Investigation of Tokat Bez Sucuk, a Geographically Indicated Local Food, within the Scope of Sustainable Gastronomy

Emin Arslan 1, Hakan Kendir 1, Halil Akmeşê 2, Handan Özçelik Bozkurt 3,* , Kamil Akyollu 1 and Cem Taner Hiçyakmazer 4

1 Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Department, Zile Dinçerler School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Tokat 60250, Turkey; emin.arslan@gop.edu.tr (E.A.); hakan.kendir@gop.edu.tr (H.K.); kamil.akyollu@gop.edu.tr (K.A.)
2 Tourism Management Department, Tourism Faculty, Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya 42310, Turkey; hakmese@erbakan.edu.tr
3 Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Department, School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Sinop University, Sinop 57000, Turkey
4 Tourism Management Department, Institute of Social Science, Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya 42310, Turkey; cemtanerer@gmail.com

* Correspondence: hozcelikbozkurt@sinop.edu.tr; Tel.: +90-5449585071

Abstract: In this study, Tokat Bez Sucuk, a traditional product of the Turkish cuisine culture with a geographical indication, was examined. It was intended to reveal the use of Tokat Bez Sucuk in the local cuisine culture in the framework of sustainable gastronomy, its production stages, and its differences from other types of sausage. In this context, interviews were conducted with nine participants who produced Tokat Bez Sucuk using the semi-structured interview technique. In the interview, which included various questions ranging from the stages of production to the consumption habits of Tokat Bez Sucuk, important information that would contribute to the field was obtained from the producers. In addition, the transfer of Tokat Bez Sucuk, which is a cultural gastronomic value, to future generations and its importance in terms of sustainable gastronomy were emphasized. In line with the information obtained, various suggestions were made for the standardization, promotion, preservation, and sustainability of Tokat Bez Sucuk, which is an important component of gastronomic tourism.

Keywords: sustainability; Turkish cuisine culture; local foods; Tokat province

1. Introduction

Geographical indications provide final consumers with detailed information about the origin and qualities of a product. A geographic indication is also an intellectual property right belonging to a narrow region. It encourages the preservation of regional diversity and the production techniques of a particular product specific to a region. Furthermore, geographical indications give a legal right to the local community by patenting local products [1]. Before the geographical indication system became widespread, especially in Europe, countries applied their geographical label systems separately. For example, Italy and France are countries that implemented their own labeling systems long before the European-wide geo-marking system and pioneered the others [2]. In 1992, the European Union started the geographical indication application by switching to the PDO (Protected Designations of Origin) labeled system [3,4]. In Turkey, in 1995, within the scope of efforts to harmonize with Europe, the geographical indication application was started. The Turkish Patent Institute has been authorized in this regard.

Local and traditional gastronomic products contribute to a region in ways such as rural development, the preservation of traditional structures, increasing the welfare of local people, and maintaining naturalness. In order to protect local security measures, they...
must be registered as a “geographical sign” and become a trademark. In this way, local products can add more value. In addition, the benefit to be obtained from the local product is increased [5]. The use of geographical indications also allows manufacturers to gain market recognition and often sell their products at a higher price. On the other hand, it has a positive effect on regional economic, environmental, cultural, and social development [6]. Geographical indications contribute to regional development as well as to an increase in employment, improved job quality, and enhanced tourist attraction [7]. Turkish cuisine is very rich in terms of traditional and local gastronomic products. Examining Turkish cuisine and geographical indications together attracts the attention of academics. Studies investigating these issues, especially in the field of gastronomy, are becoming more widespread [8–13].

The province of Tokat, located in the Black Sea Region of Turkey, is also very rich in terms of local cuisine and traditional gastronomic heritage. There are 16 geographically marked products belonging to the province of Tokat, and 11 of them have gastronomic value (local foods and beverages, traditional foods, processed or unprocessed meat products, etc.) [14]. Tokat Bez Sucuk, a traditional gastronomic product unique to Tokat and registered with a geographical indication in 2021, has an important place in the local cuisine culture. Within the scope of this study, we aim at determining the distinctive features of Tokat Bez Sucuk in terms of sustainable gastronomy, examining its use in the local cuisine culture, and revealing the differences in the production stages. Although chemical [15], biogenic [16], and biochemical [17] studies were previously conducted on Tokat Bez Sucuk, there is no academic research on it regarding geographical indication and sustainable gastronomy. Therefore, with this study, we aim to eliminate an important academic deficiency in the field of gastronomy. Contributing to the Bez Sucuk producers within the context of the protection of sustainability and locality is another goal of the research. In addition, it is likely that our study will academically help the development of gastronomy tourism and the preservation of traditional food production knowledge in the province of Tokat. Apart from these, we anticipate that our study will academically contribute to the development of gastronomy tourism and the preservation of traditional food production knowledge in the province of Tokat.

