 and uses recipes from Anglo-Saxon culture, is also referred to as US schools. The main goal of the business is to teach children the English language, but as an option, activities in English can be done with vocational workshops. In the "cooking workshop for children" category, children are taught to make no-bake oatmeal cookies, banana cookies, yogurt parfaits, or apple-grape salad. There are no branches in Turkey (Kids & Us, n.d.).
Izmir Menemen Children's Village		In the children's village, which has separate child-designed buildings for many vocational workshops, there is also a cooking workshop (Menemen Municipality n.d.).
Bubble Up Entertainment Center		Located in Istanbul Bahçeşehir, this center offers various workshops for children. In the kitchen workshop, children make cookies, pizza, cupcakes, candy apples, and sushi with chefs. In these activities,

KidZania	children wear chef hats and aprons and decorate food according to their imagination with rich options (Bubble Up Entertainment Center, 2022). It is a children's country with its own language, flag, and administration. Children aged 1-14 have the opportunity to experience different professions. Among these professions is kitchen chef. Children can experience cooking closely by doing workshops in the kitchen here. There are gastronomy activities divided into sections such as a chocolate factory, donut academy, sushi restaurant, chefs academy, confectionery factory, and local cuisine. The establishment offers children a wide range of food ingredient options and supports children's imagination and creativity (KidZania Istanbul, 2024)
KidzMondo	Children who have the opportunity to role-play and experience different professions can become chefs here if they wish. There are pizza and hamburger making workshops, themed cooking days such as Christmas cookie and breakfast cereal making, and birthday celebrations with special cakes and treats (kidzmondo a childrens world, 2014), (Kidzmondo Beirut, 2017).
MSA	Workshops for young children are held within the scope of programs such as 'Cooking: The School of Holidays', 'Cooking with Mom', 'Cooking with My Child', 'Little Gourmet Cooking', 'Little Gourmet Lunchbox', 'Little Gourmet Pastry', 'Little Gourmet Food Preservers', 'Little Gourmet My Pasta'. These workshops include basic cutting and cooking techniques, knife selection, kitchen safety, hygiene, equipment, food preservation training, as well as sushi, vegetable egg noodles, artichokes with olive oil, fillet, sea bass, chicken leg, pasta dough and sauce preparation, lasagna, ricotta, fettuccine, pizza, salad, lamb leg, rice pilaf, turkey, grilled chicken wings, crispy chicken leg, coleslaw salad, chicken shish, potatoes, shrimp, grilled salmon, arugula salad, pancake, smoothie, nacho, sandwich, flapjacks, almond milk, focaccia, vegan bowl, cheese burger, taco, pulled bun, lemonade, chocolate making, cupcake, profiterole, frosting, mosaic cake, simit, scrambled egg, chicken wrap, fruit pizza, rolled pastry, mini balls, fish croquettes, baked vegetables, cake, cookies, brownie, bolognese sauce, babka, toast bread, hamburger bun, sponge cake, pastry cream, ganache, purslane salad, rolled meatballs. At the end of the training, a certificate and chef's apron are given in the children's name. The aim is for children to cook freely in the kitchen and become future chefs (MSA Culinary Arts Academy, n.d.).
USLA	Located in Istanbul, the professional culinary academy offers a 'Chocolate with Children' workshop event. Here, children are taught to make milk rochers with pretzel crackers, chocolate candy apples, and almond white bark. This training provides a personalized certificate and digital recipe. Parental attendance is mandatory for children aged 6-10 (Usla, n.d.).
EKS Culinary Academy	The 'Children Chefs in the Kitchen' workshop program provides mini pizza, baked potato, and cocktail sauce training for the 9-12 age group (EKS Mutfak Atölyesi, n.d.).
Eataly Kitchen Workshop	Within the scope of the 'Little Hands Make Pizza' project, pizza margherita and calzone con nutella making are taught to children aged 5-9. Additionally, with the 'Mother Child' workshop program, mother's meatballs and forest fruit cake making are carried out with the participation of mothers for children aged 5-9 (Eataly Mutfak Atölyesi, n.d.).
Chef's Istanbul Kitchen Workshop	The 'Cooking Course for Children' program aims to introduce children to the kitchen. Training is provided in making tomato sauce spaghetti, chocolate cake, pudding, carrot balls, pancakes, meatballs, crispy chicken, shish kebab, omelette, baked potatoes, vegetable rice, potato pastry. It is an individual activity for children without parental participation (Chefs İstanbul Atoyles, n.d.).
Kahve Dünyası	At the Veli Efendi Kahve Dünyası factory in Istanbul, children aged 4-10 are taught how to make chocolate from cocoa beans. Children make various chocolates with master chefs and receive a certificate (Kahve Dünyası Atölye, n.d.).
Kdz Ereğli Private Ceceli Kindergarten	Many nurseries in Turkey have kitchen workshops and provide kitchen

and Nursery "Single Example of Nursery Activities"

education to children. In the kitchen workshop for children studying at Kdz Ereğli Private Kindergarten and Nursery, values such as making cake, cookies, pastry, pickles, pizza, salad, candy apples, pancakes, and cooking as a team and eating together are taught (Ceceli Kindergarten, n.d.).

