



EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY
BANAT CANDIDATE 2028

ONE SHARED TABLE

BOLD FLAVOURS • DIVERSE ORIGINS

BANAT

FUSION BEYOND BORDERS
2028





BANAT2028

Fusion Beyond Borders

Bold flavors. Diverse origins. One shared table.

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1. Foreword

1.1. Support from public authorities

Mr. Alfred SIMONIS

President of Timiș County Council

President of the Union of County Councils of Romania



The Banat is, by its very nature, a meeting place – of cultures, traditions, communities, and territories. It is a region where diversity is not merely accepted but celebrated and transformed into a shared resource. In this profoundly European spirit, Timiș County is proud to take on the honour and responsibility of leading the candidacy for Banat 2028 – European Region of Gastronomy, in partnership with the counties of Caraș-Severin and Arad, belonging to the same region.

This candidacy is more than a celebration of our culinary heritage: it is a strategic platform for sustainable development, regional cohesion, and European recognition. Gastronomy, understood in its broadest sense – from agriculture and local production to food education, tourism, innovation, and culture – becomes the driving force of a new model for integrated and inclusive economic development.

Our goal is to build a coherent gastronomic ecosystem for the Banat, bringing together local authorities, universities, research institutions, entrepreneurs, the hospitality sector, producers, tourism operators, and communities in a genuine regional partnership.

This inter-county collaboration is essential to generating sustainable public policies, revitalising rural communities, and creating new economic opportunities, especially in areas affected by depopulation.

Banat 2028 is a call to unity, collaboration, and active involvement. We will support regenerative agriculture, short supply chains, the circular economy, rural entrepreneurship, and the training of a new generation of professionals in sustainable gastronomy. We will encourage innovation, research, artistic expression, and digitalisation in the gastronomic sector, turning the Banat into a European example of applied creativity and local sustainability.

Gastronomic tourism will be a major pillar of this transformation: we will create culinary routes and itineraries, slow food experiences, and events that highlight the region's multicultural identity and natural heritage. We aim for authentic, educational, and respectful tourism that strengthens the bond between hosts and visitors, while contributing to the development of local communities.

At the same time, food education, health, and environmental responsibility will be cross-cutting priorities of our programme. We will launch campaigns for a healthy lifestyle, develop educational projects for all ages, and promote conscious consumption and the protection of biodiversity.

As President of Timiș County Council, I see the Banat's candidacy for European Region of Gastronomy 2028 not just as a prestigious project, but as a strategic investment in the future of our region. From my very first year in office, the tourism budget has been a priority, backed by significant financial allocations and a development plan designed to showcase the Banat's cultural, gastronomic, and natural potential.

Our vision is clear: to combine modern infrastructure with the traditions that give this corner of the world its identity. The investments we have planned for the coming years will modernise tourism infrastructure, promote both rural and

urban destinations, and integrate our culinary heritage into attractive thematic circuits. Traditional gastronomy, cultural festivals, and high-quality agri-food products must become the Banat's ambassadors in Europe.

However, the development of tourism and gastronomy depends directly on the quality of our road infrastructure. This is why the County Council's agenda includes projects such as the modernisation of county roads, the creation of a new link between Timișoara and the A1 motorway, and the doubling of the Southern Ring Road – all designed to ensure rapid and comfortable access to the region's main tourist and gastronomic attractions.

Modern, safe road links will enable visitors to reach, with ease, villages with culinary traditions, vineyards, local producers' farms, and the venues of major gastronomic events. In this way, infrastructure becomes not only a logistical necessity but also a cornerstone of our strategy for securing this European title and leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.

We are fully aware of the global challenges: climate change, food insecurity, the loss of local identity. That is why Banat 2028 is not an endpoint, but the start of a journey of profound transformation, part of a long-term strategy for sustainable regional development, European cooperation, and cultural and gastronomic diplomacy. In short, it is a declaration of European responsibility – a commitment to a fairer, healthier, and more united future.

On behalf of Timiș County Council and our collaborators across the region, I wish to thank all those who have contributed to this candidacy, and in particular the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism (IGCAT) for their partnership and the valuable expertise they bring. I reaffirm our firm commitment to the principles of this title and to the extraordinary potential of gastronomy to drive economic, social, and cultural progress.

We invite Europe to discover the Banat – not just for its flavours, but for its unique journey towards the future.





Statement of Support

Mr Iustin-Marinel CIONCA-ARGHIR
President of the Arad County Council



Arad County joins with confidence and enthusiasm in supporting the Banat region's candidacy for the title of European Region of Gastronomy 2028. We are convinced that this title can serve as a tangible platform for showcasing the region's multicultural gastronomic heritage and as a catalyst for sustainable tourism, the local economy, and regional identity.

The Banat area of Arad is a place where Romanian, Hungarian, German, and Serbian traditions intertwine harmoniously, with its gastronomy reflecting this richness. From local wines and artisanal producers to culinary festivals and cherished family recipes, we possess a heritage worthy of being shared with Europe.

Through our partnership with Timiș and Caraș-Severin counties, we take on a shared commitment to promoting the Banat region as an example of collaboration, diversity, and sustainable development.

We support this candidacy with both confidence and responsibility.

Statement of Support

Mr Silviu HURDUZEU
President of the Caraș-Severin County Council



Caraș-Severin County firmly supports the Banat region's candidacy for the title of European Region of Gastronomy 2028. The mountain area of the Banat, with its ethnic diversity and wealth of natural resources, brings a unique contribution to this endeavour: an authentic, rural cuisine still alive in traditional households, complemented by natural landscapes that enrich the gastronomic experience.

This initiative is not only an opportunity to promote our culinary heritage, but also a genuine chance for economic development and for attracting visitors to rural areas that are less known yet of exceptional value.

Together with Timiș and Arad counties, we are actively committed to building a shared regional gastronomic identity that celebrates the Banat's traditions, its people, and its resources. It is an inter-county collaboration project that brings us closer together and strengthens our sense of responsibility.

We are honoured to be part of this candidacy and wholeheartedly support the Banat as a future European Region of Gastronomy.



1.2 Official commitment of the Regional Stakeholders Committee

We, the members of the Regional Stakeholders Committee of the region of „Banat, candidate for the European Region of Gastronomy award 2028” – representing public institutions, the private sector, academia, and non-governmental organisations – express our firm commitment to working actively towards securing the title of European Region of Gastronomy 2028.

We uphold the values of cultural and culinary diversity, sustainability, and cooperation, undertaking the following objectives:

- ◆ **to promote** the region's gastronomic heritage and identity both nationally and internationally;
- ◆ **to develop** projects and events that bring together gastronomy, art, education, innovation, and tourism;
- ◆ **to engage** local communities, producers, HoReCa sector, education, innovation, and all relevant stakeholders in this endeavour;
- ◆ **to comply** with the standards and criteria set by the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Art and Tourism (IGCAT) and the World Regions of Gastronomy Platform;
- ◆ **to ensure** the international visibility of the Banat through partnerships and exchanges of best practice;
- ◆ **to contribute** to the sustainable development of the region through initiatives that generate long-term economic, social, and cultural benefits.

Through this commitment, the members of the Regional Stakeholders Committee affirm our full support for transforming the Banat into a model of European gastronomic excellence, preserving its living traditions and ensuring it a future that is innovative and prosperous.



Dr. Diane Dodd
President of the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Art and Tourism



Mr. Alfred Simonis
President of the Timiș County Council



Ms. Mihaela Calescu
President of the Timiș County Tourism Promotion and Development Association (Visit Timiș)



Prof. Dr. Cosmin Alin Popescu
Rector of the King Michael I University of Life Sciences in Timișoara (USVT)



Ms. Corina Macri
President of HoReTim Association



Mr. Cătălin Tiuch
President of the “Produs in Banat” Association



Ms. Delioara Florica Barbu
President of the My Banat Association



Ms. Laura Laurețiu
President of the Degustaria Association



2. Introduction

2.1. General context of the European Region of Gastronomy programme

The European Region of Gastronomy programme is initiated and coordinated by IGCAT – the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism – and aims to support the development of European regions by promoting gastronomy as an integral part of their cultural and economic identity. The title is awarded on the basis of a strategic plan and a themed year of events that demonstrate the link between culinary heritage, sustainability, education, tourism, and local economic development.

Earning this title means:

- ◆ **International recognition** of the region's gastronomic and cultural values;
- ◆ **Increased tourism visibility** through integration into the European network of award-winning regions;
- ◆ **Access to partnerships and exchanges** with other awarded regions;
- ◆ **Opportunity to work together** for a long-term regional development strategy putting gastronomy, sustainable tourism, art and culture at its core;
- ◆ **Opportunities for funding** through European programmes and private sponsorships.

For Banat, the programme is more than a competition: it is a platform to connect multicultural culinary traditions with innovation, the local economy, and sustainable tourism.

Banat cooks at the crossroads of the Carpathians, the Danube and the Pannonian Plain.

In 2028 we are turning living heritage into shared value—stronger producers, greener kitchens, fuller tables.

BANAT

Fusion Beyond Borders 2028



EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY



2.2. Banat's motivation for applying in 2028

Key arguments for Banat's candidacy in 2028 are:

- ◆ **Exceptional culinary diversity:** from Banat-style cabbage rolls, sweeter than in other regions, to plum dumplings, beef goulash, clear soup with homemade noodles, crackling biscuits, and desserts such as cremeschnitte or *lichiu*;
- ◆ **Local products with branding potential and already branded:** Banat honey, wines from Recaş and Silagiu, Buziaş and Miniş, Petrovaselo and Tirol, Banat sausages, fruit from the orchards of the Lipova Hills, on the one hand, and authentic local products such as trout from Valea Bolvaşniţa, honey from Poiana Mărului, Casa Despi cider, artisanal cheeses from the Recaş area, wild berry jams and syrups from the Almăj Valley, traditional zacusca, and wines from the Banat vineyards, which have already been branded under the label "Produced in Banat".
- ◆ **Authentic experiences:** sheepfolds in the Semenik Mountains, farmers' markets in Timișoara and Lugoj, Arad, Reșița and Oravița, and autumn fairs in Banat villages.

Why 2028 is a strategic year for Banat?

1. **Sufficient preparation time** – Around two years from the submission of the bid book that allow for the consolidation of local and international partnerships, on the one hand and development of tourism and cultural infrastructure, and the preparation of producers and HoReCa operators to meet European standards, that is already in process, on the other.
2. **The legacy of Timișoara 2023** – European Capital of Culture has left modernized cultural infrastructure, know-

how in organising major events, collaboration networks, and international visibility that can be leveraged.

3. **Alignment with European funding cycles** – The EU's 2021–2027 and 2028–2034 programming periods offer opportunities for sustainable tourism, organic agriculture, and the safeguarding of intangible heritage.

4. **Favourable regional context** – Expanding road infrastructure, economic growth above the national average, and a unique multicultural and cross-border profile in Central Europe.

2.3. Expected benefits for the community and economy

For the community:

- ◆ **Local pride:** revaluing traditional gastronomy and passing it on to new generations;
- ◆ **Education and health:** culinary education campaigns in schools, promoting healthy eating, and reducing the consumption of ultra-processed foods;
- ◆ **Community cohesion:** involving all ethnic groups in joint projects, strengthening intercultural dialogue.

For the economy:

- ◆ **Job creation:** in tourism (HoReCa), agriculture, food processing, transport, and the creative industries;
- ◆ **Integrated gastronomic tourism:** routes linking Arad–Timișoara – Lugoj – Recaş – Buziaş–Reșița– Oravița – the Danube Gorge, including tastings, workshops, and visits to producers;
- ◆ **Regional branding:** the "Produced in Banat" (Produs în Banat) label promoted at European and international level;
- ◆ **Attracting investment:** increasing investor interest in the agri-food sector, HoReCa, and agro-tourism.

2.4. Alignment with regional, national, and European policies

Regional level:

- ◆ Strategies of Timiș, Caraș-Severin, and Arad counties promote sustainable tourism, support for agri-food SMEs, and rural development;
- ◆ Regional urban and mobility plans can be adapted to support gastronomic tourism circuits.

National level:

- ◆ Alignment with the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030 and with PNRR objectives for the green transition, and food waste reduction, and digitalisation;
- ◆ Opportunity for creating the "Taste of Romania" brand programme together with Harghita 2027 European Gastronomy Region (awarded) and Dobrogea 2029 European Gastronomy Region (candidate), and Protected Geographical Indication brands.

European and international level:

- ◆ Contribution to the European Green Deal through sustainable agriculture, promoting local food, and reducing the carbon footprint;
- ◆ Alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda – SDG 2 ("Zero hunger"), SDG 12 ("Responsible consumption and production"), and SDG 17 ("Partnerships for the goals");
- ◆ Alignment with the IGCAT specific objectives and participation in IGCAT events such as the European Young Chef Award, the World Food Gift Challenge, Young Chefs Award and World Bee Day Celebrations.



3. Banat – Key facts & figures

From the Danube Gorge to the Semenik peaks: Banat is movement—rails, roads, rivers.

A mosaic of people and skills where history powers a modern economy.

The numbers behind the flavor: infrastructure, diversity, biodiversity—plus an agricultural engine feeding Europe.

Banat is a historic cross-border region, today stretching across the territories of three countries: Romania, Serbia, and Hungary.

This candidature concerns the Romanian Banat — comprising Timiș, Caraș-Severin, and Arad counties — with major urban centres such as Timișoara, Arad, and Reșița, lying between the Western Plain, the Banat Mountains, and the Danube Gorge. It is a borderland and a





meeting point — between the Carpathians, the Danube, and the Pannonian Plain — where landscapes, people, and flavours have, for centuries, learned to coexist.

A deeply multicultural space (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans/Banat Swabians, Serbs, Bulgarians, Croats, Slovaks, Czechs, Jews, Italians, and others), Romanian Banat preserves a culinary heritage shaped by centuries of coexistence and exchange.

The proposed projects will be implemented in Romania, with openness to cross-border cooperation in Hungary and Serbia to promote shared heritage.

3.1. Geographical location and infrastructure

Geography: fertile plains in the north and west (Bega-Timiș), hilly centre (Lipova and Recaș Hills), mountainous south (Semenic, Aninei, Țarcu), and south-western Danube corridor (Danube Gorge).

Road & rail network: connections along east-west and north-south European corridors; railway hubs in Timișoara, Arad, Lugoj, and Reșița; cross-border points with Serbia (Moravița, Jimbolia) and Hungary (Cenad).

Air & logistics: Timișoara “Traian Vuia” International Airport and Arad Airport; industrial parks and logistics centres serving the agri-food chain (reception, storage, distribution).

Inland waterways: the Bega Canal and the Timiș, Bârzava, Caraș, and Nera rivers; the Danube (Gorge) for fishing resources and leisure boating routes.

3.2. Demographics and cultural diversity

Urban centres: Timișoara (university, cultural, and economic hub), Arad (trade and university center), Reșița (industrial heritage in transformation), Lugoj, Caransebeș, Sânnicolau Mare.

Ethnic mosaic: predominantly Romanian, with historic communities of Hungarians, Germans (Banat Swabians), Serbs, Bulgarians, Croats, Slovaks, Czechs, Roma, and others, visible in festivals, rituals, and recipes.

Coexistence and migration: Habsburg colonisations and recent mobility have created cross-border networks — an asset for markets, audiences, and knowledge transfer.

New Communities in Banat after 1989 – Diverse Origins Enriching the Table

Since the fall of communism, Banat — and particularly Timișoara and Arad — has attracted new waves of residents from abroad, drawn by business opportunities, industrial growth, and the region’s reputation as a welcoming, cosmopolitan hub. These communities have brought their own traditions, products, and tastes, adding new layers to Banat’s already rich multicultural identity.

Italians – Arriving in the 1990s to invest in textiles, furniture, leather, and light manufacturing, Italians have shaped local industry and gastronomy alike. Today they run hundreds of SMEs, some sourcing Banat raw

materials for export while others infuse Italian culinary techniques into local dining culture.

Germans – Beyond the historic Banat Swabians, a new wave of corporate professionals and entrepreneurs has arrived with major German automotive, engineering, and IT investments, reinforcing the region’s cultural and economic links with Central Europe.

Turks – Active in retail, logistics, real estate, and hospitality, Turkish entrepreneurs have brought flavours, business know-how, and trade connections, with the Turkish-Romanian business council holding regular events in Timișoara.

Ukrainians – In recent years, especially after 2022, Timișoara and other Banat cities have hosted Ukrainian families, some of whom have opened bakeries, cafés, or craft businesses, blending Slavic and Banat culinary repertoires.

Indians – Many work in IT, engineering, and shared service centres, often introducing South Asian cuisine and products to the city’s markets and events.

Chinese – Present in trade, telecommunications, and small businesses, they contribute both to the retail landscape and to the diversity of ingredients available locally.

Cross-border Serbs, in addition to the existing Serbian community in Banat – Long-standing ties with neighbouring Serbia continue to be renewed through student exchanges, seasonal work, and cross-border entrepreneurship, keeping shared recipes and traditions alive.

Relevance to the Candidacy Concept: These communities exemplify the idea of **Fusion Beyond Borders**. Their “bold flavours” — from pasta-making skills and Mediterranean olive oils to baklava, *pierogi*, masala spices, and soy-based dishes — meet Banat’s own seasonal produce, wines, and meats. Their “diverse origins” enrich festivals, markets, and food education programmes. Ultimately, they join “one shared table” where recipes are exchanged, menus reinvented, and new tastes are born without borders.

3.3. Cultural heritage

Antiquity–Middle Ages: Roman remains (e.g. Tibiscum – Jupa/Caransebeș), early trade routes between the Danube and the Carpathian interior.

Ottoman and Habsburg eras: alternating rule and 18th-century Swabian colonization brought agricultural techniques, crafts, and a culture of good household management (bread-making, butchery, dairy, wine cellars), as well as opening trade routes towards Western Europe.

Modernity: the first stone theatre in Romanian lands at Oravița (1817), early railways (Oravița–Anina), spas and resorts (Buziaș), fairs and guilds; refined gastronomy at the crossroads of Central Europe and the Balkans.

Intangible heritage: carols, circle dances, annual customs (Ignat pig slaughter, Easter, patron saint days), fasting and feast-day recipes — an annual culinary cycle of educational and tourism value.

3.4. Socio-economic context

Mixed economy: industry (automotive, components, equipment), IT&C, and creative services in Timișoara and Arad; industrial reconversion and green economy in Reșița and the mountain area; high-performance agriculture (cereals, oilseeds), horticulture, viticulture (Recaș, Buziaș, Silagiu, Petrovaselo, Jamu Mare, Miniș).

Agri-food SMEs: artisan bakeries, small-scale meat and dairy processors, beekeeping, orchards, and vegetable farming — the basis for the “Produced in Banat” (*Produs în Banat*) regional label and short supply chains.

Tourism: city breaks, medical tourism, conference tourism in Timișoara; ecotourism in Cheile Nerei-Beușnița, Semenici-Cheile Carașului, Danube experiences, spa resorts (Buziaș), plus rural-gastronomic (local gastronomic points, guesthouses, fairs, markets), Surduc Lake, Margina (Breakst at Margina) and weekend Brunches, winter sports, tourism (Gârâna-Brebu Nou-Trei Ape-Semenic) as well as cultural tourism during the well-established internationally renowned Gârâna Jazz Festival running for 29 years already.

Workforce & education: universities and technical colleges (including food, tourism, and hospitality profiles) — a resource for vocational training and culinary innovation.

3.5. Natural resources and biodiversity

Protected areas: Cheile Nerei-Beușnița, Semenici-Cheile Carașului, Domogled-Valea Cernei (partially), nature reserves and Natura 2000 sites — beech and oak forests, caves, gorges, karst lakes (e.g. Ochiul Beilului).

Danube & Gorge: mild microclimate, traditional fishing, terraced viticulture, aromatic plants — a terroir with distinct gastronomic potential.

Agrobiodiversity: local fruit and vegetable varieties, rustic animal breeds, polyfloral and acacia honey, wild mushrooms and plants (sorrel, ramsons, dock) in seasonal cooking.

Water resources: rich network of springs and mountain streams, suitable for trout farming, smart irrigation, and green tourism.

3.6. Statistics: area, population, ethnic composition

Definition used: Romanian Banat (Timiș, Caraș-Severin, and Arad counties). All figures below cover these three counties in full.



Note: Population data from the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (RPL 2021).

Ethnic composition
(RPL 2021 – share of total county population)

Timiș: Romanians ~74,44%; Hungarians ~3,27%; Roma ~1,91%; Serbs ~0,99%; Germans ~0,72%; Ukrainians ~0,64%; Bulgarians ~0,50%; Other ethnicities ~0,49%; Unknown ~17,04%.

Caraș-Severin: Romanians ~91,20%; Roma ~2,48%; Croats ~2,13%; Serbs ~1,59%; Ukrainians ~0,70%; Hungarians ~0,66%; Germans ~0,64%; Czechs ~0,42%; Others ~0,13%.