2. Conceptual Framework
2.1. Sustainable Gastronomy and Geographical Indication

Sustainable gastronomy means that no natural resources are wasted at any stage, from the preparation of food and beverages to their presentation [18]. However, it focuses on the continuation of food production in a way that will not be harmful to the environment or health in the future. On the other hand, sustainable gastronomy also emphasizes preserving the traditional gastronomic heritage, transferring it to future generations, and bringing local gastronomic products to light [19]. At a more specific level, sustainable gastronomy encompasses the production of environmentally responsible food that appeals to both people’s minds and their food [20]. It can be theoretically expressed that sustainable gastronomy potentially contributes to economic, cultural, social, and environmental sustainability [21,22].

Geographical indications offer important opportunities for the implementation of sustainable gastronomy. Becoming widespread in recent years, geographical indications protect consumers of many gastronomic products and also encourage them to trust local production and quality products. They are seen as a legal and economic tool for the development of rural areas and the protection of gastronomic and cultural heritage [23]. To clarify, the origin label in the geographical indication registration creates a sense of belonging to the regions where agricultural products are produced. It also protects the production conditions developed in the historical process in the regions where agricultural products are produced. Thanks to this feature, it has been registered with the names of the regions where more than 4200 wines are produced, protected, and which are sustainable in the European Union [24]. However, in geographies such as Cyprus, which is an island in the Mediterranean and divided into two separate administrations, it cannot be clarified
exactly which country the geographical indication label belongs to. For example, it is a controversial issue whether the geographical indication of the origin label of Halloumi Cheese (Halloumi) belongs to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus or the Greek Cypriot Administration. There are also controversial gastronomic products between Turkey and Greece [2]. Therefore, countries and regions attach importance to registering and protecting their products with geographical indications and ensuring their sustainability. Studies that examine geographical indications and sustainable gastronomy together academically have become widespread in recent years. Thanks to geographical indications, gastronomic products become visible and attract attention [25]; it becomes easier to preserve the local culinary culture and transfer it to future generations [26]; local production and consumer demand increase [27]; environmental, social, and economic sustainability is achieved [28]; institutionalization of products [29] and legal support become easier [30]. Therefore, in light of these research studies, we evaluate that examining the geographically indicated Tokat Sucuk in Turkish cuisine culture within the scope of sustainable gastronomy will contribute to the relevant literature.

2.2. Discovery and Production of Sucuk

The history of sucuk goes back to about 3000 years ago. There is evidence that sucuk was produced in ancient Egyptian and Greek civilizations. It is thought that the invention of sucuk was born from the need to cut animal meat into small pieces and store it for a long time. Especially the discovery of the protective properties of internal organs such as the intestines and salt made it easier to turn the meat into sucuk and store it [31]. One of the sucuk production techniques that emerged in the historical process is Turkish-style sucuk. Sucuk is a very popular meat product in Turkey. In addition, sucuk is one of the food products produced with different techniques and different types of meat in Europe, the Middle East [32,33], Asia [34], and America [35]. Hence, sucuk is an important gastronomic delicacy consumed both alone and in combination with different dishes in world cuisine.

Turkish-style sucuk is a type of fermented sucuk that is kept and dried by natural methods during production by individuals or small-scale enterprises, generally adhering to traditional techniques. Usually, beef or mutton meat is used in the production of Turkish-style sucuk. In addition, goat, buffalo, and camel meat are also used in sucuk production. In the content of Turkish-style sucuk, there is basically minced meat, animal fat, and salt. On the other hand, according to the quality of the sucuk, dried garlic, various spices (such as red hot or sweet ground pepper, black pepper, cumin, and cinnamon), sugar, and vegetable oil are also used [32,36,37]. The materials used in sucuk making are brought together to form a mixture called sucuk dough. This mixture is filled into cleaned animal intestines or artificial sheaths to give the product its final shape [38]. One of the types of sucuk produced in Turkey by filling in artificial casings is Tokat Bez Sucuk, which is the subject of this study and registered with a geographical indication.

