
Fast food in Tbilisi

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Abstract: *This article deals with the fast food establishments that can be found in Georgia's capital Tbilisi as of today. The article is divided into two sections, first interviews with the managers or the owners of the establishments and then we hear the voices of the costumers by a questionnaire that was left for the costumers to answer while they were visiting the establishments. The article and study should be seen as a first academic attempt to map out the fast food sphere in Tbilisi that is quite new on the gastronomic map of the country.*

Keywords: Georgia (the nation), Tbilisi, fast food establishments, consumption, customers, economy

JEL codes: L66.

1. Introduction

Georgia (Sakartvelo) is a transcontinental country in the Caucasus region, situated at the dividing line between Europe and Asia. The country's geographical location with borders to the Black Sea, the modern Russian federation, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan, has meant that through pre-history and history it has been a crossroad between the East and the West.

Due to its location, the country has been invaded several times over the course of history by for example the Greeks, Persians and the Ottomans, to name just a few. The invasions mean that much of the antique and Islamic worldview still exists at the country's borders- which are a unique cultural situation. The invasions have also left its footprints on Georgia's food- and drinking habits and traditions. This has resulted in the existence of many different gastronomically and culinary branches in the foodway's of today's Georgia.

The choice of food and beverage (gastronomy) is founded very early in the history of a nation (society) and its inhabitants. In short factors such as need, edibility, availability, human senses, philosophical thoughts, geographical and mental boarders, economy, inheritance from childhood, ideology, social structures, social class, gender, utensils, experiences and sensations plays a vital part in humans choices of food and beverage in the daily life and on feast days. A nation's gastronomy consists also of phenomenon such as diet, provisions, culinary art, fare, nourishment. The choices are therefore very complex and never static. It gets even more complicated due to the fact that the factors mentioned above not necessary have the same meaning for all inhabitants within the same geographical boarders. [1] A rather new phenomenon in the city of Tbilisi and on the culinary map is fast food that has its roots in the western part of the world. This article will deal with the fast food establishments in Tbilisi. ¹

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1Söderlind, Ulrica, The Nobel banquets, New Jersey, 2010:6-30

2. Previous research

2.1. Food in Georgia

It has been difficult for foreign researchers to do research in Georgia in modern times, due to the often ambivalent political situation in the country and surrounding areas. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence that followed the country was facing some very difficult times in the late 1990 and was facing the brink of a civil war. Even if the political situation has stabilised itself it is not easy to get access to research material for foreign researcher.

In order to study the Georgian cuisine one has to either visit the country or try to find cookbooks about the nation's food and drinking habits. In my previous research I have done both. It is not easy to find cookery books in English regarding the subject even if there is a few. The best known one is the Georgian feast [2] , a book about the different cuisines in the country; the book is a narrative travelling book.

Since the Georgian cuisine in itself is very complicated it is not easy to describe it, in my previous research on the subject I have stated that wine, bread, khachapuri and khinkali are staple foods. It is a debate regarding the origin of wine among the researcher; however it seems safe to say that the cradle of wine is in the region of today's modern Georgia.



Fig. 1. Wine being rotated in its wooden vast during the fermentation process, ©Söderlind, Ulrica

Regardless of how much food or varieties of dishes that is on the table during a meal, if there is no bread, the meal is not considered to be complete. Bread baking is done on a daily basis, at home or at small bakeries. The main crop for flour is wheat and there are two distinct bread types that are made in an oven called tone and that is mother's bread (dedas puri) and tone bread. Cornbread is also very often eaten. Khachapuri is often translated as cheese bread; however I distance myself from that translation since I do not find it correct even if it is bread dough where cheese is added.

² Goldstein, Darra, The Georgian feast, Berkeley, 1999



Fig. 2. Making of the traditional tone bread in a local bakery. ©Söderlind, Ulrica

The photograph shows the making of the traditional tone bread in a local bakery and the photograph on the right shows the special cheese that is used for the filling of the Khachapuri. ©Söderlind, Ulrica



Fig. 3. A special cheese is used for the filling of the Khachapuri. The cheese can be seen to the right in the photograph.
©Söderlind, Ulrica

Khinkali is considered to be a national dish and can be described as meat dumplings where the minced meat is with herbs or without. There are also vegetarian versions of the dish with fillings of mashed potatoes, cheese or mushrooms. Many Georgians do not consider the vegetarian versions as real khinakli, however the version with potatoes are often eaten during fasting periods.[3]



Fig. 4. Khinkali making with the traditional filling of minced meat at a restaurant in Tbilisi, ©Söderlind, Ulrica

In previous research I have also studied cookbooks written in Georgian and cookbooks about the nation's cuisine written in English in my search for the Georgian cuisine. It is a clear difference in the contents of the cookbooks. This might be explained with the fact that the cookbooks written in Georgian is aimed for the Georgian readers in the first place and therefore contains a lot more recipes such as preservation of foodstuffs, it seems like preservations is not important at all in the cookbooks written in English. To me it seems like that if one only read the cookbooks that are aiming for the foreign public one gets a very limited knowledge, or only a small window or glimpse into the Georgian cuisine, especially if one only read the ones that are made for tourists and that does not make justice to the country's cuisine with all its freshness and tastefulness. [4]