Arad: Romanians ~77,46%; Hungarians ~6,27%; Roma ~4,08%; Slovaks ~0,81%; Germans ~0,49%; Ukrainians ~0,23%; Bulgarians ~0,12%; Serbs ~0,12%; Others ~0,35%; Unknown ~10,07%.







3.7. Agriculture in Banat

The Banat region is one of the country's most fertile and developed agricultural areas, with a temperate-continental climate influenced by the Mediterranean, fertile soils (particularly chernozems), a well-developed hydrographic network, and a long-standing agricultural tradition.



The main features of agriculture in Banat:

- ◆ Exceptionally fertile soils, ideal for field crops.
- ◆ Relatively modernized agricultural infrastructure, including irrigation in the plains.
- ◆ The presence of medium and large farms, in contrast to the predominance of subsistence farming elsewhere in the country.
- ◆ Agricultural diversification: from cereals and oilseeds to horticulture, livestock farming, and viticulture.
- ◆ Good access to western markets, thanks to its proximity to the Hungarian and Serbian borders.

Agricultural production

Banat is a national leader in the production of wheat, maize, sunflower, and soya. Timiș County often ranks first in Romania for cultivated area and total yields.

Field crops:

- **Wheat:** over 450.000 tonnes/year in Timiș County (2023)
- **Maize:** approximately 600.000 tonnes/year
- **Sunflower:** 250.000 tonnes/year
- **Soya:** 50.000 tonnes/year (increasing due to European demand)

Horticulture:

- **Potatoes, carrots, onions** – especially in the hilly areas of Caraș-Severin
- **Fruit:** apples, pears, and plums, as well as modern plantations of blueberries and cherries in Timiș

Livestock farming:

- **Cattle and pigs:** industrial-scale farms in western Timiș County
- **Sheep:** traditional in mountainous Caraș-Severin
- **Poultry:** large farms near Lugoj and Timișoara

Other activities:

- **Viticulture:** the Silagiu vineyards (Timiș) and Tirol (Caraș-Severin) produce recognised wines
- **Beekeeping:** production of acacia and sunflower honey

Exports and agricultural market

Thanks to its high yields, Banat is a net exporter of agricultural products with easy route access to Hungary, Austria, Germany, and Italy.

Export products:

- ◆ **Wheat and maize** – bulk exports via the Port of Constanța or directly to other EU countries.
- ◆ **Sunflower** – seeds and crude oil
- ◆ **Non-GM soya** – in demand in Western Europe
- ◆ **Pork and poultry** – mainly from large units in Timiș

In 2023, Timiș County exported agricultural products worth over €400 million, making a significant contribution to Romania's agri-food trade balance.

Products specific to Banat:

- ◆ Pecica bread – with Protected Geographical Indication
- ◆ Nădlac and Munar cheeses
- ◆ Banat sausages – smoked meat specialities
- ◆ Wines from Recaș, Buziaș, Silagiu, Petrovaselo, Miniș and Tirol
- ◆ Acacia honey from the Timiș Plain

Relevant statistics (2023):

Agricultural Indicator	Timiș	Caraș-Severin	Arad
Agricultural area (ha)	693.000	290.000	350.000
Irrigated area (ha)	45.000	8.000	8.000
Wheat production (t)	450.000	110.000	470.000
Maize production (t)	600.000	90.000	425.000
Number of commercial farms	6.200	2.800	3.700
Agricultural export value (€)	400m	65m	370m

Agriculture in Banat is a cornerstone of the regional economy and a model of modern agricultural efficiency in Romania. Combining tradition, innovation, and openness to external markets, Banat has the potential to become a European agricultural hub, particularly in the context of the EU's new green and digital policies.

4. Historical fusion of cultures – Banat in brief

At the hinge of empires, Banat blended cultures, faiths, languages and trades into one resilient identity.

From Ottoman strongholds to Habsburg experiments to modern makers—the fusion that fed a region.

4.1. Banat – between Byzantium and Central Europe

Banat is, by its very nature, a frontier region, positioned between Orthodox Byzantium and Catholic Europe, at the crossroads of the Carpathians, Pannonia and the Balkans. Its heritage reflects the influences of two great empires – the Ottoman and the Habsburg – and its belonging to three modern states: Romania, Serbia and Hungary. Its identity cannot be reduced to a single language, faith or culture, but has been shaped through coexistence and exchange. The history of Banat demonstrates that the past of a borderland must be viewed from multiple perspectives in order to understand its richness and human diversity.

4.2. The Middle Ages and the Ottoman period (1552–1716)

As early as the Middle Ages, Banat was a mosaic of faiths and communities: Orthodox Romanians and Serbs, Catholic Hungarians, Muslim Turks, Sephardic Jews, Armenians and Roma. When the Ottomans conquered Timișoara in 1552, the local nobility lost its legal and economic privileges, and the Central European institutions disappeared. Religious orders saw their influence decline, and the region was governed more as a military outpost than a civil province. The fortress of Timișoara became the seat of power, but the Ottomans did not develop a broader regional infrastructure.

4.3. The Habsburg conquest and the “Banat Experiment”

In 1716 Banat came under Habsburg rule and was transformed into a crown province, directly subordinated to Vienna and administered by imperial governors. The absence of strong local institutions allowed the experiment of state-society to be tested: a brand-new administration inspired by enlightened absolutism. At the same time, waves of colonists from all corners of Europe – Germans (Banat Swabians), French, Italians, Catalans, Slovaks, Czechs, Croats and Bulgarians – altered the region’s social and cultural fabric.

4.4. Agriculture, trade and colonisation

Banat’s fertile soils turned it into one of Europe’s breadbaskets. Cereals such as wheat, maize and oats, together with industrial crops like flax, hemp, cotton, hops

and sugar beet were cultivated extensively. In the 19th century, agricultural associations modernised production. Colonists introduced new techniques, set up workshops and factories, and organised guilds and cooperatives. In the south, coal and iron ore extraction supported metallurgy. Through these initiatives Banat became not only a producer but also an exporter, supplying Central European, even Western European markets.

4.5. Industrialisation and innovation

Banat was an early participant in Europe’s industrialisation. Towns such as Timișoara, Reșița and Oravița became economic and technological hubs: the first mountain railway of the Empire (Oravița-Anina, 1854), electric public lighting in Timișoara (1884), and the introduction of both horse-drawn and later electric trams in the region. The textile, footwear, hat, fur and brewing industries gained a foothold on the European market, supported by local banks.

4.6. Multiculturality and civic spirit

Banat has often been likened to a cultural “melting pot” similar to America. Colonised populations from across Europe created multilingual and multicultural villages, where Catholics and Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims lived side by side. The Banat bourgeoisie quickly adopted the mechanisms of a capitalist economy and actively supported philanthropy, culture and education. Multilingualism and civic responsibility became hallmarks of the regional identity.

4.7. The zenith: 1880–1914

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Banat experienced development comparable to the most advanced regions of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Timișoara established itself as the main industrial, banking, commercial and cultural centre: it hosted the first stone theatre on present-day Romanian territory (Oravița, 1817), as well as cultural associations, journals and music societies. The region produced not only goods, but also cultural and technical innovations, literature, historiography and art of European significance.

4.8. The 20th and 21st centuries

The 20th century brought dramatic changes. After 1919, Banat’s unity was fractured by its division between Romania, Serbia and Hungary, while totalitarian regimes sought to erase the tradition of multicultural coexistence. Yet the civic spirit and inventiveness of its inhabitants ensured continuity. Today, Banat is reclaiming its European identity by building on its legacy of pluralism and innovation.

4.9. Lessons of the past and the future of Banat

Banat’s history demonstrates that prosperity arises from diversity, solidarity and openness. Its inherited values – civic engagement, multiculturality, and an associative and entrepreneurial spirit – remain vital resources for the future. In the context of European decentralisation, when regions will gain more control over resources, Banat has the potential to once again become a driver of innovation. A symbol of this continuity is Timișoara, designated European Capital of Culture in 2023 – a moment that shows how Banat’s multicultural tradition and innovative spirit can fuel a new stage of regional development.

5. On food in Banat. Gastronomic heritage and identity

**Raw materials, real stories:
Banat is Europe's pantry in
miniature.**

**Certified local icons and
living recipes – flavor shaped by
culture, craft and religion.**

5.1 General remarks

Information on the diet in Banat during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is relatively scarce and fragmentary. Most references appear in the reports of Austrian and Western officials or travellers, who noted in passing details about food and eating practices.

One recurring element is the importance and frequency of fasting, particularly among the Orthodox communities of Romanians and Serbs. During these periods, plant-based diets predominated, featuring beans, cabbage, curly



cabbage, linseed oil, peppers, garlic, turnips, plums and preparations such as prune stew (*chisăliță*). Sources also indicate distinct dietary patterns depending on community: German colonists relied on bread, butter, eggs, flour and meat, while Romanians, according to Nicolae Stoica de Hațeg in 1773, ate “salted maize flour tied in a sheep’s stomach; cheese; and during fasting, beans and salt.”

Clear differences could be observed between the rural diet, structured around religious observances, and that of the towns, which included refined products such as cakes with butter cream, unaffected by ecclesiastical restrictions. Meat consumption also reflected ethnic preferences: Romanians favoured mutton, Serbs pork, and Germans poultry, while fish and crayfish were common to all groups. Romanians and Serbs were noted for their skill in roasting meat in the open air.

The main drinks were wine and brandy (*răchie*), though guests were often offered beer, cherry liqueur and coffee. Coffee, in particular, became a symbol of social prestige, consumed even by senior clergy of the Serbian Church in Banat.

Festive meals are described in far greater detail than everyday fare. The Schott brothers, early collectors of folklore from the Oravița area, wrote in the early nineteenth century about wedding and feast banquets that included chicken soup with noodles, veal with grated horseradish and pickled cucumbers, chicken *angemaht* (a sweet-and-sour stew), sauerkraut with roast and boiled pork, two kinds of roast with celery salad, followed by pastries and cakes.

5.2. Food and ethnography. The beginnings of Banat gastronomy

In the latter half of the nineteenth century and the interwar years, ethnographic records became more numerous, alongside the appearance of the first cookery books. Simeon Manguica, in his Romanian Popular Julian-Gregorian Calendar (Oravița, 1882), listed foods associated with religious feasts: pork aspic (*piftii*), Lazarus’ pie, boiled wheat, honeyed *bradoși* (anthropomorphic pastries for 9 March), nettle dishes, painted Easter eggs, sheep’s milk with strawberries, cherries, apricots and new apples, lamb at St George’s Day, pork at Christmas, and various ritual breads.

These references show how ritual moments marked the introduction of certain foods and how cuisine was closely tied to both the religious and agrarian calendar. Cheese pies, still widely baked in Caraș-Severin today, exemplify the continuity of ritual food traditions into modern domestic gastronomy.

The nineteenth century also brought the first printed cookery books in Banat, such as that of Petru Lupulov (1857) and the much-loved *Poftă bună!* by Zotti Hodoș (1899, 2nd ed. 1902). These collections offered both simple and sophisticated dishes, including desserts that have since become fixtures of Banat kitchens: *cozonac*, cheese and fruit pies, doughnuts, *crêmeș*, and Sacher and Doboș tortes.

5.3. Religious gastronomy

Food in Banat cannot be fully understood without considering the profound influence of religion on dietary practices, both in everyday life and in festive traditions. The region’s multi-confessional landscape – with Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim communities – has shaped a culinary heritage that is diverse, ritualized, and deeply symbolic.

In the **Orthodox** tradition (Romanians and Serbs), fasting plays a central role in structuring the annual food calendar. Extended fasting periods, such as Lent or Advent, have generated a rich repertoire of plant-based dishes: beans, cabbage, lentils, pickled vegetables, plum stews, and bread made from maize or wheat flour. Fish, consumed both fresh and salted, and even crayfish in the mountainous areas, were often permitted during fasts, ensuring variety. Fasting reinforced not only spiritual discipline but also culinary creativity.

For **Catholic** and **Protestant** communities (Magyars/Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, Croats), religious festivities have long been associated with abundant meals that combine meat, bread, dairy, and confectionery. Easter lamb, Christmas pork, festive pastries, and butter-based cakes are essential elements of celebration. Recipes such as strudels, Doboș cake, or savoury pastries reflect this heritage and have been widely adopted across the region.

Jewish gastronomy added further complexity to Banat’s food culture, with dishes prepared according to kosher laws and with a particular emphasis on bread, poultry, and

sweets, many of which were shared beyond the Jewish community.

Similarly, **Muslim** influences (from the Ottoman period and later through contact with Turkish, Bosniak, or Albanian communities) introduced coffee rituals, pilaf-style rice dishes, and a taste for spiced meats.

Across denominations, ritual foods play a crucial role in marking the cycle of life and time. Here, time is measured not only in days and months, but in aromas. Throughout the year, religious observance interweaves with family tables, and food becomes part of an unwritten yet deeply felt calendar. Banat’s gastronomy remains a way of honoring life and belief through dishes that carry the soul of the place. From patient, plant-based fare of pulses and seeds to the great feasts that gather relatives, neighbors and friends, people share not only flavors but stories, memories and thanks. Further, some examples of such moments.





5.4. Distinctive features of Banat cuisine by geographic area

Lowland Banat

Here, the staple and most prestigious food is white, fermented bread, baked in large ovens once a week, symbolizing abundance and respectability. Pork and pork products – sausages, cured hams and salamis – dominate the diet, alongside poultry. Soups are varied, featuring potatoes, kohlrabi, peas, beans or cauliflower, with the “Sunday soup” – a clear broth with the finest noodles – held as the hallmark of hospitality. Flour-based pasta dishes, often served with walnuts, poppy seeds, cheese or jam, are a weekly tradition, while homemade cakes and puddings mark festive occasions. A hallmark of the plains cuisine is pasta- and dough-based dishes—noodles (*tăiței*), small dumplings (*tășcuțe*), and *laște*—with various additions and fillings. A distinctive feature is the combination of sweet and savory. Noodles with poppy seeds or with walnuts have traditionally been served as a second course rather than as desserts—a Slovak and Austro-Hungarian influence.

Mountain Banat

In the mountainous zone, the central food is polenta (*coleașă*), thick and firm, eaten hot or cold, fresh or kept for a day. The main meat is mutton, always paired with strong sheep's cheese, a staple side dish for most meals. Bread was also made, but usually quickly baked in clay domes rather than ovens. Pasta entered the diet only recently, bought from shops, while soups – locally called *zamă* – were hearty one-pot meals of vegetables with slices of cheese. Desserts typically consisted of yeasted cakes with fruit, jam and various kinds of cheese, while plum brandy (*răchie*) was the drink of choice.

Danubian Banat

Along the Danube, the diet revolves around fish, prepared in countless ways and central to daily meals. The cuisine reflects intense interaction between Romanians, Serbs and the small Pemi community, resulting in a shared culinary repertoire. In recent decades, exotic crops such as figs have been cultivated, used both for preserves and for making brandy.





The Sunday table – The week's observance

Sunday in Banat is more than a day of rest; it is a small feast prepared with care, knowing the family will return from church expecting familiar aromas. A glass of plum brandy (*rachiu*) "to whet the appetite" is followed by clear chicken soup with home-made noodles and parsley. Sarmale—pork minced with rice and herbs, wrapped in pickled cabbage leaves—simmer slowly until the flavors marry. The roast—pork or poultry—comes with boiled or mashed *crumpi* (potatoes), cabbage salad or pickles, and a home-baked cake, plain or with cream, closes the meal.

"Ruga" feasts

"Ruga (of the village)" feasts is closely associated with Banat and has roots in the Orthodox Romanian and also Serbian (*slava*) custom of celebrating the church's patronal feast/the community's spiritual patron—with a service, a procession, and dancing (the "*hora de ruguță*"). The event itself (the patronal feast/the village festival) also appears in other denominations: Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics likewise mark the parish's "*hram*" (patronal feast; in Banat there are also Swabian "*Kirchweih*" celebrations, very similar), and in mixed villages people take part together regardless of denomination. On this occasion, each family hosts guests for whom they prepare a sumptuous festive meal. Alongside the principal Sunday dishes, the sheer abundance of sweets—cakes, tortes, and pastries—stands out, a hallmark of Banat households renowned for their skill in baking.

Easter – Joy of the Resurrection and the offering of the lamb

"As Easter comes but once a year, the table must be plentiful," says an old Banat custom. After the Resurrection service, when worshippers return home with the Light and blessed bread, the meal becomes celebration. It opens with a cold platter: red-dyed eggs, slices of fresh cheese, smoked ham, spring onions and

lamb *drob* (offal pâté bound in caul). Lamb soup, soured with sauerkraut brine and brightened with lovage, is followed by *anghemaht*—dumplings of offal and herbs poached in a clear broth. At lunch, lamb marinated overnight in wine, garlic and thyme roasts to a glaze and is served with mashed potatoes and green salad. Walnut cakes, tortes and cozonac round off the feast.

Annunciation – The fish dispensation

"At the Annunciation we eat fish," says the old saying—kept not only for taste but for the house's good fortune. People say that on this day the birds "find their tongues", and the first sure signs of spring are awaited. Tradition calls for fish—fried to a golden crust and served with red potatoes tossed in an onion-and-paprika *rântaş* (roux) and a green salad.

Pentecost (Whitsun) – Greens and the gifts of the earth

"As Whitsun is, so the summer will be—rich or poor," the elders say; a full plate is a good sign. Whitsun brings the fresh taste of early summer. Dishes feature the year's first vegetables: pea stew with chicken-liver dumplings and herbs, simmered gently until the flavors meld; crisp meatballs with new fried potatoes and a lightly sour dill sauce; and sweet cabbage with lamb, stewed with tomato and dill, to close the meal.

Christmas and New Year – Winter's abundance

"As you spend New Year's, so the year will be," so tables are loaded and glasses never empty. At Christmas, the smell of oven-baked loaves meets the aroma of smoked meats. Platters of sausages, cured pork fat, white puddings and roast pork sit alongside clear chicken soup with noodles and cabbage *sarmale*. On New Year's Day, meatball soup replaces the clear broth, and pork or turkey mains take centre stage. Desserts are generous: *cozonac* with poppy seeds and walnuts, lard-pastry biscuits, crescent cookies and layered tortes.

Fasting Days – simplicity as prayer

"Fasting purifies the body and sweetens the soul"—and in Banat, as elsewhere, these words are taken to heart. The fasts of the year bring modest yet flavorful dishes: tomato broth with noodles served alongside mashed beans with fried onions; potato soup, *păturată* over potatoes, and bean soup made without meat, relying on garden vegetables and sweet paprika. On Christmas Eve, *lacșele*—thick noodles boiled in a pumpkin-seed broth—are eaten "for health". Noodles tossed with poppy seeds or walnuts and a little sugar make a gentle, comforting pudding.

Jewish traditions – celebrations and their foods

Timișoara's today small Jewish community keeps a strong identity through Kashrut-observant cuisine and a ritual calendar tasted at the table.

Shabbat: challah and wine for Kiddush, chicken soup, gefilte fish or fried carp, roast chicken/brisket, and Saturday cholent; *Purim*: chickpea sambousak and hamantaschen; Hanukkah: oil-fried latkes and jam-filled sufganiyot.

Pesach (Passover): matzah, chicken soup with matzah balls, charoset; *Shavuot*: dairy—cheesecake, blintzes, cheese pastries (borekas/sambousak).

Rosh Hashanah: apples in honey, round sweet challah; *Yom Kippur*: light pre-fast, then dairy/fish break-fast (bagels, soft cheeses, eggs).

Sukkot: harvest dishes eaten in the sukkah (stuffed vegetables, fruit).

Across generations, the essence endures: pure ingredients, continuity of custom and the joy of sharing. Today, Banat's religious gastronomy continues to be a marker of identity and cohesion. It reminds us that beyond nourishment, food carries profound cultural and spiritual meanings, acting as a bridge between communities and traditions.

5.5 Traditional cuisine and stories you can taste

Every Banat dish is a chapter of our shared history: tales of hardship and celebration, kitchens warmed by wood fires, and hands that knead, stir, and share. Banat’s gastronomy is woven from borrowings and adaptations, but also from recipes with a distinct local stamp—born of household ingenuity, the needs of the times, and the joy of sharing. Collected from stories, old notebooks and memory, these recipes are cooked to the rhythm of the seasons and the character of each area—lowland, mountain, or Danube. They are more than food; they are living stories—fragments of identity and collective memory. To cook and share them is to carry forward a cultural heritage that binds us to one another and to the place we call home.

Lowland Banat

Laşchele (Wide homemade noodles)

Originating from Lowland Banat, *laşchele* (also known as “*laşcă*” or “*laşche*,” depending on the village) are wide noodles made from simple, unleavened dough. Once boiled, they are mixed with a variety of toppings, both sweet and savory. The sweet versions include *prezli* (toasted breadcrumbs mixed with sugar), walnuts, or poppy seeds. The savory versions are prepared with sautéed cabbage, onions with paprika, or other vegetables. This versatile dish highlights the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Banat’s traditional home cooking.