2.3. Geographically Indicated Sucuks in Turkey

The Turkish Patent and Trademark Office is responsible for geographical indication registration in Turkey. Local public institutions, business chambers, associations, foundations, and manufacturers can submit geographical indication applications for a product. The Turkish Patent and Trademark Office registers and announces the products that satisfy the requirements of the applications [39]. As of March 2023, there are 1341 products registered with geographical indications in Turkey. Of there, 842 products have gastronomic properties (local foods and beverages, traditional foods, processed or unprocessed meat products, etc.). Therefore, 62.8% of the geographically indicated products in Turkey are food and beverage products with local flavors and types with gastronomic value consisting of traditional foods. The sucuks, which are the subject of our study, are evaluated in the category of processed or unprocessed meat products. Turkey has a total of 22 geographically marked products in this category, and six of these products are sucuks [14]. The list of geographically indicated sucuks in Turkey is given in Table 1.
Table 1. Sucuks in Turkey with Geographical Indications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Product</th>
<th>File Number</th>
<th>Application Date</th>
<th>Registration Date</th>
<th>Registration Number</th>
<th>Province</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afyon Sucuk</td>
<td>C2003/027</td>
<td>31 December 2003</td>
<td>2 August 2005</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Afyonkarahisar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erzurum Sucuk</td>
<td>C2021/000128</td>
<td>23 March 2021</td>
<td>25 April 2022</td>
<td>1092</td>
<td>Erzurum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incirliova Deve Sucuk</td>
<td>C2017/186</td>
<td>13 November 2017</td>
<td>29 March 2021</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>Aydın</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sivrihisar Dövme Sucuk</td>
<td>C2019/036</td>
<td>15 March 2019</td>
<td>26 October 2020</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>Eskişehir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokat Bez Sucuk</td>
<td>C2018/142</td>
<td>27 June 2018</td>
<td>3 January 2022</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>Tokat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [14].

According to the data in Table 1, the first sucuk registered in Turkey was Kayseri Sucuk. The second place goes to Afyon Sucuk. Although these two products are similar to each other in terms of shape and packaging, they differ in content. There are slight differences between the two sucuks, especially regarding the type of meat used, the amount of meat, the proportion of spices, and additional ingredients such as garlic. However, there is no difference in preservative additives or storage conditions [40].

As for the meat type, Incirliova Camel Sucuk is the most different among the geographically indicated sucuks in Turkey. It is produced from camel meat, not beef or mutton like other sucuks on the table [41]. Among the geographically indicated registered sucuks, Tokat Bez Sucuk is the most different in terms of packaging and storage conditions. Tokat Bez Sucuk dough prepared by the producers is stuffed into cloth cases made of white fabric and stored under appropriate conditions [15].

2.4. Tokat Bez Sucuk

Tokat Bez Sucuk, for which application was made to the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office in 2018 by the Tokat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was registered in 2022 with a geographical indication. The ingredients in the Bez Sucuk, the processing technique, and the entire production process are included in the explanation part of the Geographical Indication Registration Certificate. The history of Tokat Bez Sucuk dates back to the first quarter of the 1900s. Therefore, there is the use of raw materials and traditional methods specific to the geographical border in the production of sucuk, which has a historical background [42]. Bez Sucuk, which is produced using traditional methods, is a fermented type and is stuffed into cloth covers made of a 100% cotton fabric called “mermersahı” instead of animal intestines. Cloth covers are environmentally friendly and comply with the principles of sustainable gastronomy that do not harm nature. These covers can be obtained from spice shops operating in the province of Tokat. Cloth covers are sewn from 7 × 25 cm colorless fabric [15–17,43,44]. Tokat Bez Sucuk, which is produced by adhering to traditional methods, especially in homes and butchers, differs from other Turkish sucuks in terms of its storage method.

The materials used in the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk are as follows [42]:

- Veal and animal fat.
- Salt.
- Garlic.
- Black pepper.
- Hot red pepper.
- Sweet paprika.
- Cumin.
- Allspice.
- Sucrose.
- Phosphate salt.