3.3 Other Activities

With the increasing interdisciplinary approaches in education today, gastronomy is not only considered a food production process; it is also evaluated as a holistic learning area that supports pedagogical, cultural, and psychosocial skills. In this context, gastronomy activities for children are not just an occupation where food preparation skills are acquired, but also come to the forefront as a versatile educational tool that supports cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development areas. Gastronomy-based activities contribute to the development of children, especially those of preschool and primary school age, in areas such as hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, healthy eating habits, group work, self-regulation skills, and creativity (Çelik & Kaya, 2020). These activities offer multi-sensory learning opportunities as they support children to learn by touching, smelling, and tasting foods. This is highly functional in terms of creating lasting learning and meaningful experiences (Gardner, 1999). Furthermore, structured gastronomy activities such as kitchen workshops offer important opportunities for children to take responsibility, adhere to hygiene rules, and gain awareness of sustainable food. Through such applications, children develop not only their individual skills but also social skills such as being a part of social life, sharing tasks, and working collaboratively (Ergün, 2018). Another important dimension is cultural transfer and identity development. Through gastronomy, children can be introduced to local tastes, traditional recipes, and cultural food rituals. In this way, children can develop attitudes such as recognizing cultural diversity and protecting local values at an early age. Gastronomy museums or activities based on local culinary heritage offer important learning areas in this sense. As a result, gastronomy activities for children, beyond merely providing entertainment, offer multi-dimensional learning environments and thus possess high functionality in a pedagogical sense. The integration of these activities into school curricula is suitable for supporting children to acquire life skills from an early age and to grow into healthy individuals.

4.3.1 Farm Tourism

Farm tourism, as an activity providing gastronomy experience for children, refers to a type of rural tourism carried out in areas where agriculture is practiced, animals are raised, and there are structures such as houses, barns, warehouses, and various equipment such as irrigation tools (Gençer & Gençer, 2018). Farm tourism can be defined as "a form of tourism that allows domestic or foreign tourists to simultaneously use agriculture and animal husbandry combined with other tourism products on a farm, while also providing additional economic income to the local population and contributing to its cultural promotion." In farm tourism practices, local culture and especially cuisine come to the forefront as much as agricultural production (Eröz & Bozkurt, 2015). Interacting with the cuisine of a region is like touching the heart of that region. Cuisine is one of the most important cultural tools. Witnessing the process of making a meal from soil to table is a unique experience for children. Spending time in nature helps children experience a sense of freedom and reduces their stress. In the United States, approximately 70 million people participate in farm tourism activities annually, with 30 million of them being children (Gençer & Gençer, 2018).

4.3.1.1 Gastronomy Experiences for Children on Farms

- **Kiyokawa Family Orchard:**

Offers cherry, plum, honeycrisp, and red apple harvesting events. Located in Oregon, USA, families can participate in harvest festivals. Children taste fruits while learning about nature and fruit cultivation (Kiyokawa Family Orchards, 2020; Tripadvisor, n.d.b).

- **Curtis Orchard-Pumpkin Path:**
Located in Champaign, USA, this farm features pumpkin and apple harvesting alongside special activities for children (Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Path, [n.d.](#)).
- **Narköy:**
Offers workshops like cheese and bread making, milking, planting, and sustainability education, encouraging children to engage with natural life (Narköy, [n.d.](#)).
- **Pastoral Valley:**
An ecological farm in Fethiye, Turkey, focusing on organic farming and living. Cooking workshops are held with guests, and agricultural and animal activities are included (Pastoral Valley Ecological Life Farm, [n.d.](#)).
- **Üsküdar Küçüksu Children's Village:**
Designed to bring a village atmosphere to the city, it features fruit orchards, a farm, and picnic areas for families. Activities include fruit picking and flour grinding. The village restaurant serves traditional dishes, while the coffeehouse hosts chats over tea or coffee. Workshops include pottery and bread making, and there are farming areas for children (Üsküdar Municipality, [n.d.](#)).