Păturata pră crumpi (Potato paprika stew with dough blanket)

Păturata pră crumpi brings together Swabian traditions, Ottoman-Balkan influences, and the flavors of the Banat plain. The name (“*păturată*,” meaning “blanketed”) refers to the cooking method: a sheet of dough—traditionally simple and brushed only with oil or sprinkled with parsley or green onions, though in newer versions filled with cheese and dill—is placed over a paprika-based potato stew (“*crumpi*,” the local term for potatoes). The dish is traditionally cooked under a clay lid known as *fegeu*, which gives it its authentic rustic character.



Mountain Banat

Brânză friptă cu coleşă (Panfried cheese with polenta)

A defining dish of Mountain Banat, combining the pastoral simplicity of shepherd life with the richness of local dairy. The cheese, usually hard cheese made of cow or sheep milk, is panfried until it forms a golden crust while remaining soft and melted inside. Served alongside *coleşă* (traditional polenta) often with eggs and cured pork fatback, it offers a contrast of textures and a deeply rustic, authentic flavor. This dish is considered one of the culinary symbols of the Banat mountains.



Papricaş de mistreţ (Wild boar paprika stew)

An emblematic dish of Mountain Banat, where game has long been a treasured source of food. Tender pieces of wild boar are simmered in a rich sauce made with sweet and hot paprika, onions, and garlic, which enhance the meat’s distinctive wild flavor. Often served with dumplings or polenta, this robust, hearty dish perfectly evokes the rugged spirit of the Banat highlands.



Danube Banat

Ciorbă de peşte (Danube fish soup)

A signature dish of the Danube Gorge and its fishing communities. Fresh fish, usually caught directly from the Danube, is simmered with vegetables and seasonings, resulting in a rich and intensely aromatic broth. Unlike the *borş* soups typical of other regions, Banat-style *ciorbă de peşte* is not soured with fermented wheat bran but rather with tomatoes, vinegar, or sauerkraut juice, in line with local tradition. Strongly influenced by neighboring Serbian and Hungarian cuisines, it remains a staple in both home kitchens and restaurants along the Danube.



Saramură de peşte (Grilled fish with savory brine)

Highly appreciated in the Danube Gorge, *saramură* can be prepared with nearly any type of fish: bream, carp, crucian, catfish, and more. The fish is first grilled on a bed of salt or on a hot plate, then paired with a *saramură*—a concentrated, flavorful broth made from vegetables charred on the grill. Served with polenta, this dish captures the very essence of Banat’s fishing communities, combining simplicity, freshness, and depth of flavor.



5.6. Wines, signature beverages, and coffee culture

Banat's glass tells the same story as its plate: a fusion of terrains, peoples and techniques that has matured over centuries. From sun-warmed plains to limestone hills and cool mountain foothills, the region offers distinct terroirs that shape a confident portfolio of wines and drinks—traditional, reinvented and proudly local.

Historic and modern vineyards ring the main valleys and hills: Receaș and Buziaș near Timișoara; Silagiu and Jamu Mare towards the south; Miniș-Măderat in Arad; smaller plantings around Tirol Hills and the Caraș valleys. These sites combine generous sun, well-drained soils and breeze corridors that favor both expressive whites and structured reds.

Alongside international varieties (Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling Italico, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon), Banat nurtures regional stars such as Fetească Albă, Fetească Regală, Fetească Neagră, Mustoasă de Măderat and the historic Cadarcă (Kadarka). The result is a spectrum of styles: fresh, aromatic whites for everyday tables and fish cuisine; elegant rosés for warm seasons and tasting routes; supple to robust reds—spice-tinged and food-friendly—for game, pork and slow cooking; limited sparkling cuvées for celebrations and gastronomy pairings.

Food pairings that speak Banat

- **Danubian classics**
(carp *plachie*, fish *bors*) thrive with crisp, mineral whites.
- **Mountain dishes** (pheasant broth, wild-boar *paprikaș*) call for fuller reds—Fetească Neagră, Cadarcă, or a well-handled blend.
- **Lowland pastries and noodle dishes**
(*lacșele*, sweet cheese pies) find easy partners in semi-dry whites or a bright rosé.

These pairings are an easy way to narrate the region's **one shared table** across geographies.

Beer heritage & the craft wave

Banat's Central-European footprint includes a deep brewing tradition—anchored by the historic Timișoreana beer and its brewery/factory in Timișoara (established in 1718, a landmark of the city's industrial heritage) and in Ciclova Montană (1728, today closed)—and now re-energized by craft producers in Timișoara, Arad and Reșița. Expect clean lagers for markets and festivals, alongside small-batch IPAs, stouts and seasonal brews poured at street events, food halls and tasting rooms. Classic pairings—sausages, pretzels, schnitzels, street food—sit naturally beside Balkan grills and modern small plates.

Fruit spirits & liqueurs

In farm courtyards and licensed distilleries alike, plum brandy (*răchie*) remains the ceremonial opener of a Sunday meal. Pear, quince and apple brandies extend the palette, while *vișinată* (cherry liqueur) and *afinată* (blueberry) add a sweeter, festive note. Served neat in small glasses, these drinks mark welcome, kinship and celebration—rituals that bridge Orthodox, Catholic and secular family tables.

Non-alcoholic signatures & well-being

Banat's beverage story is also about healthful, everyday drinks: mineral and spring waters from the Buziaș area and the Banat Mountains; herbal infusions (mint, linden, mountain thyme); and seasonal home-made cordials such as elderflower (*socată*) or raspberry and sour-cherry syrups.

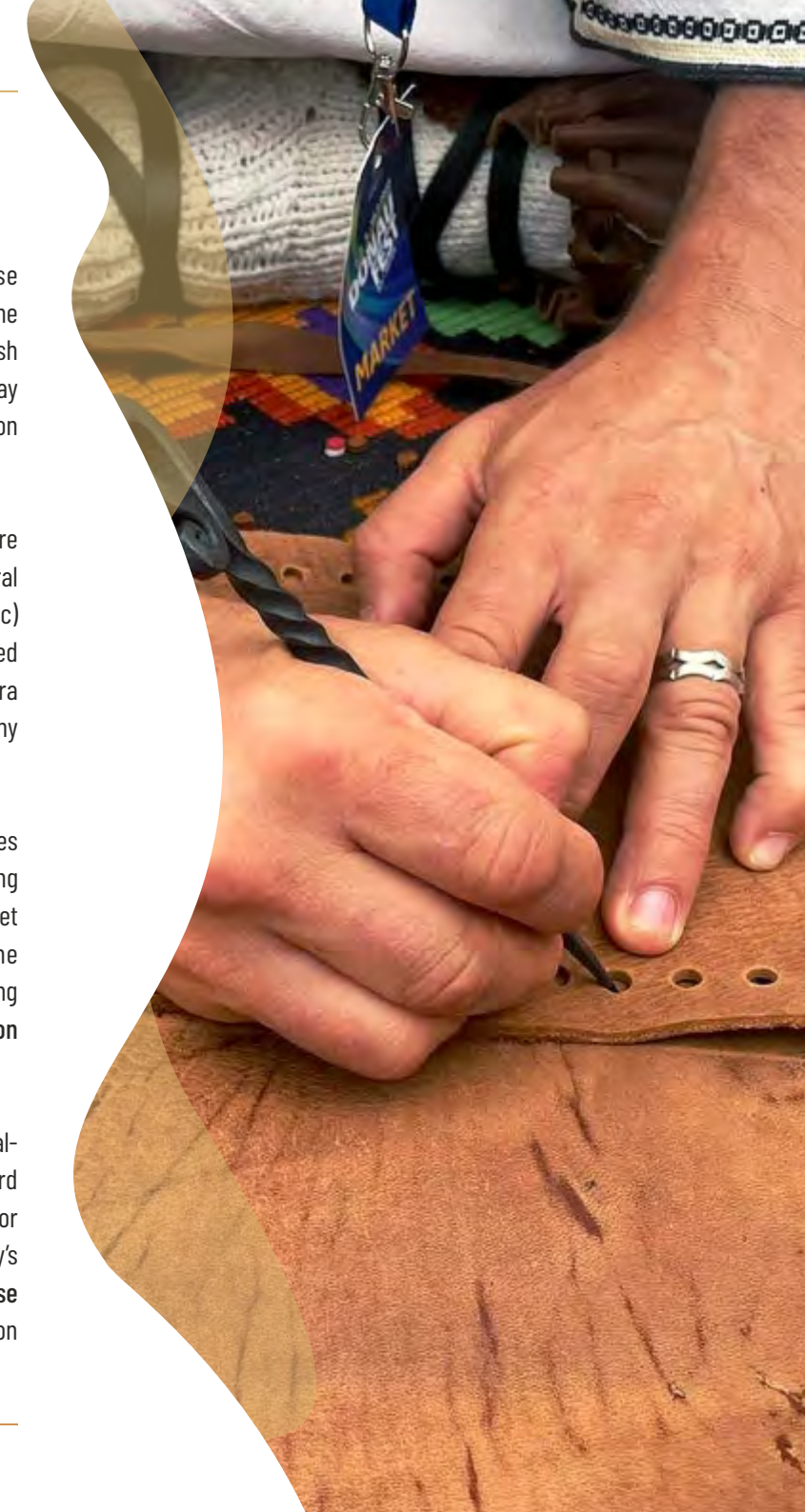
Coffee culture — from Ottoman cups to the Central-European Illy espresso

Coffee reached Banat with the Ottomans, whose kahvehane model spread social coffee-houses across the region; in the Danube's micro-cosm Ada Kaleh, Turkish coffee, sweets and rose confections became everyday ritual until the island was submerged during the Iron Gates project (1970–71).

Under Habsburg rule, Central-European café culture layered onto these Ottoman roots, and in multicultural Timișoara a modern chapter began: Francesco (Ferenc) Illy, born in the Iosefin district in 1892, later founded illycaffè in Trieste and helped shape the espresso era (Illetta machine; pressurized packaging). His biography anchors Banat in Europe's coffee innovation map.

Today, Banat's coffee sits comfortably beside its wines and craft drinks: Turkish-style brews remembered along the Danube; Austro-Hungarian café traditions in market towns; and a new wave of specialty cafés in the cities—proof that coffee here is both heritage and living craft. This strengthens the candidacy's message: **Fusion Beyond Borders** in the cup as much as on the plate.

All in all, Banat's drinks echo its culinary fusion: Central-European technique meets Balkan warmth; vineyard savoir-faire sits beside orchard craft; urban cafés mirror rural courtyards. Together they reinforce the candidacy's promise — **Fusion Beyond Borders: Bold flavors. Diverse origins. One shared table** — by turning terroir and tradition into shared experiences you can sip, pair and remember.





5.7 Contemporary realities

Banat's contemporary food scene is a living conversation between heritage and innovation. Three terroirs (lowland, mountain, Danubian) meet a mosaic of cultures and faiths; the result feels familiar yet forward-looking—rooted in place, open to the world.

What gastronomy in Banat looks like today. The ecosystem

- ◆ **Producers & short supply chains.** Market gardens, beekeepers, cheesemakers and small processors feed city markets, Local Gastronomic Points and chef-led kitchens in hotels and restaurants in a rural and urban areas. This agenda is strengthened our partners, namely HoReTim - the association which encompasses local producers, hotels and restaurants, and CRIES - Resource Center for Ethical and Solidarity - based Initiatives. The latter's long-running focus is community-supported agriculture and fair trade, backed by a network of 100+ partners across culture, education and sustainability.
- ◆ **Restaurants & skills.** In Timișoara, Arad and Reșița, chefs reinterpret classics with lighter techniques and precise seasoning. The pipeline is supported by HoReTim, the hospitality employers' association (since 2018), which coordinates training, workshops and dual education launched in Timișoara in 2018 to professionalize the workforce (>50 companies, >2,000 employees represented).
- ◆ **Community festivals & market culture.** Community festivals are usually supported by the Timiș County Council and HoReTim's chain of restaurants. CRIES's festival called LA PAS - Sustainable Food and Culture Festival (five editions, 2019-2024; 3.000-7.000 participants per edition)

celebrates local artisans and slow-food values and, in 2023, dovetailed with Timișoara's European Capital of Culture programme, the Timiș County Council supported festivals, Medieval Festival, Banaton and others.

- ◆ **Representation & advocacy.** Beyond local action, HoReTim helped found the National Hospitality Employers' Federation in 2021, connecting hospitality organizations in 26 counties—useful for scaling standards, apprenticeships and placements across the region.

Defining trends in today's gastronomy in Banat

Recent interviews conducted within the FOODie project ("Digital Collection of Romanian Culinary Heritage and Transfer to Society" run nationally by the West University of Timisoara together with a consortium of Romanian universities, 2021-2024) confirm the existence of a strong regional culinary identity, acknowledged across all communities. This identity is shaped by an emphasis on meat dishes, the ritual of Sunday family lunches, and the special importance given to desserts, which are considered indispensable. The characteristics are:

- ◆ **Heritage-forward, technique-light.** Traditional soups, stews and grills are rebalanced with cleaner stocks, thoughtful acidity and seasonal garnishes—an approach repeatedly showcased in projects and events run by HoReTim and LA PAS Festival tastings and workshops that foreground sustainable methods and local recipes.
- ◆ **Fusion with a memory.** Central-European baking, Serbian/Balkan grills and Danubian fish cookery mingle with Italian-Austrian influences—cross-pollination made visible at LA PAS Festival and HoReTim organized events, through chef demos, artisan stalls and public debates on food culture.
- ◆ **Plant-forward options.** Centuries of fasting inspire

contemporary meat-free menus; CRIES's education campaigns push healthy, seasonal, plant-led eating in schools and communities.

Contemporary Banat gastronomy proves that heritage is a starting point, not a finish line. With HoReTim driving professional standards and jobs, and CRIES mobilizing citizens, schools and producers around responsible food systems, the region turns diversity into daily practice.



This is the everyday meaning of the candidacy banner:
**Banat 2028 - Fusion Beyond Borders: Bold flavours.
Diverse origins. One shared table.**

5.8. Rural & urban gastronomy in today's Banat

The gastronomy of Banat today reflects both continuity with tradition and adaptation to modern lifestyles, with clear distinctions between urban and rural contexts.

In rural areas, food practices remain strongly tied to agricultural cycles, household production, and ritual celebrations. Families often prepare their own bread, cured meats, preserves, and traditional pastries, maintaining recipes inherited from past generations. Meals are centered on locally grown vegetables, meat from animals raised in household farms, and dairy products such as cheese and sour cream. Rural gastronomy retains its communal dimension: festive meals for weddings, baptisms, or village celebrations are large-scale, abundant, and deeply symbolic, combining ritual dishes with seasonal produce.

In contrast, urban gastronomy reflects a stronger openness to cosmopolitan influences and modern consumption patterns. Cities like Timișoara and Arad are home to restaurants that reinterpret Banat's culinary traditions in contemporary styles, blending local ingredients with international techniques. Urban households rely more on purchased goods than self-produced food, and there is a greater emphasis on convenience, eating out, and experimenting with global cuisines. Nevertheless, the urban environment also acts as a space where traditional Banat dishes are preserved, reinvented, and promoted through food festivals, farmers' markets, and culinary tourism initiatives.

The contrast between rural and urban gastronomy highlights both a diversity of practices and a shared

identity. While rural Banat maintains a more traditional, production-based approach to food, urban Banat functions as a cultural laboratory where heritage meets innovation. Together, these two dimensions shape the region's contemporary food identity, ensuring both continuity and renewal.

Urban and rural together

Cities act as laboratories—testing new formats, plating and pairings—while rural kitchens safeguard techniques and memory (smoking, pickling, open-fire roasting). LA PAS's Festival itinerant ambitions and HoRETim's member network help bridge these worlds in calendars, routes and skills exchanges.

Cross-border DNA

Partnerships cultivated by CRIES (France, Italy; membership in European and national social-economy networks) and the federation reach of HoRETim carry Banat's know-how into European dialogues and back—keeping the table open and outward-looking.





5.9 “*Produs în Banat*” (Produced in Banat) certification

The “*Produs în Banat*” Association awards this certificate to products that make an authentic contribution to Banat’s gastronomic heritage. The mark serves as a sign of recognition of origin, quality and community connection, strengthening the region’s culinary identity.

At present, in practice, the mark is used in promotion, at events and across a partner network. The following are illustrative examples:

Infinity Honey – local honey and apiarist products.

Terra Biola – raw vegan cakes and organic delicacies.

TRUFEX – truffles and truffle-based products.

Banat wineries promoted under the umbrella “*Produs în Banat*” (e.g., Petro Vaselo, Aramic, Recaş).

Casa Despi – craft cider.

BIODAC – artisan preserves (jams, vegetable spreads such as zacuscă).

Lavanda de la Țară (Fibiș) – lavender products and local events.

Principles of certification

◆ **Local authenticity.**

The product is created in Banat and preserves recipes, ingredients and traditional techniques specific to the region, passed down from generation to generation. Contemporary adaptation is welcome when it respects local taste and identity.

◆ **Connection with the community.**

The producer collaborates actively with the local community and contributes to local development – employment, training, volunteering, charity, events and gastronomic tourism. Short supply chains (farm – workshop – local market) are encouraged.

◆ **Quality and food safety.**

Production complies with good hygiene practice and applicable standards, ensuring a wholesome product without inauthentic additives and with correct labelling (traceability, batch, origin).

◆ **Sustainability and responsibility.**

Ingredients are sourced, as far as possible, locally and via eco-friendly methods; packaging and distribution follow circular-economy principles (recyclable materials, efficient logistics, food-waste reduction).

◆ **Cultural impact and promotion.**

The product helps promote Banat’s identity through participation in local, county and national events – producer fairs, travelling markets, themed festivals – and in marketing campaigns (e.g., Visit Timiș, My Banat), as well as strategic projects (e.g., Banat 2028 – European Region of Gastronomy, initiatives derived from Timișoara 2023 – European Capital of Culture).

Through the Banat 2028 European Region of Gastronomy, the label’s presence will be highlighted in gastronomic guides, culinary routes, Banat brunches, pop-up tastings and educational initiatives. As of 2025 the Timiș County Council is prioritising gastronomy, culture and tourism as a key driver of regional growth financing related activities in both urban and rural areas

6. Vision and strategic objectives

A region that cooks with its head and heart.

Banat 2028 knits feeding the planet, innovation and education with urban–rural bridges — one vision, many hands, lasting results.

6.1. Vision of Banat 2028

Banat 2028 seeks to become a European model of coexistence between tradition and gastronomic innovation, where multicultural heritage, agricultural diversity, the development of a dynamic HoReCa (hospitality) sector, and culinary creativity act as drivers of sustainable development. Our vision is that, by 2028, Banat will be recognized across Europe and internationally as a region of authentic flavors and responsible gastronomic experimentation—with a high-quality hospitality offer (restaurants, guesthouses, catering, street food) built on local sourcing, circular practices, digitalization, and workforce training—a place where people, products, and ideas circulate freely, creating an open, healthy, and prosperous community.



6.2 Justification of the concept

Banat 2028 – Fusion Beyond Borders: Bold flavours. Diverse origins. One shared table.

Banat has always lived across borders—of countries, empires and faiths—so fusion is our everyday practice, not a trend. The candidacy simply turns this lived diversity into a clear European offer.

Bold flavours.

Banat's taste is assertive because it is anchored in place, while flavours are rooted in plain, mountain and Danube terroirs—confident soups, stews, grills and pastries, with wines, beers, fruit spirits and coffee to match running from Ottoman cups to the birthplace of Francesco Illy in Timișoara. Bold also describes our approach to innovation—lighter techniques, plant-forward menus inspired by fasting traditions, waste-smart kitchens and product R&D that elevates local grains, pulses and oils.

Diverse origins.

Our recipes are a dialogue between Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*) and the Balkans, between Orthodox fasts and Central-European feasts, between Sabbath breads and Easter lamb. Habsburg colonisations layered German, Czech, Slovak and Italian techniques onto local practice; Ottoman and Danubian influences left coffee rituals and spice grammars; the 20th and 21st centuries added new communities (Italian, Turkish, Indian, Ukrainian, etc.) through business, study and work. This mosaic is not a museum: markets, festivals and households still trade know-how across languages and faiths. Diversity is our raw material—and our comparative advantage as a European culinary destination.

One shared table.

In Banat, food is civic. The Sunday meal, the village fair, the city market, the tasting room and the school canteen are places where neighbours meet, stories are exchanged and newcomers are welcomed. Our programme turns that social instinct into infrastructure and impact: Local Gastronomic Points and producer routes; a Gastronomy Hub that connects chefs with farmers and researchers; “Produced in Banat” certification to reward quality, origin and sustainability; cross-border projects with the Serbian and Hungarian parts of Banat; education from primary school to vocational training; and zero-waste standards for public events. These actions bind urban and rural, heritage and innovation, residents and visitors—one table, many seats.

