

CHAPTER 15

Food, nutrition, and health in Moldova

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15.1 Introduction

The Moldovan cuisine represents a synthesis of the natural richness of the region—cereals, vegetables, and fruits. The specific location of the Republic of Moldova (RM) between countries with different cultures has influenced the food system of its people in different periods of history. Moldovan cuisine has been preserved for centuries, absorbing all the best from Greek, Slavonic, Byzantine, and Mediterranean cuisines. Turkish (Ottoman) cuisine had a great influence on Moldovan culinary art. As a result, today Moldovan meals attract through a palette of tastes. Moldovan cuisine has developed as an original and special one, and it has individual specific characteristics, managing to fuse culinary methods and product combinations incompatible at first sight (e.g., meat with fruit, desserts with wine, marinated fruits, etc.). There are few Moldovan dishes in which vegetables are not used. Vegetables are boiled, baked, braised, fried, and salted. They are consumed as separate food and as a garnish. Vegetables are prepared in combination with many types of meat (e.g., beef, pork, lamb, poultry, fish). They are also used as filling for traditional baking (e.g., “învârtite”—swirls, “plăcinte”—pies, “saralii”). Garlic, black pepper, and paprika are some of the spices used in Moldovan cuisine. Moreover, fresh vegetables, dill, parsley, leek, celery are also used abundantly. Also, Moldovans are fond of cooking food on the grill. Thus all types of meat, usually marinated in wine, fish, vegetables, and even fruits, are prepared in this way. In order to preserve their juice and give them aroma, certain dishes are baked in vine leaves, walnuts, and cabbage. The dessert dishes of Moldovans are no less original. The large variety of fruits, dessert wines, and nuts appear in a large number of combinations in the form of jellies, juices, jams and compotes, fruits filled with nuts, fruits in wine, dumplings, pies, and baked goods.

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