Nikoloz Pirosmiani is known as the national painter of Georgia and he had a very hard life, before he started to paint for a living he among other things worked at the railway and had small shops. Pirosmiani painted billboards and walls of inns, taverns and restaurants for his upkeep. If one studies the surviving body of work of Pirosmiani one finds that wine and bread are very common as well as eggs and cakes, the later mainly for Easter. One thing that is striking when one studies Pirosmiani's painting from a food perspective, specially the paintings of the feasts or dining and drinking is that in those paintings no one drinks beer, only wine and that the composition of the meal in itself is more or less the same with bread, wine, some kind of vegetables, meat dish, birds. The selection of dishes in the meal of feast is very limited and that is surprising considering how a Georgian table is laid out today and it seems like the very large and big feast called

³ Söderlind, Ulrica, "The gastronomic man and Georgia's food culture", Review of applied Socio-Economic Research, vol 1, issue 1/2011, 97-122, "Introduction to the foodways of Georgia"- Caucasus journal of social Sciences, 2009, 71-87, Tbilisi, "An interdisciplinary approach to the foodways of Georgia", Amirani, 2010, 3-16, Tbilisi

⁴ Söderlind, Ulrica, The Georgian cuisine according to some national and international cookbooks, in print

“Supra” has a very long history in Georgia and at a supra the tables are filled with different kind of dishes, sometimes even placed on top of each other. The national dishes such as Khachapuri or Khinkali are absent in the remaining paintings by Pirosmeni.[5] As can be seen very little research regarding the Georgian cuisine have been done and it is safe to say that it is still in its infancy and that the Georgian cuisine is complex.

2.2. Fast food

Earlier studies of fast food companies have focused mainly on the production, emphasizing either management or labor. The resulting publications read much like debated between conservatives and liberals. The main focus for previous fast food research has had its focus on McDonalds. One side celebrates McDonald’s as a creator of jobs and opportunity, the other condemns the company for exploiting workers and wasting resources.[6] Regarding fast food studies in Asia (East Asia) in this case has been done by studying McDonalds in Beijing, Hong Kong, Taipei, Seoul and in Japan.[7] The later book differs from the previous mentioned ones in some areas, firstly the researchers of Asia has its focus on consumption and has talked to both the managers and the costumers and they look upon McDonald’s as a subject worthy of research in its own right, which means that they do not begin with the assumption that everything about the company is necessarily bad and the researchers strongly point out that they are not paid by the corporation for doing the research.[8]

I would like to point out here that my research has not been funded by any of the fast food establishments that are dealt with in this article and I do agree with previous researchers when they state that in dismissing enterprises like McDonalds as somehow unworthy of serious inquiry is not only elitist but also suicidal for a lot of research disciplines.[9] In this case it has not only to do with McDonald’s but with all the fast food establishments that can be found in Tbilisi of today and what they bring to the gastronomical map of the city and in the long run all over the country. Carrying out the research for the article I have without knowing it at the time have had the same approach as the researcher that has put their research efforts into the Golden Arches of East Asia when they say that it is the costumers that matters, because without the costumers the fast food establishments would not have a solid ground to stand on, they would simply not exist for a longer period of time. My research therefore fill in a gap in the previous research in the field of fast food, mainly because no one earlier have made an attempt to study fast food in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi and in Asia as a whole, since the research not only include McDonald’s but all of the establishments in the city where the focus is on consumption and the consumers. Having said that, the research also includes interviews with the managers or/and the owners of the establishments.

3. Theory

There is no doubt that the physiological need for food and nourishment is one of the driving forces for humans to see to it that there will be food and beverage for oneself and one’s family or group. Even so, in order to provide that basic need humans do not eat and drink just anything at hand. Evidence from what today is proclaimed to be the first organized feast among humans dates back to approximately 12 thousand

5 Söderlind, Ulrica, Georgia’s food and drinking culture in the eyes of Nikoloz Pirosmeni, Review of applied Socio-Economic Research, vol 3, issue 1/2012, 170-183

6 (Ed), Alfino, Mark, Caputo Johan S, Wynyard, Robin, McDonaldization revisited, Westport, 1998, Leider, Robin, Fast food, fast talk, Berkely, 1993, Schlosser, Eric, Fast food nation, London, 2001

7 (Ed) Watson, James L, Golden Arches East- McDonalds’s in East Asia, Stanford 1997.

8 (Ed) Watson, 1997; preface vii.

9 (Ed) Watson, 1997. Preface viii

years, the feast took place in what is today Israel and pre-dates the Neolithic period. The feast indicates that community feasting is one of the most universal and important behaviors humans have.[10]

Globalization has contributed powerfully to the reduction of variety and rootedness in the world's food ways but in apparent contradiction the process was also important in the emergence of national and regional cuisines. The recognition of difference always depends on comparison with something, or someone else. Thus, the spread of people in the modern world, whether through voluntary or forced migration, created ideal conditions for the development of self-conscious notions of identity, whether derived from ethnicity, religion, history, language or food. Migrating people frequently try hard to maintain their language and their food cultures in the new places they find themselves. In the past, this often has been difficult or simply impossible for those moving or moved over long distances. In recent times, however, particularly the period since the Second World War technologies and attitudes have made more possible the recreation of remembered dishes and indeed the integration of these styles into accommodating societies. At the same time, the recent period witnessed great growth in mass tourism and which the tourist sometimes wished or demanded to be able to consume abroad the foods they could not easily find the authentic food of the places which they travelled. Culinary tourism emerged as a recognized special segment of the larger market. One example in the field of food is that in recent times, the last half-century or so the growing dominance of bought meals tended to deny aspects of the specialness of particular food for particular meals. Restaurants might offer all-day breakfast for example. This kind of offer erases the borders with the different meals traditionally eaten within the time span of a day [11]. Eating out is an ancient product of urbanism, its origin was not so much a desire for "fast food" as a means of providing cooked dishes for the poorer people who lacked the time and technologies to prepare food at the places where they slept, ancient Rome is a good example to illustrate that[12].