Apart from these materials used in the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk, it is known that offal, such as beef tripe and lung, is added to the sucuk dough with the purpose of both flavoring and increasing the amount of the product, especially in domestic production. The production stages of Tokat Bez Sucuk are given in Figure 1.
When Figure 1 is examined, it is seen that the production of Tokat Sucuk started with the supply of beef and animal fat and their conversion into minced meat. Sucuk dough is prepared by adding salt, garlic, and spices to the prepared minced meat. This dough is then filled into cloth cases. The mouths of the filled cloth covers are closed with rope or clips and hung on hangers for fermentation. For fermentation, the ambient temperature should be 24–26 °C and the relative humidity should be 85%. Cloth sucks, which are kept suspended for 10–12 days, are made flat by the rolling method. The objective at this point is to hasten the drying of the liquid still present in the sucuk by rolling the cloth cover. In the ripening stage, it is important that the ambient temperature be 12 °C and the relative humidity be 65%. Commercial enterprises ensure that the shelf life is extended by vacuuming the outer part of the Tokat Bez Sucuk, and in traditional production made at home, the sucks that are taken out of the cloth covers are kept in a cool place until they are consumed.

3. Method

The location of Tokat Province, which is determined as the study area, is shown in Figure 2. Tokat Province is located in the Black Sea Region in the north of Turkey. The socio-economic structure of Tokat Province is based on agriculture and animal husbandry. In recent years, agriculture-based industries, gastronomy, and tourism have been among the fastest-developing sectors. Important entrepreneurial activities are carried out in Tokat, particularly in the field of gastronomic tourism. Promotion and marketing activities are carried out, especially for the use of local food products for gastronomic tourism. In addition, the local gastronomic products of Tokat Province are examined in academic studies [45–47]. In this study, Bez Sucuk, one of the important gastronomic products of Tokat, was examined. As the target group of the research, individuals living in Tokat and producing cloth sucuk locally and traditionally were selected.

Figure 2. Location of Tokat Province. Source: [48].

While determining the sample, the purposive sampling technique was used because it is a more effective method for small groups and subjective evaluations [49]. In the research,
phenomenology, one of the qualitative research techniques, was preferred. The reason for this can be cited as the fact that the concept of phenomenology focuses on phenomena that people are aware of but do not have in-depth and detailed knowledge of. These phenomena can occur in various forms, such as encountered events, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts, and situations. Therefore, phenomenology constitutes a suitable research ground for studies that aim to examine situations that are not only unfamiliar but also unpredictable [50]. Based on the phenomenology technique, a semi-structured interview technique was applied in the research, and the opinions of the participants were evaluated. In order to determine these views and reveal the results by determining the current situation, previous studies in the field [13,51,52] were examined, and a form consisting of nine questions was developed. The following questions are included in the interview form:

- Q1: How many years have you been producing Tokat Bez Sucuk?
- Q2: From whom did you learn to produce Tokat Bez Sucuk?
- Q3: Which meats do you prefer in the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk?
- Q4: Which spices do you prefer in the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk?
- Q5: What other materials do you use in the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk?
- Q6: At which meals do you usually consume Tokat Bez Sucuk?
- Q7: Which Tokat local dishes use Bez Sucuk?
- Q8: How did the geographical indication of the Tokat Bez Sucuk have an impact on sustainable gastronomy?
- Q9: What are the stages of Tokat Bez Sucuk production?

The interview method is the process of getting answers to the questions or statements prepared in accordance with the purpose of the research by the researcher asking the target audience, whose opinion is needed [53]. The reason for using the semi-structured interview technique is that it is not possible to reach the data to be obtained within the scope of the research with the scaled questions used in different research studies before. The semi-structured interview technique, which is carried out depending on the pre-prepared interview draft, provides the researcher with the opportunity to obtain more systematic and comparable information. In addition, this technique can provide the opportunity to ask additional questions or make changes to existing questions according to the course of the interview [54]. Using the focus group method, due to the limited scope of the research universe, the semi-structured interview form was personally applied to nine people living in Tokat who are producing Tokat Bez Sucuk, are knowledgeable about the product, and know its importance in local and traditional cuisine culture. The interviews were held in January–February 2023. Meetings about Tokat Bez Sucuk were held simultaneously with all nine participants who formed the focus group, under the management of a moderator. Detailed information about the study was given to the participants. Afterwards, interview forms were distributed to the participants, and they were asked to answer the interview questions. The data obtained were analyzed with the content analysis technique, as it offers a more objective evaluation chance. For this purpose, categorical analysis, one of the content analysis types, was used. Categorical analysis generally involves categorizing a particular message and then grouping these categories according to predetermined criteria. Creating categories is one of the key features of qualitative content analysis [55]. In the categorical analysis, the research data were coded first. While coding, the interview questions and the answers given by the participants to these questions were examined in detail [56].