Why this concept, why now?

Fusion Beyond Borders is not a slogan grafted onto Banat; it is the most honest reading of who we are and how we can serve Europe. It aligns directly with the European Region of Gastronomy goals: food education, sustainable production and consumption, short supply chains, balanced tourism, cultural participation, linking urban to rural, health and well-being, and cross-border cooperation. It builds on recent momentum (e.g., Timișoara's European Capital of Culture 2023), on strong producer and civil networks, and on measurable 2028 KPIs (routes certified, producers onboarded, pupils trained, waste diverted, jobs created).

The value for Europe

Banat offers a replicable model: use diversity as an engine for quality; turn borders into bridges; make sustainability tangible on the plate; and show how gastronomy can create jobs, pride and wellbeing. That is why our slogan fits the evidence—and why it can carry beyond 2028: **Bold flavours. Diverse origins. One shared table.**



6.3 Strategic objectives

Preserve and valorise Banat's culinary heritage — safeguard traditional recipes, ingredients and techniques, ensure intergenerational transmission, and use heritage as a driver of cultural identity and international attractiveness.

Position Banat as a recognised European gastronomic destination — integrate into the European network of gastronomic regions and foster cultural/professional exchanges to attract visitors year-round through authentic, high-quality food and cultural experiences.

Strengthen the local food economy—support small-scale producers, consolidate short supply chains with quality and traceability, and foster innovation in agri-food businesses.

Strengthen the hospitality (HoReCa) sector — upgrade skills via VET/dual programmes and chef residencies; adopt quality, sustainability and accessibility standards; connect kitchens to local producers through short supply chains; and boost resilience with seasonality planning, business mentoring and promotion.

Build bridges between sectors — connect agriculture, tourism, education and culture to stimulate inclusive economic and social development.

Enhance education and skills — develop training in gastronomy, hospitality and sustainable food systems, creating clear pathways for young talent and professionals.

Promote healthy lifestyles and responsible eating — embed food education and public-health goals across programmes and communities.

Foster cross-border cooperation — deepen cultural exchange with the Serbian and Hungarian parts of Banat, promoting shared heritage and regional cohesion.

Champion sustainability and biodiversity — advance

responsible production, consumption and tourism, reduce waste, and contribute to climate resilience and the circular economy.

Build a resilient regional brand — connect urban and rural communities, unite diverse ethnic traditions, and reinforce Banat's distinctive European identity.

6.4. Specific objectives by IGCAT domains of interest with partner contributions

Feeding the Planet

Create a digital catalogue of traditional and innovative Banat products, prioritising sustainable production methods.

Contribution: “Produs în Banat” to expand its interactive sales/ storytelling/e-commerce platform to host the catalogue and connect rural producers with urban consumers. HoReTim, together with its partners, Degustaria - are collecting recipes for the “Culinaria Banatica” collection. University of Life Sciences of Timisoara is contributing with sustainable production methods. My Banat Association will create a regional gastronomic guide and an online platform.

Develop international partnerships for regenerative agriculture and gastronomy knowledge exchange.

Contribution: HoReTim organizes training courses with international partners. CRIES leverages its partner network in France and Italy and its membership in RIPESS to organise exchange visits and joint workshops (e.g., links with Bergamo's Festival of Sustainability & Biodynamics). University of Life Sciences in Timișoara contributes to its network of scientists, workshops and debates.

Implement pilot projects to reduce food waste in HoReCa and communities.

Contribution: HoReTim contributes through training and education curricula development and learning sessions. CRIES scales up its responsible consumption & zero-waste toolkits and festival best practices (LA PAS Festival), and rolls out community pilots through schools and local events. University of Life Sciences valorises agro-horticultural by-products (e.g., oilseed cakes, grape marc, fruit peels) in functional bakery R&D, linking circular economy to everyday products.

Innovation, creativity and jobs

Establish the Banat 2028 Gastronomy Hub, a co-creation space for chefs, producers and culinary designers.

Contribution: Visit Timiș backed by the Timiș County Council in collaboration with HoReTim which provides expertise from the hospitality sector, and the University of Life Sciences which provides specialised bakery & cereal labs (MIXOLAB CHOPIN, pilot lines) as anchor infrastructure for prototyping functional products and training.

Launch an incubation programme for gastronomy and agri-food start-ups.

Contribution: HoReTim and University of Life Sciences provide with know-how; CRIES's 100+ partner network and festival ecosystem (LA PAS Festival) serve as a market-testing arena and mentorship pool for start-ups.

Stimulate the creative economy via gastronomy and arts/design events.

Contribution: HoReTim to deliver: Danubian Countries Gastronomy Festival, regional editions of the National Congress of Gastronomy & Wine, chef & pastry contests with vocational schools, and heritage cookbook projects (reprint Zotti Hodoș; new Banat cookbook in the “Sărutmâna pentru masa” [Thank you for the dish] series). Degustaria to monitor authenticity and quality across events and products.

Education for the future

Integrate sustainable gastronomy into school curricula and Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Contribution: HoReTim in collaboration with School Inspectorate run VET projects; CRIES – Educație pentru schimbare [Education for Change] (2018–2024): 4.287 pupils, 467 activities, 59 teachers/28 schools, 2.614 parents, 235 volunteers; resources on sustainable food & responsible consumption to be embedded county-wide;

Create gastronomic summer schools for youth with universities/NGOs.

Contribution: HoReTim, CRIES and University of Life Sciences co-design practice-based modules (lab sessions, field visits, festival internships).

Promote food education for consumers (healthy, responsible choices).

Contribution: HoReTim expands dual education and continuous training for hospitality roles. CRIES scales campaigns such as “Apă bună de băut” [Water ready to drink] and slow-food-oriented LA PAS Festival workshops to neighbourhood and rural hubs;

Balanced and sustainable tourism

Develop themed gastronomic routes combining food with nature and heritage.

Contribution: Visit Timis and HoReTim – “Drumul Vinului” [Wine Road] to connect local wineries with stories and tastings; GAL Colinele Recaș and “Produs în Banat” to map festival-based itineraries linking gastronomy, nature, history and craft. My Banat Association runs Banat Brunch, Picnic in the Puszta, Lunch with Friends, Breakfast in Margina gastronomic projects to promote traditional food.



Implement “Banat 2028 – Authentic Experience” certification for restaurants/guesthouses.

Contribution: GAL Colinele Recaș designs a regional branding & certification scheme tied to PGLs (Local Gastronomic Points) and training; Degustaria supports independent monitoring of authenticity/quality, “Produs în Banat” supports local producers, My Banat Association creates gastronomic routes.

Promote slow tourism and farm-to-table experiences.

Contribution: My Banat and “Produs în Banat” runs rural fairs, recipe showcases (with chefs/vloggers) and anchor tourism projects (e.g., Charlottenburg tethered hot-air balloon) to draw visitors and spotlight producers; GAL engages in international fairs and cross-border collaborations (Serbia/Hungary) to position Banat as a gastronomic destination.

Urban–rural link

Create modern urban agri-food markets with direct producer participation.

Contribution: CRIES extends ASAT (CSA) partnerships and market formats piloted through LA PAS Festival to year-round urban venues; Visit Timiș, HoReTim and My Banat Association runs traditional gastronomy events in the rural area.

Organise itinerant culinary events that connect communities.

Contribution: LA PAS Festival takes festival modules on the road, linking towns and villages across Banat. Visit Timiș, HoReTim and My Banat Association will organize gastronomic routes featuring local producers’ markets.

Support local co-operatives for fair, efficient distribution.

Contribution: GAL invests >€1m in Local gastronomic Points (LGP) infrastructure, mobile facilities and staff training, strengthening producer networks and logistics; “Produced in Banat” builds digital direct-sales channels to shorten routes from farm to city.

Well-being and healthy living

Promote balanced diets inspired by Banat traditions.

Contribution: CRIES and Degustaria deliver public workshops and community menus aligned with responsible consumption and slow food.

Run awareness campaigns on diet’s impact on physical & mental health.

Contribution: CRIES scales school/community campaigns and dialogues (films, debates, toolkits) proven through LA PAS editions. UMFT organises conferences.

Introduce healthy menus in school canteens and public institutions.

Contribution: University of Life Sciences and HoReTim provides nutrition-driven product development (low-carb breads, gluten-free lines, polyphenol-enriched bakery) and training for catering teams; CRIES supports implementation in schools via its county education network.



7. Programme 2028

2028 serves a year-long menu for Banat—festivals, taste routes and living places of gastronomy from city to village, lowlands to mountains and the Danube.

We grow talent and jobs, boost local producers, and fast-track ideas from lab to table—while championing well-being and healthy living with healthier menus, active routes and nature-based experiences.

Circular by design, rich in biodiversity and open to the world—heritage delivering the future for people and place.

Here's the plan on a plate. Under **Fusion Beyond Borders**, the Banat 2028 Programme curates a year-long menu of already existing and new festivals, taste routes and living places of gastronomy that link city and village, lowlands, mountains and the Danube. It grows skills and good jobs, strengthens short supply chains for local producers, and accelerates ideas from lab to table. Designed for circularity and biodiversity, and open to Europe, it is heritage delivering the future.



7.1. Gastronomy as culture and identity

In Banat, food is a living language of memory, craft and hospitality. Here gastronomy stages multi- and intercultural identity, connects faith calendars to everyday recipes, and anchors contemporary culture and tourism—true to **Fusion Beyond Borders**.

Living heritage & community.

Banat Brunch (Visit Timiș and My Banat) brings authentic household cooking and rural storytelling to the public; “Mic Dejun la Margina” (Breakfast at Margina) turns village hospitality into a product; Jewish festival Shalom Jerusalem and the *Festivalul Păturatei* (Ciacova) and other local festivals mentioned in the annual calendar, highlight plural traditions; *Povestea Răchiei* (Pietroasa) performs local craft and conviviality.

Culture in public space — living agoras of taste.

Year-round, Banat becomes a vast open-air stage where major festivals meet the region’s food culture. Across Timiș, Arad and Caraș-Severin counties, local producers and food artisans serve tailored menus—reimagined street food, wine/craft-beer pairings and emblematic dishes—many under the “Produced in Banat” certification. Curated food programmes prioritise short supply chains, traceability (with the University of Life Sciences in Timișoara, USVT) and zero-waste practices (with CRIES), while chef demos by HoReTim turn tasting, learning and buying into one cultural act. Museums and arts meet taste through initiatives that link exhibitions, festivals and food—Culinaria Banatica, Sânzienele-n Bastion, Electruga, and street-art on Transluncani—further embedding gastronomy as civic culture.

In 2028, we use established crowd-pullers as anchors, add identity-driven programmes, and grow producer-led marketplaces—all under shared standards for local sourcing, sustainability and audience learning. Every event below includes a curated gastro-zone (“Produced in Banat”), chef demos (HoReTim), traceability pilots (USVT) and Zero-Waste protocols (CRIES).

a) Established & supported festivals — anchors with curated food programmes

- ◆ **Flight Festival & Codru Festival** (in Timișoara) – Large open-air stages with Banat Food Courts: short-supply menus, wine & craft-beer pairings, “meet-the-producer” counters; education corners on waste/compost/packaging with CRIES; chef showcases led by HoReTim.
- ◆ **Timișoara Jazz Festival** and **JAZZx** (Timișoara) – Slow-food-friendly layouts: tasting flights, “from farm to groove” plates, dessert bars celebrating Austro-Hungarian patisserie roots and Romanian traditional menus.
- ◆ **Gărâna Jazz Festival** and **Gărâna Folk** (Gărâna, Caraș-Severin) – Mountain terroir meets music: trout & polenta, sheep cheeses, forest mushrooms; pop-up Local Gastronomic Points (PGL) host tables at dusk.
- ◆ **Rock la Mureș** (Periam, Timiș) – Street food reinvented with Banat staples (sausages, pretzels, schnitzels) alongside Balkan grills and modern small plates; Produced in Banat marketplace.
- ◆ **Medieval Festival** – Huniade Castle (Timișoara) – Historic recipes & wood-fired bread; museum storytelling on foodways.
- ◆ **Fikl Art Stage** (Socolari, Ciclova Română) – Site-specific art with curated micro-menus from nearby PGLs and producers.
- ◆ **Sânzienele-n Bastion** (Timișoara run by Visit Timiș, Banat National Museum, HoReTim and partners) – Urban heritage with floral/seasonal menus; craft and producer stalls under the “Produced in Banat” banner.

b) Identity-focused festivals — food as culture and civic practice

- ◆ **LA PAS Festival – Sustainable Food and Culture** (CRIES) – Five editions to date (3.000–7.000 participants/edition) with debates, workshops, fairtrade/organic tastings, film & community kitchens. In 2028: an expanded LA PAS Campus Banat (talks, citizen-science on waste, hands-on cooking for kids), plus a touring micro-edition in Arad and Caraș-Severin counties.
- ◆ **Shalom Jerusalem** (Timișoara Jewish Community & partners) – Ritual breads, festival sweets and kitchen stories from Timișoara’s Jewish heritage; talks on culinary memory and adaptation.
- ◆ **Povestea Răchiei** (Pietroasa, Timiș), **Festivalul Păturatei** (Ciacova, Timiș) – Distilling craft and iconic dishes brought into the public square with tastings, masterclasses and recipe theatre. To this all gastronomic festivals in villiges mentioned in the next subchapter, month by month will add.

c) Producers & heritage fairs — the region’s open pantry

Săvârșin – Local Producers’ Fair “Soul of Romania” (Arad County) – On the Royal Domain with the Royal House, USVT and retail partners: curated stalls for cheeses, honey, charcuterie, breads and preserves; QR traceability and lab-to-table demos with USVT.

Markets-in-the-Park (Timișoara + five towns in Timiș/Arad/Caraș-Severin) – Quarterly producer markets: chef demos (HoReTim), Produced in Banat pavilion, waste-sorting & compost pilots (CRIES), kids’ workshops and consumer-education talks (HoReTim). Together, these living agoras of taste turn every edition

into a complete experience that tells Banat’s story through sound, image and flavour—true to **Fusion Beyond Borders**.

Museums & arts meet taste.

Initiatives link museums, festivals and food (e.g., **Culinaria Banatica**; **Sânzienele-n Bastion**; **street-art on Transluncani**), reinforcing gastronomy as civic culture. Complementing the festival calendar, open-air fairs and markets of small producers—together with those organised by HoReTim together with commune and town municipalities and the University of Life Sciences in Timișoara and the annual **Timișoara Food Summit**—form the living infrastructure of Banat 2028. These spaces connect consumers directly with farmers, strengthen short supply chains, raise visibility for “Produced in Banat”, and double as places for food education and social innovation (seasonal demos, children’s workshops, guided tastings, talks on waste reduction, composting and responsible packaging).

Science, quality and “**from lab to table**”. The University of Life Sciences (USVT) markets add a quality-assurance layer: stands for local varieties and nutritionally proven products, producer guidance (hygiene, labelling, marketing), demonstration mini-labs for quality control, and living labs for product testing (from heritage-grain breads to additive-free preserves). In parallel, **Timișoara Food Summit** serves as the professional hub: conferences and panels with chefs, researchers and HoReCa, producer-buyer matchmaking (restaurants, retail, catering), start-up pitch sessions, hackathons on food waste and circular economy, and an exhibition area with from lab to table tastings.

7.2. Places of gastronomy and touristic routes

Places of gastronomy

Local Gastronomic Points (Punct Gastronomic Local – PGL). Family-run kitchens in homes, farms or sheepfolds, where hosts cook and serve short, seasonal menus – usually for no more than 12 guests—using ingredients from their own household or nearby authorised producers. The intimacy and scale make for a personal, authentic encounter with Banat’s culinary heritage.

Meals are often served in the family home or courtyard, with traditional methods preserved—wood-fired baking, slow stews, smoking meats—delivering that unmistakable “taste of childhood”. At Coșteiu de Sus, the first PGL in Timiș County, bread and pies still come from a courtyard wood-fired oven.

Beyond nourishment, PGLs **safeguard identity**, transmit know-how between generations and enrich the visitor experience. They also drive **rural tourism**, offering direct access to Banat’s cuisine at its source and enabling small family businesses thanks to simpler rules than for restaurants. By early 2025, Romania counted 260+ PGLs; the trend is rising in Banat too (currently there are 22 PGLs) —Caraș-Severin registered eight new PGLs in the last three years, with Timiș and Arad on similar paths. With the title, we aim to grow the PGL network across the Banat region.

All PGLs are authorised and registered with veterinary and food-safety authorities, ensuring quality and authenticity. Crucially, the Banat – European Region of Gastronomy 2028 strategy fully embraces PGLs: they showcase local produce, strengthen short supply chains and embody food sustainability—grassroots experiences that knit gastronomy into the wider cultural and rural landscape.

Below is a selection of existing PGLs in Banat (Timiș, Arad and Caraș-Severin counties), with locations, specialities and their distinctive marks of authenticity.

Timiș County (selection)

Margina – Stâna “La Fântână”: dairy from the sheepfold, slow stews, grilled meats, polenta • **Coșteiu de Sus (Margina) – Casa Emilia Popa:** first PGL in Timiș; soups, sarmale, roasts, wood-fired bread and pies • **Dudeștii Noi – Grădina lui Raul:** farm-to-table menus from the family garden; seasonal specials • **Drăgsina – Din Sol în Bol (Farmely):** “From Soil to Bowl” seasonal cooking from the household plot; grandma’s recipes • **Fibiș – La Țandra:** homestyle soups with homemade noodles, rustic stews, doughnuts • **Călacea – La Căsuțe:** cosy setting near the thermal baths; classic Banat soups, mains and desserts.

Arad County (selection)

Adea (Sintea Mare) – Romsilva PGL: forest-inspired menu—game stews, foraged mushrooms, berry pies • **Petriș – Miliza Agropension:** farmhouse broths, cauldron stews, fresh bread, festive cozonac • **Păiușeni (Chisindia) – Rustic Păiușeni:** clay-pot cooking; sour veg soup with tarragon, lamb stew, vine-leaf rolls, cheese/pumpkin flatbreads • **Mândruloc (Vladimirescu) – Loredo Dream Garden:** garden-fresh salads, veg stews with farm chicken, apricot tarts, autumn bean soup & pumpkin pies • **Roșia Nouă (Petriș) – Elekes Family (PGL Roșia):** seasonal *bogrács*, bean soup with smoked ham, *sarmale*, smoked sausages, plum dumplings & apple strudel.

Caraș-Severin County (selection)

Prigor – Prigorel Guesthouse: bean soup in bread, veal stew, cabbage with pork • **Almăj** desserts • **Slatina-Nera (Sasca Montană) – Moanea Family:** mushroom spreads, chicken noodle soup, fish broth, stew, pancakes with plum jam • **Ilidia (Ciclova Română) – Andreea Nutricept:**

Romanian-Swabian-Hungarian-Croatian mix; dumpling soup, veg stews, lamb “Bride’s Stew”, *guguluf* & cremeschnitte • **Borlova (Turnu Ruieni) – Drăgălina Family:** cheese platters, lamb stew with polenta, tarragon sheep soup, mutton-filled cabbage rolls • **Cărbunari – M&Y Popup Travel:** Danube-meets-mountain—mushroom soup, wild-boar/venison stews, fisherman-style fish; village-oven bread • **Potoc (Sasca Montană) – Ionescu Family:** *burechiușe* soup, potato stew with smoked meat, chicken paprikash, fried trout; cheese pies & apple strudel • **Eftimie Murgu – Craia Family:** watermill-ground polenta with cheese/cream, “Rudăria” pork-onion stew, *balmaș*, mutton *sarmale*; cottage-cheese dumplings • **Poiana Mărului (Zăvoi) – Casa Loreta:** forest mushrooms, venison stews, cornmeal-fried trout, *balmaș*; apple pie signature • **Pecinișca (Băile Herculane) – Trout Farm:** trout grilled/fried/baked, trout caviar/smoked trout, pickles & polenta—served by the basins • **Globurău (Mehadia) – Cristescu Family:** garden breakfasts, sour veg soup, *sarmale*, rabbit stew; walnut *cozonac* & fluffy doughnuts.

These PGLs—together with new ones in the pipeline – anchor Banat 2028’s promise: **authentic kitchens, local produce, seasonal menus and human-scale hospitality where culture is something you can taste.**

Touristic routes and gastronomic experiences in Banat

- ◆ **Timișoara: museums as gastro-cultural hubs.** As European Capital of Culture, Timișoara has showcased how culture and cuisine intersect. At the **Banat Village Museum**, the multi-ethnic village is re-created through farmsteads, workshops and festivals—from the **Festival of Ethnic Communities** and the **Craftsmen’s Fair to Șpaisul Bănățean**, a market for local produce and seasonal recipes. In the city centre, Huniade Castle (home

to the **National Museum of Banat**) is undergoing a major restoration by the Timiș County Council. When reopened, it will feature contemporary exhibitions and interactive spaces—including strands on foodways and regional gastronomic identity—restoring the castle’s European cultural role. Museums here become destinations where culture, cuisine and diversity form a living heritage open to Europe.