4. Method and questions asked

Since very little research regarding fast food in Tbilisi has been done up to date, the method used for the article has been interviews with the owners or the managers of the fast food places and a questioner (100 copies) was left at the fast food restaurants, where it was allowed [13] for the guests to fill it in. The questioner consisted of 10 questions and was anonymous, there is always a risk using that kind of method since there is no guarantee for how many questioners that will be filled out and how honest the guests are. The fast food establishments that are established in Tbilisi are Entrée, McDonalds, Kentucky fried chicken, New York burger, Ori Lola, Elvis American Diner and Ronny's American Pizza. Since this method is used the article is based on empirical research.

The main question that was asked to the managers and owners of the establishments was why and how the restaurants were established. The questions asked in the questioner were as follows: 1 What do you as a guest think of the diversity of the menu?, 2 What is your opinion about the prices?, 3 What is your opinion regarding the service?, 4 What is your opinion of the taste of the food that is served?, 5 What is your opinion regarding the display of the food and beverage?, 6 What is your opinion about the design and interior and

10 <http://phys.org/news202382957.html>

11 Higman, B.W, How food made history, Chichester, 2012: 156-157, 163

12 Higman, 2012: 151.

13 According to the managers at Entrée and Ori Lola their costume policy did not allow that the questioner was left for the costumers to be filled in. Questioners were left at New York Burger but none was filled out by the costumers.

design of the restaurant?, 7 With whom are you visiting the restaurant?, 8 How often are you visiting the restaurant?, 9 What is the primary reason for your visits to the establishment?, 10 Is there something you want to change with the restaurant? The questions were chosen in order to get to know the reasons behind the establishments and what the guest's opinions are about the establishments. If one like one can see the survey as a marketing survey over the fast food establishments in Tbilisi as it is up to date.

Table 1. The participants that filled in the questionnaire

Restaurants	Male	Female	Age	Nationality
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	12	13	17-41	Georgians
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	12	12	17-44	Georgians
McDonalds Sport Palace	12	12	14-46	Georgians
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	12	13	17-47	Georgians
Elvis American Diner	6	8	30-42	Georgians
Texas chicken	29	41	19-42	Georgians, Spanish, Nigeria, Iraq, Cze, Italian, Dutch, Indian
Ronnys American Pizza	42	50	12-58	Georgians, India, Nigeria, American, Jewish, Indian, Sri Lanka, Russian, Danish

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

Table 1 show the gender, age and nationalities of the costumers that answered the questioner at the different restaurants in Tbilisi during the period of April-May 2013. The main part of the filled out questioners are filled out by Georgians, however for the restaurant Texas chicken there was one from Spain, two from Nigeria, one from Iraq, two from Cze, one from Italy, one from the Netherlands and two from India. Regarding Ronny's American Pizza there was two from India, two from Nigeria, 11 from the USA, one Jewish, one from India, three from Sri Lanka, one from Russia and one from Denmark a part form the Georgians. Ronny's American Pizza is the restaurant with the most filled out questioner with a total of 92 answers and the age group are from 12-58 year of age. Texas chicken has a result of 70 filled in questioners with an age group between 19 and 42 years of age. Elvis American Pizza customers where in too much of a hurry to answer the questions and therefore there is a total amount of 14 answers from that restaurant. McDonalds has four restaurants in the central part of Tbilisi and the age groups between the restaurants are more or less equal between 14-47 years of age.

5. Survey

Let us start with what the managers and owners can tell us about the different establishments of fast food in Tbilisi.

5.1. McDonalds

The first McDonald's was opened in Georgia in 1999 on the most central street, Rustaveli Avenue. The opening of the restaurant was a big event since it was considered to be a window to the western world and the USA for a small country that recently have been revealed from the Soviet Union and the communist way of life. The design and the lightening of the restaurant, the food and how it tasted in itself had never been seen or experienced in the country before. The restaurants itself soon became a favorite place to hang out in in Tbilisi, both for the Georgians themselves and for foreigners that was visiting Tbilisi for different reasons. Since the start the chain has expanded with three more restaurants in the city itself and two other restaurants, one in the city of Kutaisi and one in Batumi. [14] The staffs that works at the restaurants in Tbilisi are approximately 350 employees within the age group of 18-25 years of age and 65% are women and 35 % are men. The employees are divided among the following positions; crew, instructor, manager, assistant, director and hostesses. In order to get an employment at McDonalds all the employees undergo specific training programs for the position applied for (however it was not possible to find out what kind of programs these are). The office staffs works eight hours per day and the rest of the employees between four and eight hours per day, five days a week. In average the restaurants have approximately 9200 guest as an average number per day.[15] Regarding how McDonalds is marketing their business it was not possible to get an answer to that question since that information is confidential, [16] however there is several large billboards around Tbilisi with advertisement for McDonalds. It has not been possible to receive an answer regarding the prices of the food served.