4.3.2 Tours and Local Flavors

As gastronomy gains importance as a tourism product, activities in this field have begun to include experiential learning processes targeting not only adults but also children. The concept of package tours, which combines transportation, accommodation, dining, and entertainment into a single product and price (Sheldon, 1986), has become applicable to thematic tours for children. In this context, travel companies design both touristic and educational products by creating culinary-based tours and local flavor routes centered on children's fun learning experiences (Gökdeniz, 1990; Öner, 1997). Tour operators and travel agencies play a significant role in diversifying tourism by offering gastronomy tours for children alongside adult tourism (Alaeddinoğlu & Can, 2007).

The aim of such tours is for children to explore the local culinary culture of a destination, participate in the preparation of traditional recipes, and connect with the source of food. Rural farming and culinary practices, in particular, provide children with direct hands-on experience (Deveci et al., 2013). Gastronomy tours for children are not just about tasting but also involve active learning through multiple senses such as sight, touch, smell, and production. These tours are built on four key components: experience, discovery, participation, and visitation. Experience involves children trying local flavors they have never tasted before; discovery entails observing how these flavors are made; participation means actively engaging in the process; and visitation includes accessing production sites like local bakeries, farms, and gastronomy museums (Başoda et al., 2018).

Turkey, with its rich culinary culture where each city offers distinct flavors, has a significant advantage in developing gastronomy routes for children. However, many gastronomy tours are not yet designed with content suitable for children's cognitive and emotional development, and there is a lack of pedagogically focused approaches in this area (Kızılrımkak et al., 2016). Therefore, gastronomy tours for children should include educational, interactive, gamified, and health-conscious content (Üzülmez & Akdağ, 2020).

In conclusion, gastronomy tours for children are not just tourist activities but also multidimensional educational and cultural awareness processes. Proper planning of such tours will contribute to diversifying gastronomy tourism and laying the foundation for children's lifelong healthy and conscious eating habits.

Table 3: Details of gastronomy tours and the gastronomy products they feature.

Cities	Gastronomy Products	Tours
<i>Gaziantep</i>	Alinazik, küşleme, eggplant kebab, minced kebab, simit kebab, yuvalama, chickpea wrap, lahmacun, stuffed meatballs, liver, baklava, pistachio katmer, beyran soup, and sour meatballs. Regional specialties include kabaklama, watery salad, şiveydz, yogurt beans, yogurt potatoes, zahter tea, and menengiç coffee.	GAP Tour (ages 7–12): Istanbul, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep. Lunch features regional flavors (Jolly Tur, n.d.).
<i>Hatay</i>	Fellah meatballs, hummus, spicy bread, paper kebab, Belen tava, firik pilaf, kaytaz pastry, sour aşı, Hatay döner, tray kebab, haylan squash, çökelek salad, zahter salad, oruk, muhammara, künefe, and Antakya kömbesi.	GAP Tour (ages 7–12).
<i>Şanlıurfa</i>	Urfa kebab, ağzı açık, liver kebab, lahmacun, borani, bostana salad, aya meatballs, tray kebab, lebeni.	GAP Tour (ages 7–12).
<i>Adana</i>	Adana kebab, liver, lahmacun, şırdan, mumbar, çiğ köfte, stuffed meatballs, analı kızlı, garlic pistachio meatballs, su böreği, sıkma, bici bici, banana milk, turnip juice, karakuş dessert, taş kadayıf, halka dessert.	Adana Orange Blossom Festival Tour (ages 7–12): Carnival, local flavors, games, and activities.
<i>Trabzon</i>	Trabzon pide, Laz börek, anchovy pilaf, Akçaabat meatballs, kale wrap, buttered rice, combread, pickled fry, Hamsiköy rice pudding, mıhlama.	Batum and Highlands Tour (ages 7–12): Giresun, Samsun, Ordu, Rize, Gümüşhane, Trabzon, Batumi, Hopa, Artvin, Kastamonu, Sinop.
<i>Konya</i>	Etlı ekmeğ, oven kebab, okra soup, Arab meatballs, butter somun, su böreği, çebîç, sac arası, Mevlâna candy, saç böreği, moldy cheese, tirit, wedding pilaf, tandır böreği, arabaşı soup, hoşmerim, dilber dudağı, zerde.	Şeb-i Arus Tour (ages 7–12): Held every December in Konya, attracting global visitors for a spiritual event. Tours offer regional flavors.