4. Results

4.1. Information on the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Information on the demographic characteristics of the research participants is shown in Table 2.
Table 2. Demographic information of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Duration of Residence in Tokat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Culinary Teacher</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Culinary Teacher</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Table 2 is examined, five of the individuals participating in the research are female and four are male. The ages of the participants ranged from 30 to 77 years old. According to occupations, three housewives, two butchers, one entrepreneur, one lecturer (in the field of gastronomy), and two kitchen teachers (high school) participated in our research. Entrepreneur P6, one of the participants, is one of the managers of one of the three companies accredited to the Turkish Patent Institute by providing the geographical indication registration conditions for Tokat Bez Sucuk. Other participants produce Tokat Bez Sucuk with traditional and domestic production methods. In addition, the participants consist of people who have been residing in Tokat for a long time and are generally locals of Tokat.

4.2. Responses of the Participants to the Production of Tokat Bez Sucuk

According to the results of the interviews with the people participating in our research, the individual knowledge and perceptions of the producers regarding the traditional production of Tokat Bez Sucuk are presented in Table 3. One of the research questions is Q9: “What are the preparation stages of Tokat Bez Sucuk production?” Since the answers to the statement do not fit in the table, they are included in the text.

Table 3 reveals that the majority of the participants have been producing Tokat Bez sucuk for many years. However, it was determined that P6 and P7 have been producing for less than 10 years and have less experience in the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk than the other participants. A significant portion of the participants in our research declared that they learned how to produce Tokat Bez Sucuk from their parents or family elders. Therefore, this situation shows that the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk has been transferred from generation to generation and has a sustainable structure. P3, P4, and P6 of the participants stated that they learned how to produce Tokat Bez Sucuk from the producers. All of the participants stated that they use veal in the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk. This situation is in accordance with the meat type described in the geographical indication registration certificate of Tokat Bez Sucuk [42]. On the other hand, while P1 and P2 stated that they preferred only goat meat apart from beef, P3 and P9 said that they produced Tokat Bez Sucuk sometimes by mixing lamb meat with veal.

Participants generally use the spices specified in the geographical indication registration (salt, cumin, black pepper, powdered red pepper, allspice, cinnamon, and clove) as spices while producing Tokat Bez Sucuk. However, some participants (P3, P8, and P9) stated that they used “fenugreek” in addition to the spices in question. In addition, all of the participants stated that they used “garlic”, in addition to meat and spices, while producing Tokat Bez Sucuk. Some of the participants declared that they used animal tallow (P1, P3, and P6). It has been determined that many different materials (lung-P1, tripe-P2, common-P8, veal’s head-P9) are used, especially in homemade products. When the people in question were asked about the reason for using different materials, they said that they use additional ingredients because they think that it increases the flavor of the sucuk (P2 and P9), softens the sucuk (P1 and P8), or increases the amount of material in the product (P2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>From my mother in law</td>
<td>From my mother</td>
<td>From the manufacturers</td>
<td>From my butcher master</td>
<td>From my family</td>
<td>From my butcher master</td>
<td>From my family and the manufacturers</td>
<td>From my mother and my high school kitchen teacher</td>
<td>From my grandmother and mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Veal or goat meat</td>
<td>Veal or goat meat</td>
<td>Veal and lamb</td>
<td>Beef Ribs</td>
<td>Veal</td>
<td>Veal meat without sinew</td>
<td>Veal</td>
<td>Veal</td>
<td>Veal breast and lamb mince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, black pepper, allspice, and powdered red pepper</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, black pepper, allspice, powdered red pepper, cinnamon, fenugreek, and sugar</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, black pepper, allspice, cloves, and powdered red pepper</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, black pepper, allspice, powdered red pepper, and cinnamon</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, black pepper, allspice, powdered red pepper, and cinnamon</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, black pepper, allspice, powdered red pepper</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, black pepper, and powdered red pepper</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, black pepper, powdered red pepper, and fenugreek</td>
<td>Salt, cumin, allspice, powdered red pepper, and fenugreek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>Garlic, tallow oil, lung</td>
<td>Garlic and tripe</td>
<td>Garlic and tallow oil</td>
<td>Garlic</td>
<td>Garlic</td>
<td>Garlic and tallow oil</td>
<td>Garlic</td>
<td>Garlic</td>
<td>Garlic and liver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>At breakfast</td>
<td>At breakfast</td>
<td>Usually at breakfast, sometimes at dinner</td>
<td>At every meal</td>
<td>At breakfast</td>
<td>At every meal</td>
<td>Usually at breakfast</td>
<td>At breakfast and dinner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb) Helle Soup</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb), spinach, Helle Soup</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb)</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb), Helle Soup</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb), Helle Soup</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb), Tokat Pita</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb), beetroot meal, roasted herbs</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb), Tokat Yağlıs, stuffed grape leaves with meat</td>
<td>Madımak (tear-thumb), Helle Soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Increased recognition, commercial power, and sales</td>
<td>Increased awareness, thus increasing online sales</td>
<td>The number of manufacturers and product sales increased</td>
<td>Provided standardization and institutionalization</td>
<td>No significant effect</td>
<td>It has ensured the preservation of tradition and quality and contributed to the promotion</td>
<td>Increased recognition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was pointed out by the majority of the participants that Tokat Bez Sucuk was consumed especially for breakfast. However, there are also participants (P5 and P7) who stated that it can be consumed at any meal of the day. All of the participants expressed that they use Tokat Bez Sucuk while making "Madımak", one of the local flavors of Tokat (Madımak is an endemic grass species that grows in the Tokat region). In addition, 5 participants (P1, P2, P4, P5, and P9) use Tokat Bez Sucuk while making "Helle Soup" (a thick soup cooked using green lentils, flour, and onions). Two of the participants (P8 and P9) reported that they used Tokat Bez Sucuk while making "Tokat Yağlısı" (a type of high-fat pastry produced in the Tokat region) and "Tokat Tiridi" (a local dish produced using tomato paste, eggs, fenugreek, and bread), local dishes of Tokat. One person (P6) who participated in the research said that he also uses Tokat Bez Sucuk while making "Tokat Pidesi" (a type of local leavened bread with a long and thin shape baked in stone ovens).

