

PROMOTING THE WINE CULTURE BY IMPLEMENTING THE SOMMELIER PROFESSION

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FOREWORD

The wine industry it is traditionally the strongest sector of national economy, as well as it has an international reputation. It is an established fact, that wine is manufactured in Moldova from ancient times. In order to efficiently promote this sector, first and foremost we need to market the wine locally. And this goal can be achieved by using the restaurants and catering businesses, as well as touristic and trade enterprises.

1. STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY(WINE SECTOR) AND SERVICES

According to the sustainable development of any society, the agri food sector, including the public food industry, is of strategic importance for balance and viable development of the economical and social systems. One job in the HoReCa segment creates 4 additional jobs in other complementary sectors of the national economy.

The assessment of the agri food /wine, tourism and services sectors data in Republic of Moldova, shows an increase in dynamics [3; 4].

Analyzing the structure and comparing the activity of different types of enterprises within the food industry, of particular interest are the restaurants, bars, as well as the compartments of the wine and tourism industry, which offer

food/catering services. There are over 200 enterprises who's main activity is winemaking and over 130 companies which offer tourism services [3].

Sommelier skills are mandatory for all the professionals employed in this sector, in order to insure a proper functioning of the business.

In order to identify problems and prospects of development of the food/catering industry its important to assess the economic situation within this particular sector of national economy given its utmost important social role, satisfying the primary needs of the population - nutrition.

It is worth mentioning that in the last five years, the share of food/catering services within all services provided in Moldova ranged from 8 to 10% and this rate has an improvement tendency.

Thereby, in the period of 2004-2012, the volume of food and catering services in Moldova increased 3 times, with an average annual growth rate of 20%-30%. The offer of food services is constantly expanding, offering the consumers a wide range of new culinary experiences.

Of course, like many other sectors of the national economy the food and catering sector faces a shortage of qualified staff and a high employee fluctuation [1]. The main reasons for this are:

Low motivation of the employees, *the slow adaptation of the educational system to the demands and requirements of the labor market*, poor working and hygiene conditions in various food

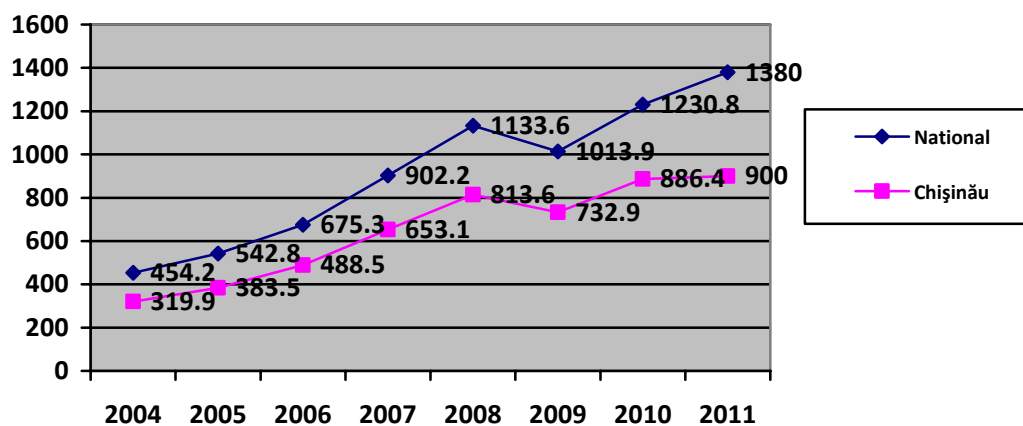


Figure 1. The dynamics of food /catering services volumes in Republic of Moldova thousand lei.

enterprises, failure to comply with labor laws etc. Based on the analysis we can conclude the following:

- During the reviewed period, we can observe an increase of the employees number by about 50%.

This proves there are numerous new food/catering and leisure(hotels) enterprises starting their operations, **and it is imperative that staff receives proper training for this business domain;**

Table 1. Dynamics of the number of employees and average salary for "Hotels and restaurants".

Indicator	2003	2006	2007	2011
Number of employees, <i>thousands of people</i>	6,6	8,2	8,6	10,3
Share in the total number of employees within the national economy, %	1,0	1,3	1,3	1,5
Average monthly nominal salary of an employee, lei	827,4	1384,6	1759,5	2111,9
Average monthly nominal salary of an employee, USD	59,3	105,4	145,0	203,3
The ratio of the average monthly salary of an employee in "Hotels and restaurants" and average salary per economy	92,9	81,6	85,2	83,5

- We have to mention that regardless the high profitability of the food services, the wages in this sector are fairly low, even compared to the national average salary.

The ratio between the average monthly salary of an employee in the "Hotels and restaurants" and average salary per economy is on average 80-85%.

Usually, the average salary in Moldova

restaurants is around USD 100 for support staff, between USD 150 -300- for chefs and USD 400-500 for management staff.