Fig. 5 Exterior of the first McDonalds restaurant opened in Tbilisi in 1999 on Rustaveli Avenue, ©McDonalds, Georgia

14 E-mail communication with manager Ana Ivanishvili, McDonalds, 23 may 2013.

15 E-mail communication with manager Ana Ivanishvili, McDonalds, 23 may 2013.

16 E-mail communication with manager Ana Ivanishvili, McDonalds, 23 may 2013.

5.2. Elvis American Diner

Elvis American Diner (EAD) first restaurant was opened in 1974 in the road from Tell Aviv to Jerusalem and became soon a popular stop for travellers on the way to the Holy Land. However the flag restaurant opened 2009 in the Concert Hall in central Tbilisi. The vision of the restaurant is to bring a fresh, dynamic vibe, top of the line quick and diverse culinary experience combined with excellent hospitality and service level. All of which through a colourful music filled ambience that relates to Elvis Presley. The value of the chain is to provide theme cuisine by using high quality ingredients and uncompromising food preparation process, while maintaining the highest service level and appropriate lead times while enhancing user experience through design and atmosphere that preserves and emphasises Elvis legacy and artwork. The restaurant in Tbilisi has seven partners and investors as of today. [17] At the restaurant works 47 personal in total which of two are chiefs (one for the Italian and one for the tai kitchen), the rest are working as helpers, cooks, dishwashers, barmen, waiters, working on the first line when guests order and pays the food and cleaning personal. The restaurant has 120 seats in the upper restaurant and 80 seats downstairs and there is a fast rotation of the guest, the restaurant have between 1000-1500 guest per day, when there is a concert at the Concert Hall the guest numbers is approximately 2000 guests. The downstairs restaurant is a non-smoking area so there is where the families with children go. A part from the service at the restaurant there is also a delivery service and it takes tops 45 minutes after the call until the food is delivered, the minimum order amount for delivery is 25 lari.[18]

For marketing the restaurant there is advertisements on the delivery cars, on billboards, on the radio and on Facebook, as of today the Facebook pages has 5 114 likes. The opening hours is between 9.00 -01.00 every day. The personal are working in shifts, someone is always in the kitchen and the personal has one day off in the week on a rotating schedule. [19] All the food in prepared from scratch in the kitchen and consists of different menus such as American grill (where the bread is baked in the restaurant and the food is grilled a-la minute, there is also a vegetarian alternative to the meat burger for religious reasons), NY Pizza (where the pizzas is baked in a pizza oven facing the guests), Italian cuisine (including traditional Italian dishes such as freshly cooked pastas, salads etc), deli corner (containing a rotisserie, smoked meat and sandwiches), tai cuisine (tai dished made a la minute in wok pan), sushi bar (a large variety of sushi rolls) and deserts (homemade ice cream). There is no Georgian food served. [20]

There is a special lunch offer for 12 laris (the current rate as of today is that 1 euro = 2.1715 lari) [21] during the hours between 11-4 pm, there used to be a special menu for children but that has been removed. The prizes for sushi is considered to be low, it start on two laris and the most expensive one is 4,50 laris for 6 pieces. There are also other combined menus such as a burger, fries and coke for 6.90 laris. The tai food costs between 10-13 laris and are very popular among Georgians since the food is very spicy. The pizzas vary in prize between 12-15 lari for a large size pizza and for a x-large pizza the cost is 20-27 lari, the salads

17 <http://www.elvisamericandiner.com/about.html#ead-international> 2013-03-11, interview with Manager, Victoria Chikaidze, Tbilisi, 2013-03-09.

18 Interview with Manager, Victoria Chikaidze, Tbilisi, 2013-03-09

19 Interview with Manager, Victoria Chikaidze, Tbilisi, 2013-03-09,

<https://www.facebook.com/elvisamericandiner?fref=ts>, 2013-06-03.

20 Interview with Manager, Victoria Chikaidze, Tbilisi, 2013-03-09

21 <http://geres.ge/currency/rates.html?lang=en>, 2013-06-05

cost between 8-10 lari. The grill menus vary between 5.50-15 lari and the Italian pasta dishes goes for 10-12 lari. The newest addition to the menu as if today is a shrimp cocktail and a soft drink for 15 lari. [22]



Fig. 6. Interior of Elvis American Diner in central Tbilisi, Georgia. © Elvis American Diner, Georgia

5.3. Texas Chicken, New York Burger

The first Texas chicken restaurant opened in the USA and in Tbilisi in the year 2010 and are a franchise restaurant. The opening hours for the restaurant are from 10.30 am-11 pm, seven days a week and they number of guests are approximately 200-250 per day. The staffs of the major restaurant consist of 22 persons and it is a mixed staff of both men and women. The staff's works half days on a rotating schedule seven days a week. As the name of the restaurant gives away the main food that is served is chicken in different variations along with soft drinks, juice, ice-cream, there is also a fasting menu. From the order is placed it does not take longer than 2.5 minutes before the guest has the meal in its hands. There is three different sizes of French fries that costs from 1.70 – 3 lari, fried onion rings for 1.90 lari, soft drinks from between 1.70-3 lari, chicken wraps for 5.80- 6 lari, fried chicken wings and tenders from 1 lari, chicken burgers for 4.80 lari, veggie burger for 5.50 lari, chicken Mexicana burger for 6.80 lari, salads for 5.50 lari, chicken nuggets for between 12-37 lari and different sorts of ice-cream for between 0.90-3.50 lari. [23] The restaurant marketing the business with advertisements in social media such as Facebook and up till today the site has 2 910 likes, they also advertise on TV, sales sites, billboards, radio and on busses. They also have special offers for the food on coupons. The clientele is of mixed nationalities such as Georgian, Indian and from the USA. [24]

The same Georgian owner that has Texas chicken also is the owner of New York Burger that is located door to door and was established in 2009 and the concept was thought of and realized because the owners themselves like burger, the opening of the restaurants as seen as a development of Georgian business. The guests per day are lesser then in Texas chicken and are approx. 100-150 guests and the guest can either eat

22 Interview with Manager, Victoria Chikaidze, Tbilisi, 2013-03-09, <https://www.facebook.com/elvisamericandiner?fref=ts>, 2013-06-03.