3.4 Children's Gastronomy Experiences in "Child-Friendly" Hotels

Child-friendly hotels not only provide safe accommodation and entertainment but also stand out with specially developed gastronomic experiences for children. These hotels feature children's restaurants, special menus, culinary workshops, and thematic food presentations, helping children develop healthy eating habits and a creative connection with gastronomy (Tuna et al., [2019](#)).

Gastronomy experiences play a crucial role in children's sensory development, palate formation, and food preferences. Therefore, the food and beverage services in child-friendly hotels should not only be satisfying but also educational, fun, and participatory. Activities like "little chef" workshops, taste exploration events, and cartoon-themed meal presentations positively shape children's relationship with food.

Research shows that children have more meaningful experiences not only with special menus but also with gastronomy-based activities involving their families (Genç & Ginigen, [2023](#)). In this context, child-friendly hotels offer family-friendly culinary activities, dessert-making workshops, and local product introductions, strengthening family bonds and raising gastronomic awareness in a tourism setting.

In Turkey, the concept of "child-friendly" in hotels is often limited to kids' clubs and entertainment-focused services. However, unique gastronomy applications for children diversify the hotel experience and directly influence family choices. Offering healthy, local, and visually appealing children's menus helps children form positive associations with food while introducing them to local culinary culture early (Keskin et al., [2021](#)).

Thus, child-friendly hotels developing more functional and interactive gastronomy services contribute to children's physical, social, and cultural development while differentiating the hotel and enhancing its brand value.

3.4.1 Child-Friendly Hotels and Their Gastronomy Experiences for Children

- **Great Wolf Lodge:**
Features a "Family Kitchen" section for families with children, offering farm-fresh eggs, smoked pork bacon, wolf-shaped waffles, organic yogurt varieties, granola, and fruit. The

snack bar includes child-friendly menus with burgers, plain buns, potatoes, cheese, chops, apple juice, and milk served in cartoon-character cups with paw-print toothpicks (Great Wolf Lodge, [n.d.](#)).

- **Club Med:**

Includes baby corners in restaurants for parents' convenience, stocked with jarred fruit and vegetable purees, milk, yogurt, and boiled vegetables. Equipment like blenders, water heaters, and microwaves are available for preparing baby food. Bottle rooms offer sterilization machines, microwaves, water heaters, small snacks, yogurt, milk, and baby biscuits. Children aged 4–10 can dine in the kids' restaurant with their families or under caregiver supervision. The "Little Chefs, Master Chefs" program offers cooking classes for ages 4–10, while the "Family Big Snack" event includes pancake parties, baking workshops, and picnic services (Club Med, [n.d.](#)).

- **Disneyland Resort:**

Servers dressed as children's favorite Disney characters. The menu includes Mickey Mouse-shaped waffles, French toast, omelets, bacon, sausages, biscuits with gravy, breakfast potatoes, pastries, bread, fruits, and cereals (Disneyland Resort, [n.d.](#)).

- **Rixos Sungate:**

The "Rixy Kingdom Yummy Restaurant" offers special meals for children prepared with unique ingredients. Activities include chocolate workshops and the "Rixy Diamond Chef" program to develop culinary skills, though these are seasonal (Rixos Sungate).

- **Granada Luxury Belek:**

Features a children's buffet for lunch and dinner, along with workshops and activities, though details vary by season and weather conditions (Tatil Sepeti, [n.d.](#)).

- **Blue Waters Club:**

Offers a children's lunch, dinner, and mini-restaurant (Tripadvisor, [n.d.c.](#)).

- **Susesi Luxury Resort:**

Kids' clubs are divided into groups: ages 4–7 (Minis), 8–12 (Midis), and 13–16 (Cool Age-Teenage Club). Includes a children's restaurant, mini-kitchen, and cake-cookie making activities (Susesi Luxury Resort, [n.d.](#)).

- **Voyage Hotel Sorgun:**

Provides a children's restaurant, ice cream service, baby-friendly solid food options, 24-hour warm milk, and jarred baby food. The chef reports that the children's restaurant offers boiled vegetables, chicken and meat varieties, fried foods, and breakfast items (Voyage Tourism Hospitality, 2024).

- **Sueno Hotels:**

Operates the "Lollipop Kids Club" and offers a children's kitchen workshop (Öztürk et al., 2018).

3.5 Child-Oriented Services in Hotel Restaurants

Children's spaces should enhance their imagination, decision-making, responsibility, sharing, rule-following, coordination, problem-solving, communication skills, and physical, psychological, and social development (Erdoğan & Kuşoğlu, 2024). Family hotels prioritize child-friendly physical layouts and menus. Restaurants and breakfast areas have non-smoking sections. Adjustable high chairs, child-sized tables and chairs, and baby chairs are available. Unbreakable cups, tableware, and bibs are provided for young children. Children's menu cards or dedicated sections in menus are offered. Small attractions like fruit and ice cream, beverage bars, and babysitting services are also available. Using fresh local products, healthy and delicious menus, and diverse salads,

vegetables, and fruits enrich the kitchen (Yılmaz, [2007](#)).