- ◆ **Gărâna & Reșița:** mountain heritage in tune. At the foot of the Semenic Mountains, Gărâna preserves its Swabian and Pemian charm in restored houses and a vibrant food scene—classic trout with polenta at **Carul cu Păstrăv**, and reimaged local recipes at **Gărâna 93** or **Casa Gotschna**. Each summer, the **Gărâna Jazz Festival** unites music, local producers and food in a signature mountain atmosphere. Nearby in Reșița, the **Mountain Banat Museum** (60.000 artefacts over eight millennia) explores identity through exhibitions such as **The Scent of Warm Bread – Bread in Dacia**. Together they form a culture-gastronomy-nature circuit.
- ◆ **Băile Herculane: imperial spa, living table.** One of Europe’s oldest spa resorts is undergoing restoration and revitalisation. Imperial architecture frames traditions of hospitality where communal meals and festive dishes accompany music and dance. **The International Hercules Festival** gathers folklore from multiple countries while visitors sample regional soups, stuffed cabbage, pies and trout specialities; hikes, watersports and wellness fill out a unique gastrotourism stay.
- ◆ **Culinaria Banatica – culinary heritage in action.** Originating in research at the West University of Timișoara and developed with HoReTim, Culinaria Banatica links restaurants, producers and the public. Culinaria Banatica Dinners explore north-plain and south-mountain flavours;
- ◆ **Ignat ca-n Banat** brings winter pork traditions and charcuterie to Victory Square in Timisoaraș. Each event bridges ancestral recipes and contemporary creativity.



- ◆ **Banat Brunch – hospitality woven with place.** Brought by My Banat Association, this series, hosted in authentic households, revives the spirit of *goști*—welcoming guests with an open heart and a laden table. Menus vary by village but favour cured ham, homemade noodle soup, roasts with rustic sides, hearth-baked pies, rose-petal doughnuts and honeyed puddings. Brunches add hikes, workshops, guided tours and artisans’ markets – traditions preserved and reconnected to the present.
- ◆ **Rudăria Watermills – living heritage on the move.** In Eftimie Murgu commune, 22 wooden watermills line the Rudăria valley, one of South-Eastern Europe’s largest milling reserves. Restored and opened with “*Acasă în Banat*” Association, they demonstrate grain-milling as practised for centuries; themed trails, festivals and guided tours turn the site into a time-travel lesson and a community hub.
- ◆ **WeWilder – wilderness with a community heartbeat.** In Armeniș, at the foot of the Țarcu Mountains (UNESCO area), WeWilder—a WWF Romania social enterprise with the local community and the Flex Foundation—models sustainable living where conservation and daily life meet. Guests share meals made from local ingredients and wild plants, dine by campfire and hike among a restored bison population—gastronomy, ecotourism and stewardship in one experience.

- ◆ **Taste diversity in Banat dialect.** Launched by Visit Timiș and HoReTim and supported by Timiș County Council, this project reconnects traditional Banat cuisine with contemporary urban dining. Sixteen restaurants in Timișoara, Lugoj and Altringen have added authentic dishes, signposted on a route with maps and QR codes, and accompanied by a cookbook compiled by Prof. Marioara Pisat from the plains’ culinary guardians.
- ◆ **Breakfast in Margina.** Created by Visit Timiș in 2017 (awarded 3rd place—Sustainable Cultural Tourism Destinations in Europe in 2021) and continued by My Banat Association, the itinerary turns village hospitality into a tourism product: farmhouse cheeses, eggs, honey, orchard jams and hearth-baked bread at **Casa Emilia Popa (PGL)** or **Stâna La Fântână**; visits to the rose orchard in Curtea, tastings at Wolf’s Creek (Coșteiu de Sus), and stories at the **Sintești Village Museum** or the “**Curtean**” **Ethnographic Museum**. Coordinated by the Margina Tourist Information Centre, it knits hosts, producers and artisans into a single experience.
- ◆ **The wine route.** Launched in 2023 by Visit Timiș, the route began in Silagiu-Buziaș and now includes Recaș and Nițchidorf. With a 1.000-year wine tradition, Timiș county counts **eight wineries**— **Recaș, Aramic, Dealul Dorului, Thesaurus, Petro Vaselo, Agape Art&Nature, Varvara, Buziaș**, plus small producers. Tastings pair varietals with sheep cheeses, honey and traditional pork products; highlights include the **Curtea Culoarelor** social micro-farm (artisan cheeses, organic gardening) and the heritage of Nițchidorf and the Pogăniș Meadow (chequered lilies, oak and ash).

- ◆ **Șura din Dumbrava – restored heritage, food and craft.** A family restored their grandparents’ barn—original beams intact—into a community space where hearth-baked bread, rustic goulash, homemade sausages and oven-baked langoși meet pottery made on site. Events range from Banat Brunch editions with live cooking to Retro Fest (music, bio-gastronomy, vintage cars and arts).
- ◆ **The Village in Buzad (Bogda) – Tradition reimagined through food and community.** Conceived as a countryside retreat and teambuilding venue for city dwellers, it quickly earned a reputation for events that present authentic village life with a contemporary twist. Its signature gathering, **Banat Brunch Buzad**, unfolds trees where guests find generous spreads of homemade bread, potatoes with cheese, smoked ham, yogurt and cheeses, Swabian pies, hearty soups, cabbage rolls, stews, and sweet finishes like tart poppyseed pie, plum jam treats, and artisanal syrups. Evenings bring campfires, craft sessions, and spontaneous artistic moments—always in step with the rhythms of village life. More than a meal, The Village Buzad is a place to rediscover Banat’s flavors, traditions, and communal spirit—updated for today yet faithful to its roots.
- ◆ **A cycle story: Timișoara–Zrenjanin on two wheels.** The EuroVelo path along the Bega Canal runs ~37 km to the border (up to ~70 km when the crossing opens the last weekend monthly). Stops become culinary interludes: Terasa ATC (vine-shaded pizzas and crêpes), Plaja Nouă (lake, beach, grill, paintball, wakeboard), La Livadă (orchard terrace with local snacks). The route passes Sânmihailu Român, across the restored lock, through Otelec to the border; beyond it Zrenjanin greets cyclists with lively terraces and its famed pljeskavica—a cross-border taste of the Banat plain.

- ◆ **Charlottenburg-Buzad-Comeat-Bogda in four bites:** After cycling the perfect ring of Romania’s only circular village of Charlottenburg and taste Swabian breads, strudels and cold cuts at **Schwabenland**, one can feel **Buzad’s Electroruga** vibe at The Village with warm pies, zacuscă and smoked sausages; and meet a romanian-italian enterprise at **Studio Rural 5** in Comeat plating antipasti with Banat cheeses and a playful țuică-prosecco spritz. The tour closes at Bogda’s **Das Haus** with seasonal boards, trout or pork from small producers. Short supply chains and “Produced in Banat” at every stop: a crisp expression of **Fusion Beyond Borders**.



7.3. Calendar of flavours: festivals that set the table

Here's our year on a plate. Month by month, Calendar of Flavours maps Banat's headline urban and rural festivals—from traditional feasts and open-air markets to jazz, film and contemporary arts—each paired with curated gastro-zones, producer pop-ups and Local Gastronomic Points. Follow the seasons across Timiș (TM), Arad (AR) and Caraș-Severin (CS) counties as stages meet plates and bold flavours set the table for every celebration.

January



Serbian New Year – various localities in Timiș (TM) and Caraș-Severin (CS) counties.

February



Fărșang / Winter Carnivals – Dudeștii Vechi & Dumbrăvița (TM); Goruia, Lupac, Forotic, Eftimie Murgu, Valea Almăjului, Vărădia de Munte (CS); **“Lada cu Zestre” (Chest of Dowry)** – rural localities in Timiș County (circuit, Feb–Mar) Hungarian Farsang Ball / Farsangi Magyar Bál – Arad (AR)

April



Dry Salami Festival – Nădlac Arad (AR)
Harababura Fair – Timișoara (TM)
“Goulash Master” – Poiana Mărului (CS)
Easter Fairs – Timișoara (TM) • Reșița (CS) • Arad (AR)
Vicii și Delicii (Timișoara edition) – Timișoara
Brunch with Wild-Garlic Soup – Denta (TM)
Wild-Garlic Celebration – Altringen (TM)
“Lada cu Zestre” – Sănnicolau Mare, Boldur, Deta (TM)
Milk Measuring – Borlova (CS)

May



Festival of Ethnicities – Banat Village Museum, Timișoara (TM)
Banat Brunch – Margina & Țara Făgetului (TM)
Arad County Days – Arad (AR)
Fresh Sausage Festival – Arad (AR)
Hunters' Festival – Chișineu-Criș (AR)
Electruga – The Village, Buzad (Bogda Commune TM)
“Cauldron” Gastronomic Contest – Dejan, Moravița (TM)
Banaton Festival – Balkanik Gastronomy, Timișoara

March



International Gastronomic Contest – Otelec (TM)
Culinary Contest & Public Tasting – Otelec (TM)
Food Truck Festival – Iulius Town, Timișoara (TM)
Oxygen Planting Festival – Lugoj (TM)
International Beekeeping Fair – Ghiroda (TM)

June



Wine & Cheese – Timișoara (TM)
Summer Celebrations – Lugoj (TM)
Dumbrăvița Days – Dumbrăvița (TM)
Rice Festival – Partoș (Banloc Commune TM)
Păturată pră crumpi (Potato “blanket”) Festival – Ciacova (TM)
Roses of Curtea – Curtea (TM)
Sânziene – Nitchidorf (TM)
Sânziene 'n Bastion – Timișoara (TM)
Istanbul Street Food Festival – Timișoara (TM)
Stew Festival – Dumbrăvița (TM)
Sânziene at Salbek Castle – Petriș (AR)

July



Timiș County Days
City Days – Sănnicolau Mare (TM)
City Days – Gătaia (TM)
Homecoming of Romanians Everywhere – Tomești, (TM)
Watermelon Festival – Gottlob, (TM)
ISEKIFOOD – Timișoara (TM)
Family Holiday – Lugoj (TM)
Pancake Festival – Moneasa (AR)

October



LA PAS – Festival of Sustainable Food & Culture – Timișoara (TM)
The Banat Pantry (Șpaiful Bănățean) – Banat Village Museum, Timișoara (TM)
Fruit-Brandy & Traditional Foods of the Banat Mountains – Băile Herculane (CS)
Autumn at the Gugulani – Caransebeș (CS)
Vicii și Delicii (autumn edition) – Arad (AR)
Pumpkin Festival – Mailat (AR)
Wine Festival – Timișoara & Arad
Festival of Ethnicities – Bocșa & Reșița (CS)
Smoked Cauldron – Dudeștii Vechi (TM)
Cauldron-Cooking Festival – Gătaia (TM)
The Moșnița Cauldron – Moșnița Nouă (TM)
Autumn Expo – Timișoara, (TM)
Paprika, Wine & Țuică Festival – Buziaș (TM)
Harvest Festival – Giroc (TM)
Fruit-Brandy Festival – Herculane (CS)
GermanFest – German gastronomy, Timișoara (TM)

August



New Bread Festival (Praznicul de Pita Nouă) – Pecica (AR)
RakijaDa – Fruit-Brandy Festival – Sânpetru Mare (TM)
Cauldrons Festival – Bocșa (CS)
Golden Cauldron – Moldova Veche (Pojejena Commune CS)
Fig Festival – Svinița, Mehedinți (Danube Gorges)
Picnic Festival – Arad (AR)
Picnic in the Banat Pusztă – Otelec (TM)
Duboz Brunch – Duboz (Nitchidorf Commune TM)
Cakes on the Street – Dudeștii Vechi, Timiș
Commune Day – Foeni TM
Banat Mountain Film Festival – Bocșa, Cransebeș, Herculane (CS)

November



ROVINHUD Wine Show – Timișoara (TM)
Winter Banat Brunch – Denta (TM)
Wine Festival – Arad (AR)
“Winter Traditions” Fair – Arad (AR)
Paprika, Wine & Țuică Festival – Buziaș (TM)
Harvest Festival – Giroc (TM)
Fruit-Brandy Festival – Herculane (CS)

The festivals hosted in Timiș County are publicly supported by the Timiș County Council, through annual co-financing, logistics and permitting coordination. This support underwrites quality, safety, accessibility and sustainability standards, ensuring programme continuity and impact throughout 2028 and beyond.

September



Street Food Festival – Timișoara, Timiș
Timiș Hunters & Fishermen Festival – Pădurea Verde, Timișoara (TM)
Hunters' Festival – Arad (AR)
Cauldrons Festival – Ghiroda & Giarmata Vii (TM)
Golden Cauldron of Banat's Ethnicities – Sănmartinu Sârbesc (Peciu Nou Commune) (TM)
Harvest Days – Reșița (CS)
National Minorities Festival – Arad (AR)
Grape Festival – Ghioroc (Ghioroc Lake), Arad;
Grapes Ball – Pâncota (AR)
Banat Brunch – Nitchidorf (TM)
Magyar Napok (Hungarian Days), Timișoara (TM)
Timișoara Tasting Tour
The Twists Festival (Festivalul Suciturilor) – Fârdea (TM)

December



Christmas Market – Timișoara, Giroc, Arad and Reșița
Gastronomic Exhibition & Carol Concert – Nitchidorf & Charlottenburg/Bogda (TM)
Carol concerts – various localities in Timiș, Arad and Caraș-Severin.



7.4. Education, skills and local producers

Banat 2028 treats education and producer support as the engine of a resilient food ecosystem—linking pupils, trainees, chefs, researchers and smallholders into one value chain that creates skills, jobs and pride of place.

Skills & jobs (HoReCa pipeline). HoReTim leads a **dual-education track in hospitality** (initiated in 2018, scaled to 2028), pairing classroom learning with paid practice in kitchens and hotels. It also convenes **chef/pâtissier competitions** with vocational schools to attract young talent, runs **HoReCa-producer conferences** and **advocacy forums**, revives **historic cookbooks** (e.g., Zotti Hodoş) and connects restaurants directly with HoReTim and “*Produs în Banat*” Association suppliers.

Taste Diversity in Banat Dialect. Sixteen restaurants in Timișoara, Lugoj and Altringen introduce Banat recipes into urban menus (with a companion recipe book coordinated by Prof. Marioara Pisat), turning tradition into employable skills and marketable dishes.

Schools & youth (first taste of heritage). Visit Timiș runs **Young Turist School** with the National Museum of Banat—guided visits plus micro-workshops that link heritage to food. A digital layer—Discover Tourism. Virtual Timiș—extends access via virtual tours (e.g., Jimbolia, the 1989 Revolution).

Higher education, research & incubation (from lab to table). Powered by USVT – University of Life Sciences in Timișoara, it is about pilot bakery & functional foods line (CTTU) and modern reology analysis (e.g., MIXOLAB CHOPIN) for product R&D and technology transfer to industry. Students, researchers and entrepreneurs prototype low-carb breads, gluten-free lines

(pseudocereals) and functional products enriched with natural polyphenols/antioxidants—while valorising agro-horticultural by-products for circularity and waste reduction.

ICBB (biosafety & bioengineering) for food safety and applied research; CRCPAD Vest supports Danube-focused aquaculture (fish-wine pairing, sustainable pisciculture). Campus markets double as public testbeds for new products and food-education stands. Incubator Gastronomic USVT offers rapid prototyping, labelling and coaching for agri-food start-ups.

Producer support (capacity, standards, markets). Markets-in-the-Park (Timișoara and five towns): curated producer fairs with a Produced in Banat pavilion; live chef demos by HoReTim; QR-code traceability and lab-to-table testing by USVT; and Zero-Waste protocols co-designed with CRIES (sorting, donation, compost, reusable serveware).

Association “*Produs în Banat*”: digital-literacy courses (300+ beneficiaries), branding/packaging mentoring, and direct-sales opportunities at fairs; the “Produced in Banat” certification to signal locality, craft and authenticity; plus thematic rural festivals and chef/vlogger collaborations that lift producer visibility.

GAL Colinele Recaș: Local Gastronomic Points (PGL) infrastructure (including mobile units), staff training (HoReCa/tourism), regional branding/certification, and festival/itinerary integration—concretely bridging farm, kitchen and visitor.

Inclusion, literacy & responsible consumption. CRIES scales food-education programmes (in schools and communities) and provides toolkits for sustainable events, community-supported agriculture (ASAT) and responsible consumption—resources that we integrate across 2028 markets and festivals.

Together, these strands turn Banat’s culinary heritage into employable skills, entrepreneurial opportunity and measurable regional value—so that bold flavours translate into good jobs, confident producers and better food on every table.

7.5. Research, innovation and culinary incubation



Banat’s food innovation system connects labs, kitchens and markets so that ideas move quickly from research benches to diners’ plates. Three engines drive this: the University of Life Sciences Timișoara (USVT), a regional B2B & ideas forum (Timișoara Food Summit), and practice-led transfer programmes such as Culinaria Banatica (HoReTim).

- ◆ **USVT – the science-to-table backbone.** USVT anchors the programme with applied research and open facilities: a pilot line for bakery & functional foods (formulations, reology, quality analytics); food-safety and bio-engineering services (ICBB); and the regional aquaculture centre (CRCPAD Vest) supporting Danubian gastronomy and sustainable fish production. Campus markets double as testbeds for product validation with consumers, while the new “Gastronomy Incubator” offers rapid prototyping, coaching and compliant labelling for start-ups.

Traceability and digital passports. A QR-based traceability platform will document origin, recipes and nutritional values for “Produced in Banat” products—linking producers, chefs and consumers and feeding real-time feedback into R&D and market decisions.

- ◆ **Timișoara Food Summit – B2B & innovation marketplace.** Co-created with USVT, CRIES, HoReTim and producer networks, Timișoara Food Summit scales science-industry dialogue (panels, demos), runs start-up pitch sessions and matchmaking between producers– HoReCa–retail, and hosts hackathons on food waste and circularity that translate into pilots at festivals and in restaurants.
- ◆ **Living labs & standards in public space.** Quarterly “Markets-in-the-Park” become open innovation arenas: chef demos (HoReTim), QR traceability trials (USVT) and Zero-Waste protocols (CRIES) are tested with the public, with a curated “Produced in Banat” pavilion accelerating uptake by buyers and venues.
- ◆ **From research to menus: Culinaria Banatica.** Born from Vest Universiti of Timișoara (UVT) research and now delivered with HoReTim, Culinaria Banatica uses themed dinners and the “*Ignat ca-n Banat*” winter programme to move documented heritage recipes into contemporary service—an ongoing loop of knowledge transfer from archive and lab to kitchen and guest.
- ◆ **Cross-border and sector bridges.** Innovation strands align with Taste Trails (Wine & Beer; Danube Fish & Wine; Coffee Heritage) and with chef residencies/festivals that pilot product pairings and new service formats, including the “Illy Heritage Trail” and “Timișoreana & Craft” micro-tours led by Visit Timiș and partners. Together, these strands ensure that **Fusion Beyond Borders** is not just a cultural motto but an innovation method—combining scientific rigour, chef creativity and community feedback to deliver healthier, traceable and distinctive Banat flavours to Europe.

7.6. Sustainability and circular economy

Banat 2028 treats sustainability as a design principle, not an add-on. Across markets, festivals, routes, kitchens and classrooms, we embed circular practices, protect biodiversity and shorten the distance from farm to fork—so every great taste leaves a lighter trace.

Zero-waste standards at events. Building on CRIES’ proven toolkits from LA PAS Festival – Food and Sustainable Culture, all Banat 2028 public events adopt a common protocol: separate collection and on-site sorting, food-donation partnerships, composting streams, refill points and reusable serving ware. Curated “Markets-in-the-Park” apply these standards while showcasing local producers, with chef demos by HoReTim and QR-based traceability developed with USVT—turning tasting, learning and buying into one responsible cultural act.

Short chains, fair prices, resilient communities. We scale community-supported agriculture (CSA/ASAT) formats and year-round producer markets that were piloted in the LA PAS ecosystem, extending direct sales and fair contracts between small farms and urban buyers. The approach is paired with an expanded “Produced in Banat” pavilion and a light-touch “Banat 2028 – Authentic Experience” label for HoReCa and guides, aligning procurement with local, seasonal sourcing and transparent labelling.

Circular innovation—from side-streams to new products. USVT’s pilot lines and labs valorise agro-horticultural by-products (e.g., oilseed cakes, grape marc, fruit peels) into functional bakery and allied foods, with rapid prototyping, testing and lab-to-table trials at campus and city markets. A common QR system supports product traceability for “Produced in Banat” makers.

Eco-tourism and conservation gastronomy. WeWilder (Armeniş) models low-impact hospitality where wild nature, local ingredients and community livelihoods meet:

plant-forward menus, responsible foraging, campfire dining and guided wilderness experiences within a UNESCO area—linking taste to habitat restoration.