23 Interview with the owners, Texas Chicken, Tbilisi, 2013-03-11

24 Interview with the owners, Texas Chicken, Tbilisi, 2013-03-11, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/TexasChicken/10747775982465?fref=ts>, 2013-06-03

the meal at the restaurant or take it away. The food stuff are bought from local farmers around Tbilisi and the bread are locally produced for the restaurants burgers. [25]

The restaurant offers hot dog with bread for 2.70 lari, New York hot dog with cheese inside for 3.50 lari, small French fries for 2.50 lari and a big fries for 3 lari, fried onion for 1.90 laris and a vegetable salad for 1.70 lari. One original hamburger costs 3 lari and a cheeseburger 3.50 laris, while a double burger costs 3.20 lari and a double cheeseburger 3.70 lari and a veggie burger 3.50 lari, if the guest wants egg, bacon or chilli added to the burger or a side it cost 0.50 lari each, a small soft drink costs 1.70 lari and a large one 2 lari. Tea and coffee also cost 2 lari each while three different kinds of ice cream cost 2.50 lari each. [26]



Fig. 7. Menu for Texas Chicken in Tbilisi, © Söderlind, Ulrica

5.4. Ronny's American Pizza

Ronny's American Pizza started in 2009 by two Americans that themselves have had experienced cross cultures while growing up, mainly in Latin America and after spending time in the USA and travelling around they decided to settle down in Georgia with their children in what they consider to be a similar warm culture as in Latin America. Once of the reasons why Tbilisi was chosen for the business was that back then there was a lack of fast food in the city and the choice of American Pizza falls back on their own understanding of American food. There is also a vision of that Tbilisi someday will became the capital city (as a hub) for the whole region. The business was started with very little experience of the restaurant business and up till today the owners have done every work possible in the restaurant in order to understand the work tasks. [27]

The restaurant has never been designed for foreigners and the guests are mainly Georgians today, even if it was not so in the beginning, the establishment is today non-smoking with Wi-Fi access and have 60 seats. The guests are free to write on the walls of the restaurant. The restaurant advertise the business via social

25 Interview with the owners, New York Burger, Tbilisi, 2013-03-11

26 Interview with the owners, New York Burger, Tbilisi, 2013-03-11

27 Interview with the owners of Ronny's American Pizza, Tbilisi, 2013-04-03

media such as Facebook and as of today they have 22 325 likes on the Facebook page. [28] They also use trip advisor, twitter, their own website, flyers, special offers and word to mouth to market the restaurant. The restaurant is open between 11am-11pm every day except Sundays when the opening hours is 12.30-11 pm and the busiest part of the day is between 1-3pm and 6-9 pm, the numbers of orders are more than 100 on a daily basis.[29]

Today the restaurant have 15 employees that works 6 days a week or less with a total of 7-8 working hours per day and the staff are all Georgian a part from the owners and the staff is trained by the owners in order to give the best service to the costumers. The manager staff is also sent to English classes as a part of the training. The staff gets free lunch and paid breaks and two weeks of vacation every year. There are also six delivery drivers with cars or mopeds that carry the restaurants logo which also works as a kind of advertisement. The staff along with the owner's works as a team and the working moral is good. [30]

The products that are used at the restaurant are Georgian as far as it is possible since one intention for the owners is to invest back in the country and community. That means that 80-90 % of the products are Georgian and are fresh vegetables are for example bought at the local market on a every day or every other day basis, the meat such as salami, pepperoni etc are also Georgian as well as dairy products. [31]

The Menus are both in Georgian and English and are in black and white. The pizzas comes in three different sizes; small, medium and extra-large. The small size is 8 inch, the medium one is 12 inches and the extra-large one is 18 inch. The prizes for the different pizza vary from 5-38 lari, depending on the size and contents. Additional topping can be added for 1-4 lari as well. The most popular pizzas are the ones named 4*4 (pepperoni, smoked ham, homemade Italian sausage, onion, sweet peppers), Papa Ronny (pepperoni, mozzarella, marinara sauce). There is also a fasting pizza that is served without cheese. Coffee can be bought for 1.80 lari and cookies for 1.60 lari. [32]



Fig. 8. Exterior of Ronny's American Pizza in central Tbilisi, Georgia. © Ronny's American Pizza

28 <https://www.facebook.com/iloveronnys?fref=ts>, 2013-06-03, Interview with the owners of Ronny's American Pizza, Tbilisi, 2013-04-03

29 Interview with the owners of Ronny's American Pizza, Tbilisi, 2013-04-03

30 Interview with the owners of Ronny's American Pizza, Tbilisi, 2013-04-03

31 Interview with the owners of Ronny's American Pizza, Tbilisi, 2013-04-03

32 <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=475055609221288&set=pb.192621160798069.-2207520000.1370267082.&type=3&theater>, 2013-06-03, Interview with the owners of Ronny's American Pizza, Tbilisi, 2013-04-03

5.5. Entrée

Entrée was established in 2008 by former employees of the food chain Populi. The same person that created and opened Entrée was the ones who brought in French baguette in to the bread assortment at Populi and the Georgians loved the bread. Today the establishment has six different restaurants/cafés in different central locations in central Tbilisi. The establishments are non-smoking inside with Wi-Fi, however smoking as allowed outside. [33]