Decorating restaurant walls with fun and informative images or cartoons about healthy foods can guide children toward healthier menu choices (Keskin et al., [2021](#)).

3.6 Accessibility of Child-Friendly Hotels

A search for "family-friendly hotels" on Tatil Sepeti yielded 1,869 hotels. While most official websites mention kids' clubs, details about children's menus, restaurants, or culinary workshops are scarce. None of the examined hotel websites listed dedicated children's restaurants under their dining sections. This suggests that in Turkey, "child-friendly" is largely equated with kids' clubs.

However, designing and publishing child-friendly menus would give parents more confidence. Kids' clubs focus more on entertainment than skill-building activities. Integrating gastronomy more effectively into kids' clubs would enhance children's imagination and skills while diversifying hotel offerings.

Official websites are a primary means of reaching customers in the tourism sector. Accurately showcasing all amenities is crucial. Hotels labeling themselves as "family-friendly" or "child-friendly" but failing to clearly present these features on their websites creates distrust. Similar searches for international child-friendly hotels reveal detailed information about multiple children's restaurants and club activities, indicating that Turkish hotels are still developing in this area.

4 Methodology

A literature review on gastronomy and child-focused academic studies revealed limited research. Searches on Google Scholar and ResearchGate using the keyword "children and gastronomy" yielded no significant academic publications. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the literature by analyzing children's gastronomy experiences.

This research employs qualitative methods, including literature review and content analysis. The literature review systematically evaluates existing knowledge and identifies gaps. Bowen ([2009](#)) defines literature review as "a systematic examination of previously published documents to illuminate research questions, create context, and guide conclusions." The first step of this study involved reviewing literature on children's gastronomy experiences.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

Gastronomy is rapidly expanding and influencing various fields. Childhood (ages 3–11) is a period of heightened brain receptivity. Introducing children to gastronomy during this time fosters positive psychological, social, mental, and physical interactions. In Turkey, the likelihood of children encountering gastronomy is moderate for families who regularly vacation, visit museums, or seek activities. This is because most culinary workshops for children are concentrated in Istanbul, leaving other cities underserved. Gastronomy education teaches people of all ages about nutrition, cooking, combining food with art, using imagination, responsibility, and measurements. For children, mastering these skills leads to self-sufficiency, creativity, health, and responsibility later in life. Museums, workshops, tours, and club activities allow children to experience gastronomy in an engaging, understandable, and fun way.

5.1 Recommendations:

- **Gastronomy Tours for Children:** The absence of specialized gastronomy tour packages for children is a gap. Such tours would be ideal for school trips.
- **Farm Tourism:** Foreign farms offer child-friendly activities like pumpkin picking with wheelbarrows, farm obstacle courses, and farm birthday parties. Turkey should adopt similar practices to diversify tourism and appeal to families.

- **Child-Friendly Hotels:** Many hotels labeled "child-friendly" only mention kids' clubs on their websites, lacking details about activities, menus, or restaurants. Offering transparent information would build parental trust.
- **Gastronomy Museums:** Turkey has only two child-themed gastronomy museums. Expanding such interactive museums would enhance children's exposure to gastronomy.
- **Culinary Arts Academy:** The "Culinary Arts Academy" stands out for its unique gastronomy activities for children. Increasing similar high-quality, accessible establishments is essential.
- **School Programs:** Schools should collaborate with gastronomy experts to integrate nutrition and cooking education into curricula. Gastronomy tours should be made accessible for schools.
- **Hotel Management:** Hotel managers should view gastronomy experts as more than kitchen staff. Their input on family-friendly dining, food clubs, and themed events is valuable. Increasing gastronomy activities for children enhances hotel appeal.
- **Interactive Elements:** Restaurants, buffets, museums, and workshops should incorporate cartoon mascots, visually appealing menu designs, catchy dish names, and hands-on cooking workshops. More child-interactive gastronomy museums should open in Turkey. Travel agencies should prioritise gastronomy routes and adapt them for children.

In conclusion, child-friendly hotels must improve transparency and adapt gastronomy more effectively for children. These efforts will enrich children's development and enhance the tourism sector's appeal.

6 Declaration

Data Availability Statement

All relevant data generated or analysed during this study are included within the article. No additional data is available from the corresponding author.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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