The vast majority of food/catering enterprises, around 60% are located in the capital, Chisinau [2]. According to the data from the commerce Department of the Chisinau City Hall, the number of food/catering enterprises evolved in the following way:

Table 2. Dynamics of food/catering enterprises in Chisinau.

Type of enterprises	1997	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
Food/Catering Enterprises	-	14	24	28	37	37
Restaurants	20	48	51	57	68	75
Cafes	44	277	353	425	505	476
Canteens	32	204	215	240	271	273
Luncheon Bars	99	417	417	441	442	426
Bars	140	352	457	448	318	295
Culinary Stores	12	21	17	7	5	3
Cafes and Summer terraces	22	75	91	105	73	60
Total	379	1444	1626	1751	1719	1654
%, compared to the previous year			104	104	98	96

The dynamics and development of the HoReCa segment, created an increasing demand for new professional qualifications, one of them being the **sommelier position**.

If we analyze the network of food/catering enterprises in Chisinau city in 2012, we observe the following:

➤ Out of the total number of 1654 units of food/catering, 1403 are free access, which is a share of 84.8%.

➤ The number of places in the free access food/catering enterprises is around 82000, meaning 72% out of the total number.

➤ The number of restaurants is 75, and the number of bars- 295, with a total number of customer places of 21000.

2. ADVOCACY FOR THE NEW JOB POSITION OF SOMMELIER

The presence of a sommelier offers the restaurant, the cellar or the tourism agency a high-end image, that is why on Moldova's labor market there is a demand for a new job, that of a **sommelier**.

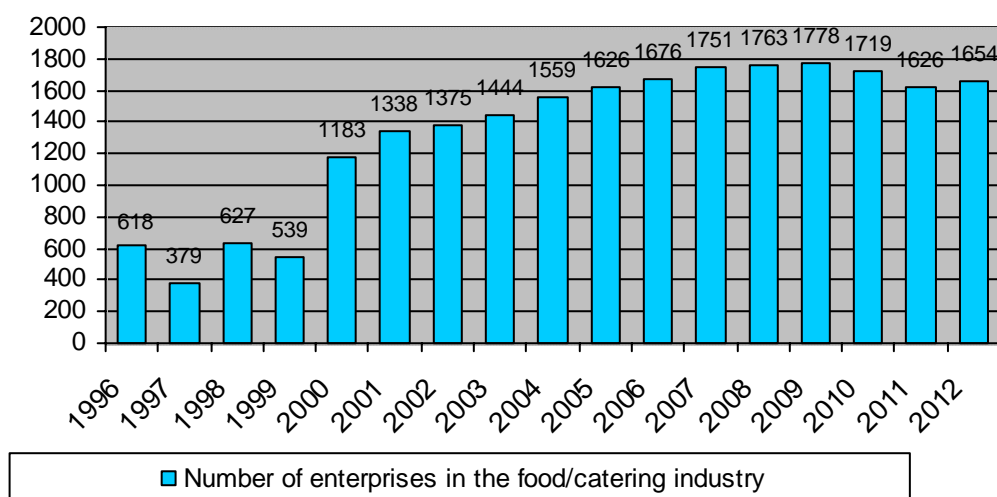


Figure. 2 The number of food/catering enterprises in the period of 1996-2012 (1st January each year).

The sommelier is a professional in the HoReCa segment and beverage trade, including wines.

His expertise includes:

- Development of a wine list/menu
- Food and beverage pairing
- Cellar and wine stock management
- Tasting and assessing the wine and other beverages
- Beverage storage and sales
- Oenology
- Efficient communication.

The sommelier performs the following activities

- In the restaurants- develops and updates the wine list, manages stocks, verifies the presence of materials and tools, together with the Chef chooses the foods which go best with the wines from the list, serves drinks according to the etiquette, promotes the image of the restaurant, cooperates with restaurant staff and manages its subordinates.

- In the store/cellar he manages the stocks, updates and renews the assortment, receives and controls new products, recommends customers the wines in the portfolio and suggests the best food pairings, promotes the wine culture.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on a thorough study of the HoReCa development, of the process of education and training of professionals in this domain, as well as based on consultations offered by experts from France and other EU countries we motion for including in Labor Nomenclature the title and

profession of sommelier. We also recommend the development of the occupational standard for this position, as well as the study plan of the sommelier training, designed and adapted to the conditions and requirements of the educational system of Moldova.

The mission of the training courses would be to consolidate the image of Moldova on international markets by promoting the Moldovan wine and culinary culture, educating professional sommeliers.

Another major goal of this concept is to educate the consumers about wine culture and to create a new vision in the area of food/catering services, as well as enhance the cognitive and intellectual potential of the the HoReCa staff.

Establishing this job position will consequently lead to increased profitability and efficiency of the food/catering enterprises.

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