Entrée was the first establishment in Tbilisi that offered take away coffee in the early morning hours for people on the way to work and the take away coffee has been a great success among Georgians and foreigners that are visiting Tbilisi alike. The bread is made in the early mornings by men and women are working with the other sweets. There is also a special fasting cake that is create by and for the Georgian society and are sold on the common fasting days of the week; Wednesday and Fridays. The fasting cakes are very popular among the costumers. New cakes are added to the assortment on a steady base; a French pastry cook arrives in Tbilisi and teaches the women how to make the new items. A part from the pastry, salads, soups, sandwiches, ice cream, fresh pressed juices and coffee are offered to the costumers. The costumers can either eat at the establishments or take the food with them. The prices on the different items are between the ranges of 5-15 lari and even if the prices are high for Georgians, the establishment with its assortment is very popular. The raw materials for the assortments are imported from France due to its high quality. A part from the monthly additions to the pastry the chain are planning on expanding the menu with French dessert wines and red wine from the same country along with a cheese and ham selection in the near future.[34]

The restaurants/cafés are open between 8 am-10 pm, seven days a week. The staff members are between 110-120 persons and they are working 5 days and are free two days and they are working 8 hours a day when they are at work, they are working in two shifts and they are eating lunch at the establishments. [35]

The chain is marketing itself via advertisement such as its own webpage and on Facebook and as of today the establishment has 119 followers on Facebook. There are also advertisements in different local and international magazines such as Financial and the establishment is also depending on word of mouth from their guests. [36]

5.6. Ori Lula

The Ori Lula fast food chain was founded in 2005 and the first restaurant was open on the 25th of December and up till today there are six restaurants in central Tbilisi. The guest rate on a daily basis is approximately 800 guests. The staffs at the establishments are today 75 persons. The main menu that is served is of the Georgian cuisine such a lobiani, Chatchapuri, fried potatoes. Different kind of kebabs costs between 3.50-6.40 lari, lobiani (red beans that are cooked and smashed in bread) comes in different shapes and cost between 1.70-2.70 lari, fried potatoes cost 2.70 lari, chatchapuri (bread and cheese) comes in different shapes and forms equal to the lobiani and costs 2.90-4.60 lari, different kinds of salads comes at the prize range of 2.70-4.30 lari. The guests also have the alternative to choose a combined menu that contains for example fried potatoes, a salad, lobiani etc., and these menus costs between 6-7 lari. A part from the food items there is also soft drinks, mineral water, tea and coffee for sale at prizes of 1- 2.70 lari. The prices is

33 Interview with head of marketing communications Lika Mikautadze, Tbilisi 2013-03-14.

34 Interview with head of marketing communications Lika Mikautadze, Tbilisi 2013-03-14.

35 Interview with head of marketing communications Lika Mikautadze, Tbilisi 2013-03-14.

36 <https://www.facebook.com/entree.ge.5?ref=ts&fref=ts>

considered to be in the middle range, not cheap but neither expensive and the most popular dishes are kebab “ori lula” and lobiani on a grill pan with fried potatoes. The establishment advertises the business with their own webpage, on Facebook and in local magazines. As of today the establishments Facebook page has 5 926 likes. [37]

Some voices from the customers

So far we have heard the voices of the managers and owners of the establishments, so let’s turn to the customers that answered the questioners and see what they think about the different establishments. As mentioned previously ten questions was asked and some of them had multiply choices for answers, as mentioned earlier Ori Lula and Entrée did not give permission to hand out the questionnaires so their guests voices are missing in this survey.

Table 2. Answer to the question what the guests think about the diversity of the menu offered

Establishment	ok	good	very good	excellent
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	6	8	5	5
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	4	5	10	3
McDonalds Sport Palace	4	10	7	4
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	5	6	6	8
Elvis American Diner	2	5	6	1
Texas chicken	12	30	24	8
Ronnys American Pizza	12	23	26	19

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny’s American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

According to table 2 the major part of the guests seems to be of the opinion that the diversity of the menus offered is very good and excellent.

37E-mail conversation, manager Ori Lula, Tbilisi, 2013-05-16,
http://www.orilula.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=27,
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http://www.orilula.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54&Itemid=55, 2013-05-16,
<https://www.facebook.com/orilula.ge?fref=ts>, 2013-06-04

Table 3. Answer to the question what the guest's opinion is about the prices

Establishment	cheap	ok	expensive	very expensive
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	0	14	9	2
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	0	13	9	2
McDonalds Sport Palace	0	19	4	2
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	1	13	8	1
Elvis American Diner	0	13	0	1
Texas chicken	4	54	15	2
Ronnys American Pizza	2	65	13	1

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

The main opinion among the customers regarding the prices at the establishments are that very few answered that it is cheap to eat at the restaurants and the majority are of the opinion that the prices are ok even if there is a large group that regard the prices as expensive and also very expensive.

Table 4. Answer to the question of what the guests think about the service

Establishment	Poor	ok	good	very good	excellent
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	0	3	9	10	3
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	0	1	7	10	6
McDonalds Sport Palace	0	2	8	9	6
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	0	0	7	11	7
Elvis American Diner	0	2	3	7	2
Texas chicken	2	10	23	25	16
Ronnys American Pizza	0	6	14	34	30

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

The main opinion about the service at the different establishments is that it is very good or excellent, followed by a good and ok service, very few of the guests thinks that the service is poor.

Table 5. Answer to the question about the guest opinion regarding the taste of the food served.