4.3. The Effect of the Registration of Tokat Bez Sucuk with a Geographical Indication on Sustainable Gastronomy

Q8, one of the interview questions of our research, asked, “What effect did the geographical indication of the Tokat Bez Sucuk have on sustainable gastronomy?” This section includes the participants’ responses to the question. P3, P4, P5, and P6 of the individuals who participated in our research declared that the geographical indication registration of the Tokat Bez Sucuk increased recognition, sales, standardization, and institutionalization. In addition, P5, one of the participants, stated that “thanks to the geographical indication, the number of people producing Tokat Bez Sucuk has increased, which also contributes to employment”. Participants P8 and P9 reported that geographical indication contributes to promotion as well as preserving tradition and quality. On the other hand, participant P7 declared that “registration of Tokat Bez Sucuk with a geographical indication does not have a significant effect in terms of sustainable gastronomy”. In addition, participants P1 and P2 used expressions such as “I do not know the effect of the geographical indication of the Tokat Bez Sucuk in terms of sustainable gastronomy”.

Considering the answers given by the participants to Q8, it is noteworthy that the geographical indication registration in Tokat Bez Sucuk is mostly a positive development in terms of sustainable gastronomy. These opinions reveal the importance of geographical indication registration in sustainable gastronomy, especially in terms of not forgetting local and traditional gastronomic products such as Tokat Bez Sucuk, transferring them to future generations, and connecting them to a standard. However, Tokat Bez Sucuk can be considered a different type of use of traditional methods in terms of storing perishable basic food products such as meat for long periods without wasting them. Therefore, expanding the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk can be seen as an important opportunity for sustainable gastronomy at the point of food waste.