Education for responsible consumption. HoReTim expands dual education to embed green practices in kitchens and service and together with CRIES bring county-wide resources into schools and neighbourhood hubs—workshops, debates and toolkits on waste prevention, water, labelling and everyday choices.

Independent quality & authenticity monitoring. Degustaria supports the programme by promoting slow food principles, training for waste reduction and responsible consumption, and acting as an independent observer for authenticity and quality across events and offers.

Local Gastronomic Points (PGLs) as sustainable anchors. With GAL Colinele Recaş investing in infrastructure, mobile facilities and training, PGLs grow as low-footprint, season-led dining experiences that keep value in villages and shorten supply paths from garden to plate.

7.7. Well-being and healthy living

In Banat, eating well and living well go hand in hand. The Programme treats food as daily prevention—fresh, seasonal, minimally processed—and pairs it with movement in nature, low-impact events, and strong community ties. From city greenways to mountain trails and Danube shores, our terroir becomes a platform for healthier bodies and minds.

A quiet engine of this well-being is Banat’s **beekeeping culture**. Local apiaries—fed by acacia, linden and meadow flora—produce prized honeys, while bees secure food diversity through pollination. We’ll back bee-friendly farming (flower strips, hedgerows, late mowing), urban micro-apiaries and blossom “no-spray” windows. “*Produs în Banat*” Association will pilot QR traceability with USVT, and UMF Timișoara will provide evidence-based guidance on honey in healthy diets.

What we’ll do (highlights)

- ◆ **Food literacy & better choices.** LA PAS / Slow Down (by CRIES) spreads practical habits—responsible consumption, fair food, and low-waste event standards—through festivals, school modules, and citizen workshops, so healthy options become the default at home and in public venues.
- ◆ **Functional foods from Banat.** We showcase Aronia Charlottenburg (Timiș County)—organic plantations producing cold-pressed aronia juice—through orchard visits, school tastings, and chef-led recipe R&D, linking polyphenol-rich fruit to everyday menus.
- ◆ **Active routes = active lives.** “Ride & Taste” days along the Bega Canal greenway (Timișoara–Zrenjanin), mountain footpaths, and village lanes promote gentle mobility, fresh air, and cross-community encounters.
- ◆ **Horse-riding for everyone.** Horse-riding sessions and wellbeing treks at Herneacova equestrian centre; riding clubs in Izvin and Pădureni; and accessible lessons via Cantemir Sports Club (Timișoara)—pairing outdoor movement with nature connection and confidence-building.
- ◆ **Blue & thermal well-being.** Lake sports and swims—on Surduc and Trei Ape lakes; restorative thermal experiences at Lovrin thermal beach; and winter fitness through skiing and snow-shoeing on the Semenic Mountains.
- ◆ **Nature, recovery, and mindful eating.** In the Jarcu Mountains, WeWilder hosts low-impact stays, wild-plant walks, and forest-to-table meals that reconnect visitors to nature—supporting mental well-being through immersion and simplicity.
- ◆ **Short food chains for healthier plates.** CSA/ASAT models link families to small farms through weekly veggie boxes and direct contracts—improving diet quality, producer income, and food traceability across the year.

- ◆ **Health science for citizens.** The “Victor Babeș” University of Medicine and Pharmacy (UMF) Timișoara leads public conferences, workshops and screening days on nutrition, cardiovascular health, diabetes prevention, mental well-being, and active ageing—translating medical evidence into everyday choices and festival/event practice.

Flagship initiatives 2028

1) Banat on Your Plate – clear healthy-choice nudges at events: seasonal icons on menus, “better swap” tips, chef demos (HoReTim and Visit Timiș) showing low-salt/low-sugar techniques without losing flavour.

2) Purple Orchard, Red Heart – Aronia for All: open days in Charlottenburg, nutrition talks, pilot snacks in schools and at festivals, and a start-up micro-challenge for aronia-based non-alcoholic pairings.

3) Ride-Walk-Taste Banat – monthly themed rides and hikes on lowland and mountain trails, ending with local-produce picnics; family editions with kid-friendly distances (Visit Timiș, HoReTim).

4) Saddle Up Banat – equestrian well-being: coached sessions at Herneacova, community riding in Izvin and Pădureni, and inclusive taster days with Cantemir SC; safe-rider guidelines and helmet libraries included (Visit Timiș).

5) Blue & Thermal Circuit – lake-sport weekends on Surduc and Trei Ape, plus thermal recovery days at Lovrin; hydration and nutrition corners spotlighting fruit, whole grains and low-/no-alcohol options (Visit Timiș).

6) Wild Calm at WeWilder – nature-based retreats (breathwork, herbal teas, foraging, campfire suppers), with scholarships for youth and caregivers.



7) Food with Dignity – CSA/ASAT pop-ups at Markets-in-the-Park and campuses; starter kits for new consumer groups and tools that show how short chains improve both nutrition and farmer resilience.

8) Semenik Snow & Flow – winter wellbeing on Semenik: guided ski and snow-shoe trails paired with hearty, balanced mountain menus and zero-waste huts.

9) UMF Timișoara Well-being Forum – a rolling series of public conferences, masterclasses and hands-on workshops with clinicians, dietitians and psychologists; mobile screening booths (BP, BMI, glucose) at festivals; “Ask-the-Doctor” corners and evidence-based resources for families, schools and producers.

Principles we embed:

Seasonality first. More veg, legumes and whole grains; heritage fruits (including aronia) and raw honey; modest, better-quality animal protein; and plenty of water and herbal infusions.

Move every day. Programme design nudges walking, cycling, riding and paddling to venues; outdoor editions (plains, mountains, Danube) double as green gyms. Care for mind and place. Nature immersion lowers stress, while zero-waste, low-plastic events care for the environment we rely on.

Access & equity. Family tickets, school buses to orchards, lakes and farms, low-cost UMF workshops, adaptive riding sessions, multi-lingual materials, and community hosts ensure everyone can join.

By weaving nutrition, movement, nature, science and community—on saddle, skis, foot or board—Banat 2028 turns bold flavours into everyday well-being. This is **Fusion Beyond Borders** made practical: healthy habits fused with the places, people and knowledge that grow—and safeguard—our lives.

7.8 Inclusive & accessible gastronomy and tourism

We make Banat’s food culture welcoming to everyone—residents and visitors with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities—by embedding universal design across places, routes, events and communications. This strand advances IGCAT domains on Balanced & sustainable tourism, Urban-rural link, Education for the future and Well-being & healthy living.

Flagship partner & pilot. In Timișoara, Fundația Pentru Voi runs “Destinația Incluziune” (Destination Inclusion) funded by the National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For three months, 100+ beneficiaries enjoy trips to cities and resorts in western Romania, supported by an easy-to-read guide tailored to people with intellectual disabilities—unique in Romania. Banat 2028 will scale this pilot into gastronomy: accessible tastings, markets and Local Gastronomic Points (PGLs), with adapted information, caregiver support and sensory-friendly scheduling.

Training & standards: host training for PGLs, restaurants and event teams (disability awareness, plain-language communication, allergen & texture-modified options); venue micro-grants for priority adaptations.

Programming: “Inclusive Banat Days” linking museums, producers and chefs; co-created menus with occupational therapists and caregivers; companion ticket policies.

Cross-border: align accessible offerings on the Bega Canal ride (Timișoara–Zrenjanin) and along Danube experiences.

Governance & partners include Visit Timiș with County Councils. Delivery partners: Fundația Pentru Voi (design & facilitation), HoReTim (training), USVT (venue audits/food safety).

Rovinho Festival (Timișoara) will pilot inclusive festival standards: step-free routes and low-sensory zones, sign-

language interpretation, pictogram signage, and easy-to-read menus (clear allergens, small portions). Staff and volunteers receive inclusion training; quiet hours and assistance points support neurodiverse families.

Curtea Culorilor (Sârbova)—a social micro-farm and cheese atelier—models accessible farm-to-table: adapted paths and spaces, communal tables, inclusive gardening/cookery workshops, easy-read materials, and sensory-guided visits. With Visit Timiș, USVT and NGOs, we’ll add accessible routes and transport—so the taste of Banat is truly for everyone.

7.9 Exchanges & international partnerships

Banat 2028 treats internationalisation as a two-way street: we invite Europe and the world to taste Banat, and we take Banat’s bold flavours on tour. Exchanges span chefs, producers, researchers, festivals and travel trade—so culture, knowledge and markets move together.

Cross-border networks (Serbia–Hungary–Romania)

• **BANAT IMPACT CulTur (RO–SER):** a working platform for shared programming, mobility and joint promotion across the tri-border Banat space.

• **Culinary Ride Timișoara–Zrenjanin (Bega Canal / EuroVelo connector):** monthly cross-border group rides with producer stops, lakeside pop-ups and joint tastings; seasonal “Fish & Wine Danube Week” in the Gorge.

• **Novi Sad showcase:** annual Banat pavilion within the city’s festival calendar (chefs, micro-roasteries, wineries, “Produced in Banat” makers).

• **Regional alignment:** wine and taste trails linked with Arad and Caraș-Severin routes for a single cross-county visitor proposition (one map, one pass, shared standards).

Chef residencies & a Danube gastronomy circuit

• **Residencies & co-created menus:** HoReTim curates chef exchanges with cultural institutes and consulates (RO–SER–HU and wider EU). Output: limited-run menus pairing Banat produce with guest techniques; open classes for students and producers.

• **Danube Countries Gastronomy Festival:** a rotating showcase led by HoReTim and Visit Timiș (Timișoara / Gârâna / Danube Gorge) featuring chef tables, street-food labs and “from archive to plate” sessions; partner cities invited for guest kiosks and tastings.

Signature heritage trails with European reach

• **“Illy Heritage Trail – Coffee Stories of Banat”:** connecting Timișoara’s coffee legacy (Francesco Illy’s birthplace) with contemporary roasteries, café culture and museum storytelling; guest baristas from Central Europe; workshops on sustainable sourcing.

• **“Timișoreana & Craft”:** brewery-heritage tours and tap takeovers linking the Timișoreana beer story with Banat’s craft wave (lager classics, small-batch IPAs and seasonal brews), plus food pairings at festivals and in tasting rooms.

Knowledge, standards and market access

• **Timișoara Food Summit – B2B & Innovation (USVT + CRIES + HoReTim + partners):** science–industry panels, start-up pitches, and marketplace matchmaking producers–HoReCa–retail with hosted buyers from neighbouring countries.

• **Toolkits on the move:** CRIES’ zero-waste event standards and responsible consumption guides are translated and shared with cross-border partners; USVT supports QR traceability for “Produced in Banat” products used abroad (menus, pop-ups, fairs).

• **Study tours & labs:** two-way visits for chefs, producers and students (pilot bakery line, aquaculture centre, living-lab markets) to turn exchanges into replicable practice.



RANAT

FUSION BEYOND BORDERS

International promotion & media

- **Travel-trade fairs:** coordinated presence at ITB Berlin and IMEX Frankfurt under a single Banat 2028 banner (trade kits, bookable routes, media assets).
- **Press & content trips:** curated itineraries for Italy, Germany and Serbia (wine, coffee, beer and Danube themes), plus creator residencies tied to major festivals.

Cultural exchange is how **Fusion Beyond Borders** becomes tangible: chefs learn, producers sell, students train, visitors travel—and Banat’s story is told with credibility from the Danube to the wider European table.

7.10 Collaboration with other Regions of Gastronomy

Who we partner with?

Harghita 2027 – European Region of Gastronomy (awarded). We will align communications and programme hand-overs (2027–2028), co-curate chef exchanges, and co-brand routes that link the Eastern Carpathians to the Banat plain.

Dobrogea 2029 – European Region of Gastronomy (candidate). We plan “river-to-sea” collaborations (Danube–Delta–Black Sea) on fish, wine and biodiversity, plus joint promotion in 2028/2029.

IGCAT Regions/World Region of Gastronomy Platform. We will engage in the Platform’s shared programmes (European Young Chef Award, World Food Gift Challenge, Food Film Menu) and joint visibility actions.

Collaboration pillars

- ◆ **Chef residencies & knowledge transfer.** Banat–Harghita–Dobrogea seasonal residencies, co-created menus, and masterclasses for students and producers (Visit Timiș with HoReTim & USVT).
- ◆ **Signature routes, shared branding.** **Carpathians to Banat:** forest foods, cheeses, pastries (Harghita) + plains produce and wines (Banat). **Danube to the Sea:** Danube fish & wine (Banat) + Delta/Black Sea products (Dobrogea).
- ◆ **Product & producer exchange.** Pop-ups and “guest region” pavilions at fairs/markets, with QR traceability and zero-waste standards shared across regions (USVT + CRIES toolkits).
- ◆ **Joint promotion & trade.** Coordinated presence at ITB Berlin and IMEX Frankfurt under a Romania–Regions of Gastronomy banner; hosted buyer/press trips rotating between Harghita 2027 (awarded), Banat 2028 (candidate) and Dobrogea 2029 (candidate).
- ◆ **IGCAT Platform programmes.** Entries from all three regions in European Young Chef Award, World Food Gift Challenge and Food Film Menu, with cross-mentoring and co-marketing.

Together, these alliances make Banat 2028 a bridge between Carpathians, plains and sea—amplifying visibility, talent pipelines and market access. Shared standards (local sourcing, traceability, zero-waste) and joint branding create one coherent national story within the IGCAT platform. The outcome: stronger programmes and a durable legacy—new routes, trained chefs and resilient producer networks—carrying **Fusion Beyond Borders** across Romania and Europe.



8. Governance and partnerships

Many hands, one shared table.

Governance for Fusion Beyond Borders: a lean team and Regional Stakeholders Committee, clear roles, cross-sector links and European partners—volunteers at the core.

So bold flavours and diverse origins meet at one shared table.

The governance model for “Banat 2028 – European Region of Gastronomy” is designed for transparency, efficiency, cross-sector cooperation and meaningful community involvement. Management brings together public authorities, destination management, private sector and chambers, academia, culture and civil society to deliver a coherent, sustainable implementation framework.



8.1. Management structure and the Regional Stakeholders Committee

Governance rests on three coordination levels:

Regional Stakeholders Committee – strategic body for overall direction

Core members include signatories of the Protocol: Timiș County Council (lead), Visit Timiș, HoReTim, University of Life Sciences in Timișoara (USVT), My Banat Association, “*Produs în Banat*” Association, Degustaria Association; and partners CRIES Association, Arad County Council, Caraș-Severin County Council

Banat 2028 Executive Team – operational unit for planning, delivery, monitoring and reporting, representation with coordinators for each IGCAT domain (Gastronomy, Education, Tourism, Innovation, Health, Sustainability).

Delivery partners: Visit Timiș (programme management, communication, marketing, international relations, public representation), HoReTim (chef network, skills, vocational training, events, regional and international fairs), USVT – University of Life Sciences / West University of Timișoara (research, innovation, education, tourism), “*Produs în Banat*” & GAL Colinele Recaș (producer engagement, product certification, vocational training), CRIES (sustainability/zero-waste, skills and training), Degustaria (quality & authenticity), chambers of commerce – CCIAT, Timiș Chamber of Industry, Trade and Agriculture, Romania-Italy Chamber of Commerce (B2B, trade links).

Regional Consultation Committee – an open, consultative forum that aligns the programme with community needs.

Participants include: Timiș County Council (lead), Arad and Caraș-Severin County Councils, Timiș county municipalities, Village Museum of Timișoara, Banat National Museum of Timișoara, tourism and cultural operators, producer associations and NGOs alongside the partners named in the Regional Stakeholders Committee.

8.2. Roles and responsibilities of partners

Public authorities (Timiș County Council, project leader and main financing authority, Arad County Council, Caraș-Severin County Council; municipalities): co-funding, logistical support, integration into development strategies, coordination with heritage/cultural and infrastructure projects.

Visit Timiș: overall programme coordination, partner liaison, marketing & communications, regional, national and international relations, public representation of the programme, visitor-facing products (routes, events), international promotion.

Academia & research (University of Life Sciences in Timișoara USVT; West University of Timișoara and University of Medicine and Pharmacy): research & innovation (labs, pilot lines), vocational and higher education, living labs, monitoring & evaluation.

HoReCa & skills (HoReTim): dual education pathways, chef/pâtissier competitions, curated food zones, standards for venues, chef residencies, Culinaría Banatica, recipe books and catalogues.

Producers & rural development (“*Produs în Banat*” Association; GAL Colinele Recaș Association; HoReTim): producer network mobilisation, certification and branding, digital literacy & packaging mentoring, PGL development and training.

Sustainability & community (CRIES Association): zero-waste protocols, responsible consumption education, ASAT/community-supported agriculture resources.

Quality & authenticity (Degustaria Association): Slow Food promotion, waste-reduction training, independent quality and authenticity checks.

Business & trade (CCIAT; HoReTim; Romania-Italy Chamber of Commerce): B2B matchmaking, corporate engagement, buyer programmes, international trade fair presence.

Cultural & experiential (My Banat Association): place-based experiences (e.g., Banat Brunch), storytelling, community activation.

8.3. Local, regional and European partnerships

Local (Timiș, Arad, Caraș-Severin): structured collaboration among Visit Timiș, the three County Councils, producer groups (Produs în Banat, GAL Colinele Recaș), HoReTim, museums, universities and NGOs (CRIES, Degustaria, My Banat).

Regional / cross-border: coordinated actions with Serbian and Hungarian Banat (events, routes, media), supported by CCIAT, HoReTim and the Romania-Italy Chamber of Commerce for business links.

European / IGCAT network: participation in platform programmes (competitions, exchanges), joint visibility at trade shows, and EU project consortia anchored by Visit Timiș and partners.

8.4. Cross-sector coordination mechanisms

- Quarterly joint meetings of the Regional Stakeholders Committee, Executive Team and Regional Consultation Committee.
- A shared digital workspace for partners (documents, calendars, progress dashboards).
- Thematic working groups led by relevant partners, e.g.:
1) **Skills & HoReCa** (HoReTim, Visit Timiș, universities)
2) **Producers & Rural** (“*Produs în Banat*”, GAL Colinele Recaș, HoReTim)
3) **Sustainability** (HoReTim, CRIES, Degustaria, USVT)
4) **Business & Trade** (CCIAT, HoReTim, Romania-Italy Chamber of Commerce)
5) **Culture & Tourism** (Visit Timiș, My Banat, museums) • A results framework with KPIs and periodic public reporting.

8.5. Community and volunteer engagement

Banat Ambassadors Programme – run by Visit Timiș. Through collaboration with HoReTim, universities and NGOs will train students, professionals and community leaders as advocates.

Banat 2028 Volunteer Network – coordinated jointly by Visit Timiș and partners (HoReTim, West University of Timișoara, University of Life Sciences, CRIES, My Banat, Degustaria and schools) to support events and education activities; volunteers receive training and certification.

Open public consultations and an online suggestion platform hosted by Timiș County Council and Visit Timiș.

Micro-grants for community gastronomic initiatives administered with “*Produs în Banat*”, GAL Colinele Recaș, CRIES and HoReTim.

9. Ambassadors and distinguished chefs

Meet the faces of flavour: ambassadors who open doors, distinguished chefs who set the tone. They mentor, tour and tell our story—plate by plate, stage by stage. Banat made personal.

Banat's ambassadors and distinguished chefs are the faces and voices of our programme. They turn heritage into flavour, research into menus, and hospitality into cultural diplomacy—bringing to life our credo, **Fusion Beyond Borders: Bold flavours. Diverse origins. One shared table.** Their craft, ethics and storytelling connect producers with kitchens, urban audiences with rural traditions, and local identity with European visibility.

Across 2025–2029, they will co-create signature menus for festivals and routes, lead residencies and masterclasses, mentor young talent, and champion short supply chains, seasonality and low-waste practice. They will animate local gastronomic points, support innovation with universities and producers, and represent Banat in regional, national and international media, fairs and exchanges.

Selection is based on excellence, commitment to sustainability and community impact, guided by a code of conduct and annual briefs with clear targets. This chapter presents the current cohort; the selection remains open and dynamic—additional ambassadors and chefs will be appointed up to and including 2028 through partner nominations and open calls to ensure broad representation across cuisines, disciplines and communities.

Ambassadors



Corina Macri

Corina Macri is a leading voice of Banat hospitality, blending entrepreneurship, sector representation and policy-making. Owner of Casa del Sole Hotel & Restaurant in Timișoara (since 2004), she has turned operational excellence into a local benchmark for quality and regional flavours. As founding President of HoReTim (2018) and founding Vice-President of FPIOR (2021), she has rallied the industry around shared priorities: workforce, standards, public-private dialogue and national visibility. She serves on the boards of OMD “Visit Timișoara” and “Visit Timiș”, and in social-dialogue and consultative bodies (County Employment Agency), Pension & Health Funds, CLDPS), connecting producers, HoReCa, education and authorities. As project manager of Culinaria Banatica for Timișoara 2023 – European Capital of Culture, she proved able to turn culinary heritage into impactful public programmes. In 2023 she initiated the Banat European Region of Gastronomy drive (with Timiș County Council and USVT), proposing inter-county collaboration (Timiș, Arad, Caraș-Severin). Her leadership and coalition-building skills make her an ideal ambassador to carry **Fusion Beyond Borders** to business, to the hospitality sector and the public.