Establishment	Poor	ok	good	very good	excellent
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	0	4	6	10	5
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	0	2	7	9	5
McDonalds Sport Palace	0	2	13	4	6
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	0	2	9	8	6
Elvis American Diner	0	1	3	9	2
Texas chicken	1	10	20	25	15
Ronnys American Pizza	1	2	9	32	39

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

In ordinance with the answers regarding the service the main part of the guest are of the opinion that the taste of the food that is served is of very good or excellent taste, followed by good and ok, very few regard the taste as poor.

Table 6. Answer to the question on what the guest's opinion is about the display of food and foodstuff

Establishment	poor	ok	good	very good	excellent
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	0	2	10	11	2
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	0	1	10	9	4
McDonalds Sport Palace	0	3	11	8	3
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	0	6	12	4	3
Elvis American Diner	0	4	6	4	1
Texas chicken	1	9	28	22	13
Ronnys American Pizza	4	9	23	22	16

Source: Filled out questionnaires by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

The question how the food is displayed follows the same pattern as the answers for table 4 and the main part of the guest regard the display of the food and foodstuff as very good or excellent, followed by good, ok and very few think it is poor.

Table 7. Answer to the question what the guest's opinion is about the design and interior and design of the restaurant

Establishment	Bad	OK	Good	Very good
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	0	0	10	3
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	0	4	4	5
McDonalds Sport Palace	0	4	2	1
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	1	2	6	8
Elvis American Diner	0	0	5	3
Texas chicken	0	4	28	13
Ronnys American Pizza	1	12	15	9
	Nice/modern/cosy /calm/special	Wonderful/excellent / beautifull	cool/comfortable /classic	
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	4	1	1	
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	0	2	0	
McDonalds Sport Palace	8	1	3	
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	4	4	1	
Elvis American Diner	1	4	0	
Texas chicken	8	9	2	
Ronnys American Pizza	33	15	1	

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

Answers to the question what the guest thinks about the design and interior of the restaurant varies in range, very few regard it as bad, cool, comfortable and classic. The general answer to the question is that it is good or very good with one exception and that is Ronny American Pizza where the customers uses words such as nice, modern, cosy, calm and special to describe the design and interior. At Ronny American Pizza the guests are allowed to write on the walls.

Table 8. Answer to the question to with whom the guests visits the restaurants

Establishment	by yourself	with friends	with partner	with family members
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	6	16	6	16
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	4	10	1	14
McDonalds Sport Palace	6	11	5	19
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	2	12	2	10
Elvis American Diner	0	9	3	5
Texas chicken	22	52	14	5
Ronnys American Pizza	12	70	18	14

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

In order to try find out if the customers came alone to the establishments or with someone else the question was asked with whom they visited the restaurants and the answers from the guests indicated that a large number comes with friends in the first place, followed by having no one with them and then with their partner and other family members.

Table 9. Answer to the question how often the guests visit the restaurant

Establishment	1-3 times/week	4-5 times /week	6-7 times/ week	seldom	often
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	8	3	0	5	3
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	8	0	2	5	1
McDonalds Sport Palace	11	1	4	6	0
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	8	0	1	8	0
Elvis American Diner	13	3	0	0	0
Texas chicken	30	2	6	14	3
Ronnys American Pizza	24	1	5	41	2

Source: Filled out questionnaires' by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

The most common visits to the establishments are between 1-3 times per week even if some of the establishments have a large number of guests that are coming seldom, followed by frequent visits with between 4-7 times on a weekly basis.

Table 10. The answer to the question what is the primary reason for the guests to visit the restaurant

Establishment	atmosphere/internet	prices	food	children likes it	service	location
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	6	2	8	6	3	0
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	2	0	12	8	5	2
McDonalds Sport Palace	6	1	13	3	7	1
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	7	0	11	5	4	4
Elvis American Diner	4	4	7	0	5	5
Texas chicken	9	3	32	0	7	28
Ronnys American Pizza	22	4	65	1	13	5

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny's American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

It seems like the food is the major reason for the visits to the restaurants and it seems like families with children prefers to go to McDonalds for the reason that the children likes it there more than at other fast food establishments. Regarding Ronny's American Pizza guests also appreciate the atmosphere and internet during the visit.

Table 11. The answer to the question if there was something the guests wanted to change with the restaurant

Question 10	prices	menu	nothing	more or better seats
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	5	5	5	2
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	6	1	10	3
McDonalds Sport Palace	2	6	2	4
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	5	1	13	1
Elvis American Diner	1	1	6	0
Texas chicken	5	7	25	3
Ronnys American Pizza	1	31	26	9
	music	interior/atmosphere/service	card terminals	smoking areas
McDonalds Rustaveli ave	3	0	0	0
McDonalds Marjanishvili ave	0	3	0	0
McDonalds Sport Palace	0	11	3	0
McDonalds Tsereteli ave	0	0	3	0
Elvis American Diner	0	1	0	0
Texas chicken	5	8	0	3
Ronnys American Pizza	1	15	0	10

Source: Filled out questionnaire by the costumers at the McDonalds, Elvis American Pizza, Texas chicken and Ronny’s American Pizza restaurants in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April-May 2013.

The guest at the different restaurants would like to changes the prices, mainly at McDonalds where they think it is too expensive, especially families with children. A lot of the guests do not want to change anything at the restaurants while some wants to change the menu. Regarding Ronny’s American Pizza guests are asking to add a fasting pizza, however that is already in the menu, it seems like the guest have missed that for some reason. In Georgia it is very common that music is played very load at every restaurant and some guest would like a lower volume during their visits. Smoking is something that is very common everywhere in Georgia and the guests are asking for more smoking areas as a change at the restaurants. When it comes to interior/atmosphere and service the main comment is to change the interior, in the case of Ronny’s American Pizza the guest are asking to whitewash the walls so new graffiti can be added to the walls.