4.4. Production Stages of Tokat Bez Sucuk in Line with the Opinions of the Participants

One of the research interview questions was Q9 “What are the stages of Tokat Bez Sucuk production?” Included in this section are the participants’ responses to the question. While most of the participants (K1, K2, K3, K7, K8, and K9) produce homemade products, some (K4, K5, and K6) produce them by adhering to traditional methods. Participants who make homemade sucuk can apply different methods in the production stages of Tokat Bez Sucuk. For example, participant P2 used the following expressions while describing the production stages: “First of all, I grind meat and animal fat into minced meat. Then I add various spices and garlic and knead well. I rest the sucuk dough I obtained for one night. On the second day, I knead it again and let it rest for one more night for the fermentation to fully form. On the third day, I fill the sucuk dough into cloth cases. I tie the mouth of the cloth covers with a rope and hang them in a dark place to dry. After it dries for a few days, I go over it with a roller and let the remaining liquid come out and be absorbed by the cloth. Thus, I prevent the sucuk from spoiling and make it easier for it to be stored for a long time. After the drying process is completed, I keep the sucuks in a cool environment.” However, participant P9, who also produces domestically,
stated that she used a different method: “I chop the beef breast and the beef’s own fat in a meat grinder. I then rest the meat in the refrigerator for a few hours. After resting, I add the spices and garlic, knead it well, and turn it into a sucuk dough. I fill the sucuk dough with 20-cm cloth covers and let it hang for two weeks in a warm environment. Then I go over it with a thick roller, and if there is any liquid left in it, I let it come out. After this process, I keep the sucuks cool by hanging them in a cool place. A week later, I roll over the sucuks again with a rolling pin and flatten them. Finally, I keep it on the hanger for a week or two and use it for meals.” On the other hand, eight of the nine participants said that they used a meat grinder to chop the meat. However, unlike the others, participant P1 used the statement, “I turn the meat and animal fat into minced meat with the help of a fishing line called armor. Because it is more natural and delicious that way.”

Apart from domestic production, the company that produces under the brand of “Aşık Baba”, one of the companies that produce by adhering to traditional methods and geographical indication conditions, contributed to our work with the visuals in Figure 3. In addition, some of the visuals in the documentary titled “Yemek Serüveni”, broadcast on the Turkish State TV Channel TRT, in which the production stages of the “Aşık Baba” company are displayed, are also included in Figure 3 [57]. There are seven processes in Figure 3, where the production stages of Tokat Bez Sucuk are seen. One of these processes, Process 1, is the coarse cutting of meat and animal fat in a meat grinder. In Process 2, spices and garlic are added to the coarsely minced meat, and the mixture is left to rest. In Process 3, the mixture with spices and garlic is finely chopped in the machine and kneaded by the masters to obtain sucuk dough. In Process 4, the sucuk dough is filled into cotton cloth covers called “mermerşahi” with 300 g by means of a filling machine. In Process 5, the mouths of the sucuks stuffed in cloth covers are tied with a string, hung on hangers, and rested for 10 days to dry. As seen in Process 6, the liquid inside the Tokat Bez Sucuk is thrown out several times during the 10-day rest period, and the liquid inside is made flat, as seen in Process 6. Finally, in Process 7, the final, ready-to-eat version of the Tokat Bez Sucuk is seen. P5, who is a butcher and participated in the research, stated the following: “Veal meat grown in the highlands of Tokat is used in the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk. Thus, we produce Bez Sucuk by adhering to local raw materials and traditional production methods. In addition, we do not apply additives in order to preserve the heat treatment and naturalness while producing Bez Sucuk. For this reason, we definitely do not use animal intestines as a cover. Also, since we do not use animal intestines as a cover, the taste of the intestine does not pass into the sucuk. Therefore, the natural flavor is preserved thanks to the cotton cloth cover we use, called the mermerşahi. This is our biggest difference from other geographically marked sucuk produced in Turkey.” Other participants (P4 and P6) who produce in the workshops in their enterprises expressed similar views to this explanation.

Figure 3. Production Stages of Tokat Bez Sucuk Suitable for Geographical Indication. Source: [57].
5. Discussion

Within the scope of this study, the distinctive features of Tokat Bez Sucuk, which was registered with a geographical indication in 2022, in terms of sustainable gastronomy, its place in the local cuisine culture, and traditional production stages were examined. Detailed findings were obtained as a result of interviews with individuals who know the production of Bez Sucuk and produce it by adhering to local and traditional techniques. The findings obtained from our research have been categorized and discussed under the following sub-headings:

5.1. Discussions on the Connection of Tokat Bez Sucuk Production with Sustainable Gastronomy

Individuals who stated their knowledge, opinions, and perceptions within the scope of the research stated that they generally learned how to produce Tokat Bez Sucuk from their family elders or masters. This situation is of great importance in terms of transferring the gastronomic heritage to future generations and ensuring sustainable gastronomy. In addition, the particular finding coincides with a similar study [13] on traditional and local gastronomic products in Turkish cuisine. However, in a study published on Greek Cheeses [25], it is mentioned that cheese production continues domestically by families and is passed from generation to generation. Therefore, it can be said that the findings of this research are similar to the previously published studies on products with different geographical indications in sustainable gastronomy.