Laura Laurențiu

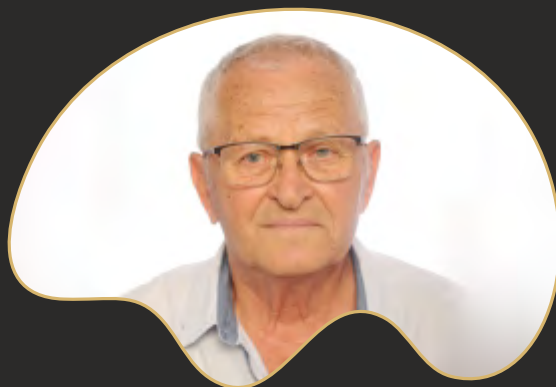
Laura Laurențiu is one of Romania's most trusted culinary voices: founder of lauralaurentiu.ro (2009) and the centre of an online community of ~1.2 million followers. This communication strength, built on rigour and dialogue with readers, makes her a powerful messenger for Banat 2028 at home and abroad. Named “Digital Chef of the Year” (2014), she professionalised her craft (HoReCa School Bucharest; mentorship under Chef Nico Lontras) and went on to win three Taste by Electrolux editions (2015–2017). She has cooked and learned alongside leading European chefs at Taste of Paris/ Rome/ London/ Moscow (along with chefs Philippe Conticini, Pascal Aussignac, Stéphanie Le Quellec, Daniele Usai, Marcus Wareing), gaining technique, stagecraft and a contemporary lens for regional cuisines. This experience helps translate Banat's authenticity into a contemporary, European register. Her bestselling book, *Sunday Lunch – Recipes that Bring the Family Together* (Gaudeamus, 2018) champions food as community, the family table as a social glue—precisely the spirit of Banat 2028. As ambassador, she can connect producers, restaurants, schools and audiences, and communicate **Fusion Beyond Borders: Bold flavours. Diverse origins. One shared table**, across media, festivals and demos, with the ability to translate recipes into stories, mobilise audiences and link producers at regional, national and international level.



Jiva Marcov

Jiva Marcov is a defining figure of Timișoara hospitality, combining hands-on craft with entrepreneurial vision. He started in the city's landmark restaurants—LLOYD, Palace, Vaporul—working his way up from waiter to unit manager. After 1990 he went independent and, in 1995, opened Terasa Nora, dedicated to Banat cuisine and wood-grilled dishes; it soon became a byword for quality and warmth. To guarantee authentic taste he developed in-house charcuterie based on Banat recipes and, in 2018, opened the first Nora butcher's shop. His products have represented Romania at tourism fairs in Vienna, Frankfurt and Berlin, strengthening a local brand with national reach. Over nearly three decades he has built one of the region's most stable HoReCa structures—five buildings and 66 rooms—an ecosystem that unites kitchen, lodging and guest experience. Remarkable for continuity, he secured a smooth 2025 succession to his son, Deian Marcov.

Why ambassador for Banat 2028? Because his work embodies these values: authentic, producer-led taste; short supply chains; hospitality that turns a meal into a story. He can mobilise restaurants and producers, lead demos and youth workshops, and promote the “Produced in Banat” label and traceability—taking Banat's message to audiences and partners across Europe.



Vasile Guștere

Vasile Guștere is a pillar of Banat gastronomy with over five decades in Timișoara's kitchens. A graduate of the Public Catering School (1967) and awarded Master in the Culinary Arts (1985), he has led emblematic restaurants, trained generations of chefs and won numerous competitions. His range spans Romanian, Banat and international cuisines; from the standardised recipes of the communist era to today's trends, he has kept the authentic taste alive. He blends technical mastery, professional authority and mentorship. Around him grew sound kitchen practices: respect for product and season, precision and the story behind every dish. As an ambassador for Banat 2028 he can translate heritage into the language of today—youth masterclasses, public demos at festivals, advice for restaurants and producers, judging and quality programmes. True to **Fusion Beyond Borders**. Bold flavours, his experience bridges tradition and innovation: reimagined Banat menus, direct links between producers and HoReCa, promotion of local-identity recipes and short supply chains. With long-earned prestige and credibility, he can represent Banat to audiences and partners across Europe, helping turn the 2028 title into a lasting standard of quality and hospitality.



Narcis Georgiu

Narcis Georgiu is a wine connoisseur, a storyteller of Banat's terroir, and an authentic ambassador of refined taste. Raised among the Recaș vineyards, he was drawn to wine from childhood. Though he first pursued Law—studying in Timișoara and Graz and practising as a lawyer—he ultimately followed his passion for wine and gastronomy. He spent eight years in France as a sommelier at the celebrated Le Bristol Paris (home to 1* and 3* Michelin restaurants), managing a cellar of over 80.000 bottles, working within a nine-sommelier team, and leading the brigade in one of the 1* venues. That experience cemented a clear vision: wine is culture, emotion, and dialogue. Back in Banat, he introduced an educational approach: "The Buffet of the Senses", a multi-sensory exhibition, turning tasting into an interactive cultural experience. At Recaș Wineries he champions local wines as expressions of regional heritage. With rare international expertise, genuine passion, and deep attachment to Banat, he can turn the messages of Banat 2028 – European Region of Gastronomy to the public at regional, national and international level.



Distinguished chefs



Chef Ioan Bebeșelea

Ioan Bebeșelea is a chef rooted in place and research, with a track record of turning local produce into contemporary cuisine. Since 2024 he has led Restaurant Ferment in Timișoara, building seasonal menus, training teams, and staging “Harvest of the Month” fine-dining events in unconventional venues (i.e. community gardens, the former cigarette factory) that bring city audiences face to face with Banat’s makers and ingredients. As chef-owner of Syndicat Gourmet (Sibiu, 2014–2021) he worked closely with small producers, mentored young cooks, and designed high-profile menus (EU Summit Sibiu 2019; France–Romania Season; Vienna Tourism Fair), cooking four-hands with leading Romanian and French chefs. His awards—Gault & Millau “Terroir” (2019), Transilvania Gastronomică “Best Reinterpretation” (2016), and podium finishes at Chefi de România (2023, 2024)—confirm both craft and creativity. For Banat 2028 – European Region of Gastronomy, he is a natural ally: he researches Banat foodways (“*Blide Noi*” [New Plates] with “*Prin Banat*” Association), champions short supply chains, and can translate heritage into chef residencies, public tastings, and training for young cooks—delivering the programme’s spirit: **Fusion Beyond Borders**.



Chef Daniel Cheregi

Daniel Cheregi is a Timișoara-trained pastry chef turned head chef who brings discipline, creativity and zero-waste thinking to contemporary Banat cuisine. After graduating in confectionery/pâtisserie, he moved into hot-kitchen roles at Hotel Continental, Domeniul Herneacova and Restaurant Casa Bunicii, refining both Romanian and international repertoires. He later managed large operations—including a major hotel in Băile Herculane—running daily buffets for hundreds, and now serves as Head Chef & gastronomic coordinator at Restaurant Merlot (Timișoara), where he builds seasonal, locally sourced menus with precise plating. His accolades include Gold at Golden Balkan Chef, Belgrade (2011) and the Popularity Award at “Chefi de România”, confirming both skill and public appeal. For Banat 2028 he is a practical bridge between producers, training and the public: curating chef demos, mentoring young cooks, piloting short-supply chains and low-waste workflows, and co-creating signature menus for festivals and local gastronomic points—so that what begins as a programme lands as lasting everyday practice across the region.



Chef Manu Michelbach

Manu Michelbach brings 15+ years of European kitchen experience and a talent for reimagining Romanian tradition with modern technique. Committed to local, seasonal produce and sustainability, he has led teams as Head Chef at Aniroc Signature Hotel (2022–2024) and Gemi Conference & Events (2023–2024), and is currently a collaborating chef for Iulius Congress Hall & the Packed in Flavour project—work that connects directly with Timișoara’s Banat food scene. Earlier roles include Roca Brună in Arada county (2020–2022). His accolades—UNIChef Cup finalist (Knorr Primerba/Unilever, 2024) and Rising Star Chef podiums (2023, 2024)—underscore both craft and momentum. Signature experiences such as the Medieval Fusion Dinner at Bran Castle, Delta Fish Feast pop-ups, and culinary masterclasses in Arad show a chef who pairs storytelling with technique. For Banat 2028 – European Region of Gastronomy, he can co-create Banat menus, lead chef residencies and youth workshops, and curate festival gastro-zones—delivering the spirit of Banat beyond borders.



Chef Miroslav Romanov

Chef Miroslav Romanov is recognised for elevating Banat cuisine—especially from the Serbian side—through precise technique, balanced flavours and deep respect for local ingredients. With 14+ years in top kitchens across Romania and Serbia, he researches historic regional recipes and modernises them without losing authenticity. His work has represented Banat on international stages—Vienna (2024), Frankfurt (2024), Berlin (2025)—and in cultural settings such as the Craiova Christmas Fair (2024) and Friedrich Schiller University Jena (2025). He shares his craft through regular demos and masterclasses within Culinaria Banatica, and has catered major milestones including the closing gala of Timișoara – European Capital of Culture, the opening of Mocioni Castle in Timiș county, and the Mocioni Project launch at the National Museum of Banat. Skilled in thematic menu creation, team coordination and producer partnerships, Romanov is ideally placed to serve Banat 2028 – European Region of Gastronomy: co-creating cross-border menus, mentoring young chefs, leading public tastings and showcasing short-supply chains thus bringing to life the region’s spirit.

10. Communication and promotion plan

How Fusion Beyond Borders moves from idea to appetite: a bold Banat brand, campaigns from village square to European headlines, and a digital hub that turns clicks into visits.

With media, influencers and culinary ambassadors—plus citizens at participatory events—we turn story into buzz, and buzz into bookings.

10.1. Banat branding – visual identity and central message

Purpose. The Communication and Promotion Plan turns the candidacy slogan – **Fusion Beyond Borders: Bold flavours. Diverse origins. One shared table.**— into a clear, consistent story told locally, nationally and internationally throughout 2025–2029. The strategy is designed to build pride among residents, invite visitors with bookable, low-impact experiences, and mobilize partners across

culture, tourism, education and agri-food. Visit Timiș coordinates delivery together with the Timiș County Councils and a core partnership including Arad County Council, Caraș-Severin County Council, HoReTim, the Association “*Produs în Banat*”, the University of Life Sciences Timișoara (USVT), My Banat, Degustaria together with CRIES, Gal Colinele Recaş and partners. We will observe IGCAT’s logo and usage rules rigorously in the candidature phase, in the title year and in the legacy period on all print, digital, event and partner assets.

Brand positioning. We position Banat 2028 as the welcoming crossroads where Central Europe meets the Balkans and the Danube and where heritage powers the future. The brand rests on **four pillars: taste and terroir, people and places, sustainability, and exchange through cross-border and IGCAT platforms.**

The visual language draws on multicultural motifs and a palette inspired by regional gastronomy, while the tone of voice remains warm, inclusive and energetic. We prioritize short, youth-friendly formats without compromising respect for heritage and accuracy.

Objectives. The plan seeks to build a distinct and memorable regional brand and to position Banat as a premium, sustainable culinary destination with measurable positive impact for local communities. It mobilizes citizens through participatory events, grows national and international awareness through multimedia campaigns and trade presence, and consolidates an ecosystem for education, innovation and agri-food entrepreneurship.

Audiences. We address residents and the diaspora, producers and SMEs, HoReCa and the creative industries, schools, universities and young people, domestic travelers, cross-border, European and international visitors, as well as trade and media professionals. Messages adapt to each segment – from heritage and pride to bookable routes and festivals or B2B opportunities – while remaining faithful to the core brand line.

10.2. Regional, national, and international media campaigns

We will deliver a year-round sequence of media campaigns that follows the 2028 programme calendar and the seasonal patterns of travel.

Locally and regionally, we will publish monthly angles tied to producer markets and Local Gastronomic Point openings, and we will stage festival takeovers at Flight, Codru, Gărâna Jazz Festival, Sânzienele-n Bastion and other major events.

At national level, we will activate four seasonal bursts—Spring Opens, Summer of Festivals, Harvest and LA PAS, and Winter and Ignat—through food and travel media, targeted digital placements and selective out-of-home in key cities.

Internationally, we will prioritize Serbia, Hungary, Italy, Germany, and countries which host other Regions of Gastronomy (i.e. Croatia, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Greece and others), with cross-border activations in Novi Sad, hosted buyer and press trips, and a coordinated trade presence at ITB Berlin and IMEX Frankfurt in partnership with the chambers of commerce.

Every campaign will communicate concrete, bookable experiences. It will highlight short supply chains and sustainable choices, and it will consistently amplify the “Produced in Banat” certification.

10.3. Digital presence – website, social media, mobile apps

Our digital ecosystem consists of a multilingual website and a companion app or progressive web app. These platforms provide a live What’s On calendar, Eat & Drink listings for restaurants, Local Gastronomic Points and wine, beer and coffee places, and route maps with booking options. A Learn section hosts stories, research and sustainability resources, while product-passport QR pages explain the traceability of “Produced in Banat”



certified products.

On social media we will use Instagram and TikTok for short reels from festivals and kitchens, Facebook/ Meta for events and community building, YouTube for mini-documentaries and recipes, and LinkedIn for B2B and trade communication. We will ensure accessibility through multilingual outputs, captions and alternative text on all key assets.

10.4. Collaborations with media, influencers, and gastronomy ambassadors

We will develop media partnerships and co-branded specials around tent-pole moments such as Flight, Codru, LA PAS, the Gârâna festivals, the Săvârșin Producers' Fair, Timișoara Food Summit and other major events. Influencer and creator trips will prioritise multi-ethnic voices from Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Germany, Italy in order to achieve authentic reach and relevance.

Our ambassadors will include chefs and pâtissiers associated with HoReTim, producers, academics from USVT and other universities, and festival curators. They will contribute talks, masterclasses, school visits and recipe research and development. Together with the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture Timiș and Italy – Romania Chamber of Commerce we will coordinate buyer missions, B2B tastings abroad and GDPR-safe database exchanges.

10.5. Citizen involvement through participatory events

We will expand hands-on formats that allow citizens to

learn by doing and to experience living heritage in real settings. Markets-in-the-Park will bring tasting, learning and buying together with the “Produced in Banat” banner, with chef demonstrations delivered by HoReTim, QR traceability supported by USVT and zero-waste protocols co-designed with CRIES.

Banat Brunch, Breakfast in Margina, Buzad Brunch, Local Gastronomic Point Open Days, Culinaria Banatica dinners and LA PAS campus and micro-editions will bring producers, chefs, families and students to the same table. These formats promote short supply chains, zero-waste habits and a shared sense of place in both villages and city neighbourhoods.

10.6. Shared communication with Harghita (2027, awarded) and Dobrogea (2029, candidate)

We will design a three-year narrative arc that bridges 2027, 2028 and 2029. The arc will use hand-over features from Harghita to Banat and preview features from Banat to Dobrogea, recognising that Dobrogea's European Region of Gastronomy title is planned for 2029.

Joint campaigns will highlight “Carpathians to Banat”, which links forest foods, cheeses and pastries with plains produce and wines, and “Danube to Sea”, which connects Banat fish and wine with Delta and Black Sea products. We will run rotating chef and storyteller residencies across the three regions with co-created menus, pop-ups, masterclasses and youth workshops.

Our trade and press activity will include co-branded stands at ITB Berlin, IMEX Frankfurt and other big fairs, and rotating buyer and press trips hosted in Harghita in 2027, in Banat in 2028 and in Dobrogea in 2029.

We will align with the IGCAT Platform by submitting entries and creating shared storytelling for the European Young Chef Award, the World Food Gift Challenge and the Food Film Menu.

10.7. Communicating the IGCAT domains

We will make “Feeding the Planet” tangible through in-season content, Markets-in-the-Park activations, Local Gastronomic Point Open Days, interactive “What's Fresh” maps and chef tips for zero-waste home cooking.

We will present “Innovation, Creativity and Jobs” through Timisoara Food Summit stories, incubator spotlights, chef-producer research diaries and features about trainees entering their first jobs in hospitality and agri-food.

Under “Education for the Future” we will organise school challenges, campus open kitchens, ambassador visits to classrooms and bite-size micro-credentials supported by teacher packs and family guides.

For “Balanced and Sustainable Tourism” we will run the Slow Banat campaign, manage dispersion and off-peak calendars and promote bookable routes with clear capacity guidance and low-impact travel options.

We will bring the “Urban-Rural Link” to life through city pop-ups for village producers, farm-to-city weekends, mobile markets and behind-the-scenes reels from Local Gastronomic Points and family farms.

We will communicate “Well-being and Healthy Living” with “Banat on your Plate” nutrition tips, better-choice icons at festivals and cycle-and-hike-plus-eat itineraries that pair movement with mindful eating, and integrating inclusive and accessible tourism and gastronomy.

We will strengthen “Brand and Certification” by sharing “Produced in Banat” maker stories, using QR product passports and delivering consumer education on quality, authenticity and traceability.

10.8. Legacy communication

After 2028 we will maintain the website, the app and the media archive, together with the ambassador network and the annual signature events. In this way the narrative remains visible and actionable for residents, visitors and partners.

Legacy communication will focus on year-round routes, on the “Produced in Banat” label, and on cross-regional collaborations with Harghita and Dobrogea within the IGCAT Platform. We will continue to publish impact stories, maker profiles and research-to-menu features, and we will refresh the content library with new resident and visitor voices. A continuous media and social presence will ensure that the brand stays active, that partners retain visibility and that future editions of our major events continue to set the table for bold flavours, diverse origins and one shared table.

10.9 Timeline highlights (indicative)

- ◆ **2026:** brand rollout, toolkits, pilot residencies, first joint campaigns with Harghita.
- ◆ **2027:** Harghita title year hand-over series; Banat previews; first tri-region press trip.
- ◆ **2028:** Banat title year — full calendar; international push; joint “Danube->Sea” features with Dobrogea.
- ◆ **2029:** Dobrogea title year — legacy amplifications; maintain routes, ambassadors and annual signatures.

11. Budget 2026–2029

Where passion meets accounting, or how we finance **Fusion Beyond Borders**.

A clear breakdown by spending category, a balanced mix of public funds, private sponsorships and in-kind contributions, and transparency from plan to proof.

Every euro is tied to outcomes for people, places and producers.

This budget underpins how we turn **Fusion Beyond Borders** into tangible benefits for people, places and the planet. It finances a coherent, multi-year programme that prioritises impact, additionality and inclusivity, while applying strict principles of fiscal responsibility, transparency and value-for-money. Spend is steered to projects that strengthen short supply chains, boost local producers, build skills and jobs, and leave a measurable legacy beyond the title year.

The financing mix combines public funding (county/ municipal contributions, national programmes, EU instruments where eligible), private sponsorships and partnerships(hospitality, retail, agri-food, logistics,

media), and in-kind resources (venues, equipment, airtime, volunteer time, pro-bono expertise). This blend leverages every euro invested, crowds in partners, and de-risks delivery.

Allocation follows a clear logic: Programme delivery ~60%, Communication & Marketing ~20%, International Partnerships ~7%, Citizen & SME Engagement ~6%, Management & Administration ~5%, and Contingency & Evaluation ~2%. Phasing reflects the project lifecycle—preparation(2026–2027), a peak in the title year 2028, and legacy activation (2029)—with cash-flow aligned to milestones and co-financing agreements.

Governance measures include transparent procurement, KPI-linked contracting, quarterly financial and performance reporting, external audit, open-data budget dashboards, and green procurement standards (waste, energy, materials). Together, these safeguards ensure that every line of spend advances our objectives and that the Banat 2028 investment translates into lasting cultural, social and economic returns.



2026–2027: Preparation

Budget line	Subtotal 2026–2027	Share of 2026–2027	4-year total	Share of €12,000,000
Programme implementation (events, routes, education, research & incubation)	€2.880.000	60.0%	€7.200.000	60.0%
Marketing & communications	€960.000	20.0%	€2.400.000	20.0%
International co-operation & partnerships	€336.000	7.0%	€840.000	7.0%
Citizen & SME engagement (PGL micro-grants, markets, producers)	€288.000	6.0%	€720.000	6.0%
Management & administration	€240.000	5.0%	€600.000	5.0%
Contingency & evaluation	€96.000	2.0%	€240.000	2.0%
TOTAL 2026–2027	€4.800.000	100.0%	€12.000.000	100.0%

2028–2029: Title year & legacy launch

Budget line	Subtotal 2028–2029	Share of 2028–2029	4-year total	Share of €12,000,000
Programme implementation (events, routes, education, research & incubation)	€4.320.000	60.0%	€7.200.000	60.0%
Marketing & communications	€1.440.000	20.0%	€2.400.000	20.0%
International co-operation & partnerships	€504.000	7.0%	€840.000	7.0%
Citizen & SME engagement (PGL micro-grants, markets, producers)	€432.000	6.0%	€720.000	6.0%
Management & administration	€360.000	5.0%	€600.000	5.0%
Contingency & evaluation	€144.000	2.0%	€240.000	2.0%
TOTAL 2028–2029	€7.200.000	100.0%	€12.000.000	100.0%

12. Monitoring and evaluation

We track impact with clear KPIs, collect and report data, and run independent reviews to keep us honest.