6. Closing remarks

This article has dealt with fast food in Tbilisi in order to try to find out the reasons for the establishments of the restaurants and what the costumers think of them. Even if the survey for this article might be considered to be limited it is the first of its kind regarding fast food in Tbilisi.

To make a survey of the fast food restaurants in the capital of Georgia is very interesting from a food perspective since it has been somewhat difficult to visit due to the political turmoil that has surrounded the country in the past. It also has been difficult for Georgians to go abroad and still is, visas are needed for the major part of the countries in the world. The situation in modern times has created a kind of vacuum in the culinary sphere since little has been able to come inside or outside the borders of the nation. Globalization and culinary tourism has reached the country only in recent years, included in the term culinary tourism not

only food but also beverage. For Georgia that means first and foremost a rise in the tourism interested in wine. Along with the taste for good wine a taste for good food usually comes along and the main part of the tourist that travels with organized vacations usually prefer the national or local cuisine.

It is not easy to pinpoint what the national cuisine of Georgia is since it has several branches that dates back far in history, however it seems safe to say that wine, bread, khachapuri and khinkali is what can be consider as traditional and national, even if there is a large variation of the dishes and the wine, depending on where one is in the country. What can be considered as traditional and national cuisine stands far from fast food. The same can be said about eating out at restaurants in Georgia in general, there is nothing fast about having a meal out, it takes time before the ordered food reaches the table and there is nothing like a calm conversation at the tables since loud music is always played, either by a live band or singer or from radio or TV channels.

McDonalds, Elvis American Diner, Texas chicken/New York Burger, Ori Lula, Entrée and Ronny's American Pizza are the fast food restaurants that are established in Tbilisi as of today and has taken part in the survey for this article even if some of them did not allow guests to fill out the questionnaire the managers was willing to do an interview. The interviews with the owners and managers indicates that the reason for the establishment of the restaurants mainly was to introduce dishes that has its origin in the western part (except for Ori Lula that is the only one of the restaurants that offers dishes that can be considered as Georgian) of the world. Even if it has been a challenge there was an open space on the culinary map of Tbilisi for the kind of food that the owners wanted to establish and the business is still growing. The social media is of great importance as a marketing tool for the restaurants, especially Facebook. From the interviews with the managers and owners the establishment of the restaurant has also offered work opportunities for Georgians in the city of Tbilisi.

Interesting to see is that all of the establishments are taking into account the fasting rules in Georgia. Georgia is a nation where religion plays an important role in the daily life and on feast days, on different levels in society and fasting is one of the major personal activities that are done, mainly before Easter and Christmas, however a lot of people fast also on Wednesdays and Fridays. The establishments that sells sweets offers fasting cakes and the establishments that are serving burgers offers vegetarian burgers and Ronny's Pizza offer a fasting pizza without cheese for the fasting occasions and the answers from the customers indicates that they are content with this offers.

The answers from the costumers indicates that they a large group are visiting the restaurants more or less on a daily basis, even so they think that the prizes is somewhat expensive. In order to be able to visit the establishments on that kind of level are a clientele that have a monthly salary that is over the average. The average salary for a person in Tbilisi is between 400-700 laris on a monthly basis and that should cover all the daily life expensive and the education fee at the University for families that have youngster that studies there. Living costs in Tbilisi has gone up the last years and if one shops at the local markets (that are in decline) and in the supermarkets that have the lowest prices it is not uncommon to leave the stores with groceries' for a week that costs somewhere around 70-90 laris. With those kinds of prices and salary it is not possible to buy a coffee every morning for a cost of between 5-8 lari on an average wages. For the ones that can afford the restaurants they are content with dining at the establishments, they like the atmosphere, location, the food and enjoy the experience to dine by themselves or in the company of friends or family members. The ones that come alone mainly do that during lunch, the main group of customers comes with company of others.

It might seem that the modern man stands very far from the humans that gathered to dine together as a group for over 12 thousand years ago and maybe we do in many ways but not when it comes to share a meal among family and/or friends regardless if it is at home, a more traditional restaurant or at fast food establishment. Here one should keep in mind that dining out is very common in general in Georgia.

The different fast food restaurants that have taken part in this survey seem to have found a niche both in the overall restaurant market and on the national food map, at least among the clientele that can afford it. One needs to keep in mind that the local food stuff such as vegetables, cereals, fruits etc. are of very high quality in Georgia and most of the restaurants in this survey are using local products for different reasons. That in itself is an indicator of that the fast food that are served keeps a high and good quality.

It seems like that the globalization and culinary tourism in this case, when it comes to fast food in the capital of Georgia shows a reverse pattern. The tourists are not coming to eat fast food but the Georgians themselves are found of the fast food that has come to them. The taste for fast food can be an indication of that the Georgians (the ones that are visiting the establishments in this survey) have a taste for food that comes from the western part of the world, it can also be an indication of that the Georgians are stepping back from the days of the Soviet Union and the food that was forced upon them during that time, for example one day a week everyone was supposed to eat fish and on that day, that was all that was served in the restaurants.

There is a saying in Georgia that God took a supper break while he was creating the world and then became so involved in his meal that he by accident tripped over the peaks of the Caucasus and as a result he spilled his own food onto the land below and the country blessed with the scraps of Heavens table was Georgia. That saying is an indication of how important food and beverage are for the nation and this survey should be seen as a start to research about fast food in Georgia and it is going to be very interesting to follow the future development of the fast food business in the country.

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