In addition to academic studies on Tokat Bez Sucuk, it is seen that the practices of the producers are also on the agenda in the national press. For instance, in an article titled “Qatari people loved Tokat Bez Sucuk”, a company official stated that they inherited the production of cloth sausage from his grandfather and father and that they have been producing it for a century [58]. The production in the form of family inheritance mentioned in the news in question again revealed the effect of learning from the family in the findings of this study. Therefore, this news supports the findings of the study in terms of sustainable gastronomy. In particular, we can assert that the geographical indication of local gastronomic products has a significant effect on the preservation of traditionality and cultural heritage, encouraging and sustaining production. We can argue that the registration of local gastronomic products, such as cloth sausage with geographical indication, has an important effect on the preservation of traditionality and cultural heritage, encouraging and sustaining production.

5.2. Distinctive Features in Tokat Bez Sucuk Production and Different Applications of Manufacturers

It was generally determined that the meat used by the participants in making Tokat Bez Sucuk was veal. This is in accordance with the meat product specified in the geographical indication registration document [42]. However, some participants stated that they add different types of meat or offal-like products to the Tokat Bez Sucuk raw material besides beef. Participants who do this explain the difference with reasons such as “I think the sucuk is more delicious and softer” and “I increase the amount of product ingredients”. We consider this finding obtained in the study to be one of the important details that make the study different. Since there is no such academic study in the literature on Tokat Bez Sucuk, which has a unique structure, no comparison could be made. These findings are novel in terms of literature and have never been examined before. Therefore, we think that these findings obtained from the research have a distinctive feature.

5.3. Discussions on the Use of Tokat Bez Sucuk in Different Dishes in the Local Cuisine

When evaluated in terms of daily meals, most of the participants stated that Tokat Bez Sucuk is generally consumed for breakfast. This finding is compatible with other studies [37,59] indicating that sucuk is consumed as an important fermented product in Turkish breakfast culture. However, all of the participants stated that they use Tokat Bez Sucuk as a complementary product in the “madımak” dish, which is one of the local flavors of Tokat. Accordingly, in terms of sustainable gastronomy, it is understood that not only...
Tokat Bez Sucuk but also other local dishes using Tokat Bez Sucuk positively contribute to the transfer of this food to the next generation as a legacy. The findings in the study, we believe, are another key aspects that make the study distinguished.

5.4. Discussions on the Evaluation of the Geographical Indication Registration of Tokat Bez Sucuk

Business owner participants (P4, P5, and P6) stated that the registration of the Bez Sucuk with a geographical indication increased its recognition and commercialization and had a positive effect on the sales and marketing of the product. Additionally, some participants stated that the geographical indication in Bez Sucuk is important in terms of preserving tradition, ensuring quality, standardization, and institutionalization. This situation coincides with different studies published on geographical indications in the field of gastronomy and food [11,60–62]. At the same time, we can argue that geographical indication registration is at a level that can positively affect production increase, recognition, standardization, institutionalization, employment, income increase, and sustainability. We discovered that numerous studies [5–7] support this positive effect. However, these positive effects can also create an attraction for the destination, especially in terms of gastronomic tourism. Therefore, we can state that geographical indication registration will bring important opportunities for Tokat Bez Sucuk in many areas, especially sustainability.

6. Conclusions and Limitations

As a result, in this study, Tokat Bez Sucuk, a traditional geographically marked product belonging to the Tokat region in Turkish cuisine culture, was examined in terms of sustainable gastronomy. Detailed information has been presented about Tokat Bez Sucuk, which has become an intriguing gastronomic product with its geographical indication registration. The opinions of people who produce both homemade and business-based production were sought, and the production processes of Bez Sucuk were researched. Our limitation in this study was reaching a limited number of producers who know about Tokat Bez Sucuk. The fact that most of the producing companies did not want to give information about the content and production processes of Tokat Bez Sucuk was an important challenge for us. However, the owners, who gave a little information about Bez Sucuk, contributed to our research. We consider that conducting a sensory and cognitive study on consumers about Tokat Bez Sucuk will also contribute to the field. In addition, we think that conducting academic studies on consumers, especially in sensory and cognitive terms, about Tokat Bez Sucuk will contribute to the field. On the other hand, it can be suggested that the decision makers in gastronomy and food in Tokat should carry out studies (for example, workshops, training, etc.) to encourage and disseminate the production of Tokat Bez Sucuk by adhering to the geographical indication. In our opinion, studies in this direction will contribute to the sustainability and standardization of the product.

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