Roles are defined, risks are managed, and our learning loop means we refine the recipe as we go—so the region can literally taste our progress.

To ensure **Fusion Beyond Borders** delivers real value for people, places and the planet, Banat 2028 is managed by evidence: clear indicators, comparable baselines, regular reporting, and external review. Our framework aligns all programme strands—from festivals and routes to education, producer support and sustainability—so decisions are data-driven and learning-oriented.

12.1. Evaluation framework & principles and key performance indicators (KPIs)

We track outputs (what we do), outcomes (what changes) and impact (what lasts). Indicators are grouped and reported in a common format across partners, with shared definitions, baselines and targets. Quarterly reviews keep delivery on track; mid-term and final evaluations test effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and legacy.

Sector	KPIs
Participation & engagement	• Number of events delivered; attendance by origin (local/regional/international); volunteers engaged. • Audience experience (satisfaction/NPS), accessibility measures, and community participation in design.
Economic	• HoReCa and agri-food turnover change during the title year; new jobs created; value of direct sales at producer markets. • Bookings and spend linked to routes and major festivals.
Socio-cultural	• Projects linking gastronomy with culture/heritage (e.g., museums, festivals, street arts). • Number of Local Gastronomic Points (PGLs) supported; activation of multi-/intercultural content.
Sustainability	• Food-waste reduction at events; share of events applying zero-waste protocols. • Share of local/seasonal procurement; biodiversity/eco-tourism activations (e.g., WeWilder).
Skills & education	• Learners in dual education and short courses; chef/producer masterclasses. • Schools/youth reached through programmes and toolkits.
Innovation & traceability	• Products piloted in living labs/markets; start-ups supported. • QR-based traceability deployments for Produced in Banat products.
Communication & reach	• Media impressions; social engagement; web/app usage (routes, calendars, maps). • Hosted buyer/press trip outcomes.

Note: 1) Programme-specific KPIs are tied to the calendar: curated gastro-zones at anchor festivals; Markets-in-the-Park roll-out; PGL growth; research-to-menu transfers (e.g., Culinaria Banatica); Food Summit B2B metrics. 2) After the full programme is set-up for 2028 a KPI Dashboard for 2028 relative to the Specific objectives by IGCAT domains of interest will be established.

12.2. Data collection & reporting

- ◆ **Integrated digital platform** for partner event reporting (attendance, suppliers, waste streams, procurement origin), with real-time dashboards.
- ◆ **Surveys (on-site/online) for audiences, volunteers, producers and venues;** focus groups for qualitative insights.
- ◆ **Partner administrative data** (training registers, incubator logs, market sales).
- ◆ **Media & social analytics** for visibility and sentiment.
- ◆ **Quarterly/semiannual reports** compiled by the Executive Team and presented to the financing authority / Regional Stakeholders Committee.
- ◆ **University partnerships (USVT & UVT)** for independent socio-economic and environmental assessments.

12.3. Reviews & assurance

- ◆ Annual reviews (mid-2026–2029) to adjust delivery and budgets.
- ◆ Mid-term review (mid-2028) to optimise the second half of the title year.
- ◆ Final evaluation (Q1 2029) with a public report and recommendations for legacy.
- ◆ External audit to assure credibility of methods and results.

12.4. Roles & responsibilities

- ◆ **M&E Unit (Visit Timiș):** runs the platform, consolidates data, issues quarterly dashboards and annual reports.
- ◆ **Lead partners** (Timiș/Arad/Caraș-Severin County Councils; Chamber of Commerce; HoRrTim; CRIES; Produced in Banat; GAL Colinele Recas; USVT; UVT): collect strand-level data using shared templates and standards.

- ◆ **Quality & sustainability:** CRIES verifies zero-waste compliance; Degustaria supports authenticity/quality checks; USVT validates traceability/“lab-to-table” metrics.

12.5. Risk management & learning loop

We maintain a live risk register (delivery, finance, participation, reputational, sustainability). Mitigations include diversified funding, back-up venues/suppliers, audience development plans, and contingency for extreme weather. After each milestone event, after-action reviews capture lessons and update guidelines (e.g., crowd flow, waste stations, supplier onboarding).

12.6. Legacy tracking (2029+)

Beyond 2028, we track continued festival standards; local gastronomic points (PGL) and producer network growth; integration of heritage recipes in urban menus; ongoing use of QR traceability; and the durability of education/innovation pipelines (dual education, incubator, Food Summit). Indicators roll into an annual “Banat Food & Culture Barometer” published with university partners.

We aim a transparent, comparable and learning-centred system that proves how Banat’s bold flavours and diverse origins translate into measurable benefits—and how one shared table becomes a durable regional legacy.



13. Legacy plan (post-2029)

When 2028’s spotlight fades, Fusion Beyond Borders becomes practice, not a slogan.

This legacy plan secures permanent hubs, mixed funding, EU-wide partners, and a living roadmap—so Banat keeps nourishing people long after 2029.

Purpose & principles

From 2030 onward, **Fusion Beyond Borders** becomes our working method: permanent structures, stable funding lines and shared standards that continue to turn heritage into skills, jobs and pride of place—across Timiș, Arad and Caraș-Severin counties. The legacy keeps anchor events, labs and producer networks running, with measurable outcomes on sustainability, education and market access.

Permanent infrastructure & institutions

- ◆ Institutionalizing permanent structures (Banat Gastronomic Hub, Legacy Steering Group).
- ◆ Banat Museum of Gastronomy (new institution). A flagship, hands-on museum devoted to multicultural foodways, tools and techniques; hosts exhibitions, living classrooms (bread, preserves, no-plastic kitchens) and craft residencies. Led by HoReTim with the Timis County Council and Visit Timiș together with partners: USVT, My Banat.
- ◆ Cabbage Rolls Museum (Muzeul Sarmalelor) proposed by HoReTim with partners.
- ◆ Banat Gastronomic Incubator (USVT) – a support platform for startups and local entrepreneurs in the functional bakery and pastry sector.
- ◆ USVT “from-lab-to-table” backbone. Pilot line for bakery & functional foods, food-safety/bioengineering services and the Danube aquaculture centre; campus markets as public testbeds and a Gastronomy Incubator for start-ups (rapid prototyping, compliant labelling, coaching).
- ◆ “Produced in Banat” marketplace & traceability. Quarterly Markets-in-the-Park continue as curated, zero-waste producer fairs; QR digital passports document origin/recipes/nutrition and feed consumer feedback to R&D and buyers.
- ◆ Local Gastronomic Points (PGL) network. Scale low-footprint, family kitchens (PGL) as rural anchors (training, light infrastructure, mobile units) led by GAL Colinele Recas and Produced in Banat Association together with partners.
- ◆ Integrating gastronomic routes and events into official tourism and local development strategies.
- ◆ Maintaining the partner network and expanding it across Europe and internationally.

- ◆ Ensuring a mixed public-private financing mechanism for initiatives stemming from the program. Annually updating indicators to monitor long-term progress.

Calendar that endures

Anchors with curated food programmes. Flight, Codru, JAZZx/Timișoara Jazz, Gărâna Jazz & Folk, Rock la Mureș, Medieval Festival (Huniade), Electroruga, Sânzienie-n Bastion—each keeps a “Produced in Banat” gastro-zone, chef demos (HoReTim), traceability pilots (USVT) and CRIES zero-waste standards.

Identity festivals that teach. LA PAS – Food & Sustainable Culture becomes a travelling campus (debates, fair-trade/organic tastings, community kitchens) with editions across the three counties; local and regional gastronomy festivals across region.

Producers & heritage. Sustainable Bread Festival (USVT), local and regional gastronomic festivals, Local Producers’ Fair remains the regional open pantry with lab-to-table demos and QR traceability.

New/expanded legacy formats (My Banat). Annual Regional Sweets & Jams Fairs; Banat Brunch series; Picnic in the Puszta (Otelec-Foeni-Bega), Lunch Among Friends (Nemeșești), and thematic Long Tables in Banat (e.g., Christmas at the Castle).

Routes & places. Wine Route (Silagiu-Buziaș-Recaș-Nițchidorf), Breakfast in Margina, Rudăria Watermills, WeWilder Armeniș, and village hubs (e.g., The Village Buzad, Șura din Dumbrava) remain bookable year-round.

Inter-regional collaboration & the IGCAT Platform (legacy drivers)

Harghita (ERG 2027) × Banat (ERG 2028, candidate): Carpathians -> Banat route. Co-branded, year-round exchanges on forest foods, cheeses, cured meats and pastries (Harghita) paired with plains produce, wines and multicultural recipes (Banat). Chef residencies, dual-education masterclasses (HoReTim + USVT), and guest-region pavilions at major fairs.

Banat (ERG 2028, candidate) × Dobrogea (ERG 2029, candidate): Danube to the Sea. Joint programmes on Danube/Delta/Black Sea fish, salt-cured traditions, wines and biodiversity—co-hosted long-table dinners, fish-& wine weeks, and cross-marketing of routes (Danube Gorge <-> Delta).

IGCAT Platform (ongoing). Annual participation and co-mentoring in the European Young Chef Award, World Food Gift Challenge and Food Film Menu; shared visibility actions; rotating hosted-buyer/press trips (2027 Harghita -> 2028 Banat -> 2029 Dobrogea).

Standards that travel. We share and adopt common playbooks with partner regions: local-sourcing checklists, QR-traceability templates (with USVT), and CRIES zero-waste event protocols—scaling impact across Romania and the IGCAT network.

Skills, jobs & inclusion

HoReCa pipeline. HoReTim keeps dual education in hospitality, chef/pâtissier contests and producer-HoReCa matchmaking; Taste Diversity in Banat Dialect stays as a living syllabus in 15–20 restaurants.

Timișoara Food Summit. Hosted by USVT and partnered with HoReCa sector and sponsors, becomes the annual B2B & innovation marketplace (science–industry panels, pitches, hackathons on circularity), with Harghita/Dobrogea/IGCAT guest strands.

Food literacy. CRIES scales toolkits for schools and communities (responsible consumption, zero-waste events, CSA/ASAT models).

Sustainability & circularity embedded

A single Zero-Waste Protocol (sorting, donation, compost, reusables) applies to all legacy events and markets; procurement guidelines favour local/seasonal menus and transparent labelling.

Circular product innovation continues at USVT (valorising side-streams—grape marc, oilseed cakes, peels—into functional foods), tested at markets and adopted by Produced in Banat makers.

Digital, branding & certification

Regional online guide & platform maps routes, PGLs, producers and events; integrates booking and QR product pages; maintained by Visit Timiș with partners and linked to Harghita/Dobrogea pages for cross-traffic.

Ongoing attestation of traditional products and growth of the “Produced in Banat” label as the region’s quality

mark, with guest-region shelves for Harghita and Dobrogea at major markets.

Governance & finance (2030–2032)

Legacy Steering Group (Timiș County Council; Visit Timiș; HoReTim; USVT; My Banat; “*Produs în Banat*” Association; Degustaria; with partners: Arad County Council, Caraș Severin County Council, CRIES, GAL Colinele Recas; chambers of commerce), plus Memoranda of understanding with Harghita and Dobrogea and an IGCAT liaison, oversees delivery, funding and standards.

Funding mix. County/municipal lines for events and routes; EU & national programmes for infrastructure, skills and R&D; private sponsorship; micro-grants for producers/PGLs; joint bids with Harghita/Dobrogea where eligible.

By locking in institutions (museum, labs, markets), standards (local sourcing, traceability, zero-waste), and long-term collaborations with fellow Regions of Gastronomy and the IGCAT Platform, Banat’s bold flavours keep delivering cultural, social and economic value—well beyond 2029. That is **Fusion Beyond Borders** made permanent.



14. Closing Note: Banat's Journey to 2028

Dr. Simona NEUMANN

Director General, Visit Timiș

Coordinator of Banat 2028 – European Region of
Gastronomy candidacy



The Banat 2028 – European Region of Gastronomy candidacy is more than just a project. It is a collective mission, a process of rediscovery, of strengthening our regional identity, and of showcasing the extraordinary potential that Banat holds on both the national and European stage. As the coordinating and implementing organisation, the Timiș County Tourism Promotion and Development Association (Visit Timiș) has the honour and responsibility of uniting the energy and resources of all stakeholders involved, building bridges between communities, sectors, and institutions, and giving coherence to a shared vision.

Banat is a region of taste, diversity, and coexistence. From Timișoara to the remote villages of the Banat Mountains, from the Western Plain to the Danube Gorge, its gastronomy tells a story of belonging, migration, tradition, and adaptation. It is a story in which every cultural community, every generation, has left its mark – in recipes, in customs, and in its relationship with the land and its resources.

At its core, the Banat 2028 candidacy is a sustainable development strategy, using gastronomy as a driver for economic growth, social inclusion, innovation, and education. Through this project, our aim is not only to promote the local culinary heritage, but also to create a real impact: supporting local producers, revitalising villages, towns and cities, boosting the hospitality sector, attracting tourists and investors, developing new skills, strengthening regional identity, and forging new European connections.

We are fully aware that this title is both a unique opportunity and a long-term responsibility. Drawing on the experience of Timișoara – European Capital of Culture 2023, a project I coordinated for nine years, we have once again worked with our team and partners to build a strong candidacy, grounded in active partnerships, and the genuine involvement of the public, private and academic sectors. We have defined clear action lines around key themes such as: sustainable gastronomic tourism, food education, creativity and innovation, health and environmental responsibility, intertwined with the art and culture of the region. Bringing together our region's strengths and our partners' vision in this bid book has been a demanding yet rewarding journey.

Visit Timiș will coordinate the implementation of this vision in a participatory, transparent, and efficient manner, together with its partners and sponsors, and alongside the Regional Stakeholders' Committee. We will work in network with our partner counties – Caraș-Severin and Arad – and with all local actors, from municipalities and county councils to entrepreneurs, farmers, NGOs, cultural institutions, universities, tourism operators, artists and citizens. Only together can we make Banat a model of best practice at European level.

We believe gastronomy can offer not only flavour and experience, but meaning: meaning for young people seeking a future here, for local producers able to capitalise on their work, for tourists in search of authenticity, and for communities striving for a better life, respectful of nature and tradition.

On behalf of the Visit Timiș team, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this candidacy—the members of the Regional Stakeholders Committee, our partners, and sector-specific advisers. I am especially grateful to my colleagues—Sorina Ciurlea (Deputy Director), Bianca Vințan, Marilena Drăghicescu, Adrian Mitar, Daniel Popa, Meda Skeja, Mariana Erbslöh, Adina Leaha – for all their support. We reaffirm our strong commitment to carrying this mission forward in the years ahead.

We are ready. We have the vision. And we have a story worth telling – through taste, through people, through action.



The Shared Table — Who We Are

200+ names, one purpose—growing Banat’s flavour and future. This list is alive: with every festival, route and idea, new partners pull up a chair. By 2028 and beyond, the table keeps extending.

Timiș County Council

Arad County Council · Caraș Severin County Council

The Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Timiș County (Visit Timiș)

Timiș County Council · West University of Timișoara · University of Life Sciences 'King Michael I of Romania' Timișoara · “Traian Vuia” International Airport · Town of Buziaș · Town of Ciacova · Town of Deta · Town of Gătaia · Town of Jimbolia · Town of Recaș · Commune of Banloc · Commune of Beba Veche · Commune of Biled · Commune of Birda · Commune of Bogda · Commune of Boldur · Commune of Bucovăț · Commune of Cenad · Commune of Chevereșu Mare · Commune of Comloșu Mare · Commune of Criciova · Commune of Curtea · Commune of Dumbrăvița · Commune of Fârdea · Commune of Foeni · Commune of Găvojdia · Commune of Giarmata · Commune of Gottlob · Commune of Jebel · Commune of Lovrin · Commune of Mănăștiur · Commune of Margina · Commune of Moșnița Nouă · Commune of Nițchidorf · Commune of Otelec · Commune of Pietroasa · Commune of Sânmihaiu Român · Commune of Șandra · Commune of Tomești · Commune of Traian Vuia · Commune of Victor Vlad Delamarina · Commune of Variaș · National Association of Travel Agencies of Romania · HoReTim Association · Parachute Sports Club Association Timișoara · Bega Turism Ltd. · Turism Tratament Aqva Ltd. ·

HoReTim Association

Argetinian Steakhouse · Berărescu · Brewery 700 · Bistro M · Café 5TOGO · Casa Bunicii Restaurant · Casa de la Rosa · Casa del Sole · Casa Kolping · Chocolaterie Chantia · Confectionery Naomi · Curtea Berarilor Restaurant · For Fresh · Fratelli Timișoara · Garage Caffè · Grătarul cu Staif Restaurant · Grill to chill · Hangry Monkey · Hotel Boutique Park · Del Corso Hotel · Delpack Hotel · Galaxy Hotel · Ibis Hotel · Mercure Hotel · Savoy Hotel · Senator Hotel · Stein Collection Hotel · Ivy Events · La Riviera · Lido · Locanda del Corso Restaurant · Nora · Donna Ana Guesthouse · Andronic Guesthouse · Nor Hostel · Pepper Steak · Pizza Cora · Pizza Thalia · Popasul Căprioarei · Province · Raku Sushi · Cerna Restaurant · Del Vechio Restaurant · Maison Restaurant · Osterietta Restaurant · Ribs Grill · Riviere · Sabres · Senneville · Spot Events · Suppa Bar · Tinecz · Valery · Venue · Rivo Hotel · Branco Hotel · Klasico Hotel ·

Serenity Hotel · Elisey Guesthouse · Exclusiv Hotel · Pura Vida Guesthouse · Friends Residence · Tied Restaurant · Atlas Hotel · Iosefin Residence · Timisoara Hotel · Sanki Romanian Food Restaurant · Ryo Sushi · Ryo Chinese Fusion · Drimoland · L”Azzuro Restaurant · Kai · Spontan · Prime Restaurant · Timișoara Hotel in Sânnicolau Mare · LaFayette Guesthouse ·

Produced in Banat Association

Moara Maria Bakery · House Despi · Rykas Winery · Terra Biola · Mangalita Tadtional NIA · Romvyctor · Aronia Charlottenburg · Infinity Honey · Glie Vie · Dintre Dealuri · LUN · TRUFEX · Aramic Winery · Galinni · Lavanda de la tara · Enigma Plant · Bio Dac · Petrovaselo Winery · Croseta Mamei · Studio Rural 5 · Das Haus Charlottenburg · Casa Iorgovanul Guesthouse · La Renaissance · Valahia Timisoara Restaurant · Ta.ro.t Gastro Bar ·

University of Life Sciences ‘King Michael I of Romania’ Timișoara

Degustăria Association

Laura Laurențiu · Mihaela Vețan · Sergiu Florean My Banat

Association My Banat · CRIES Association

GAL – Local Action Group „Recaș Hills”

Town of Recaș · Commune of Dumbrăvița · Commune of Giarmata · Commune of Sânandrei · Commune of Pișchia · Commune of Bucovăț · Commune of Mașloc · Commune of Fibiș · Town of Lipova · Unirea Cerneteaz Sports Club · Dumbrăvița Investment Ltd. · Echipa Iubire Ltd. · Leu Giarmata Sports Club · Cătălin & Cătălina Ltd. · IU.BE Invest Ltd. · Fibiș Plant Invest Ltd. · CKS Agro Ltd. · Alina – Larcar Ltd. · Blumenthal Community Development Association · „Together for Recaș” Humanitarian Association · Mihai Valer Sole Trader · Davitoiu Ionel-Adrian Sole Trader · Corpaș Laura Sole Trader · Urdea Maria-Alexandra Sole Trader · Wine Princess Ltd. · Recaș Wineries Joint Stock Company · Recaș Wineries Ltd. · Petrovaselo Winery Ltd. · Agro-Industrial Valu lui Traian Ltd. · Domeniile Sera Ltd. · Viticola Banat Ltd. · Colinele Recaș Intercommunity Association · Biovidanj Ltd. · Agro Serv. Cerne Ltd. · Agricola Cerneteaz Ltd. · V&F Recording Studio Ltd. · Roco 2001 Ltd. Hotel · Artcelularis Ltd. ·

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EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY
BANAT CANDIDATE 2028

CONSILIUL JUDEȚEAN TIMIȘ

