**Offering Gastronomic Tours for French Tourists**

 **in Malta**

**Higher National Diploma in Tour Guiding**

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**Abstract**

This study has taught me a lot about Maltese food and has also deepened my knowledge about Malta's history and culture through food. I have also compared Maltese food to Provençal food and have found many similarities. By examining the differences between Maltese food and Provençal food I have learnt that historical circumstances are deeply involved in the origin of food culture, especially the movement of the Mediterranean world. I have found that it is very interesting to see how two areas facing the same Mediterranean Sea have evolved in their cuisine very often due to the ingredients brought in by the different invaders. This research motivated me to study not only Maltese but also French history and culture. The opportunity to present research contents while actually guiding was definitely useful for myself who plans to work as a French speaking tourist guide in Malta.

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**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

A meal was an action necessary to survive for human beings and for all living things. The aims of the meal have changed dramatically over the years. The progress of globalization has given us the opportunity to get food whenever we want, anytime and anywhere. Nowadays, meals have become a pleasure of our life rather than for surviving, and this is no exception during holidays. Obviously, food is part of our culture and it has become one of the most attractive and important aspects of choosing holiday destinations together with history.

Before I talk about food, I would like to talk about myself. I am Japanese and I started learning French at the university in Japan. Soon I fell in love with France and its beautiful language, and in order to improve my French, I decided to study in France for a few months. Therefore, my first experience of living abroad was in Nice, the capital of Côte d’Azur. The reason why I chose Nice as my destination was very simple, because I like the sea, the sun and the friendly people. The Mediterranean weather was warm and enjoyable, local people were charming and welcoming, I spent precious time there and my French improved considerably. It was one of the best experiences of my life. But now, I live in Malta. The reason why I visited Malta was the same reason why I chose Nice but with one difference since I wanted to learn English this time. When I arrived in Malta, I felt nostalgic of Nice and I found a lot of similarities between Nice and Malta. What surprised me most was the food. Maltese food and Provençal food have a lot of common ingredients. It is obvious because both places are facing the Mediterranean Sea, but each has its own characteristics. I chose to use the discovery of Maltese food and comparison with Provençal food as the theme of my dissertation to help future guiding in French.

So, what is Maltese food and Provençal food? And what are the common ingredients and their similarities? Both foods have evolved through history and culture of the Mediterranean. And a common secret is that the recipes are not always written and handed down, they are often passed on from mother to daughter.

**Chapter 2**

**Literature review**

**2.1 Maltese & Provençal food history**

It is said that the very first inhabitants in Malta were farmers who were originally hunters and gatherers moving all the time and looking for their food. When the Knights of St.John came to inspect Malta before they decided to settle in 1530, they described that the land of Malta was very dry and not fertile. However, in ancient times, the conditions seemed completely different and Malta had the best climate and land for farming. The remains of Bronze Age which started around 2400 BC till 700 BC showed us that the people started trading food, for example, grain. During the time of the Phoenicians, trade became a big business in the Mediterranean Sea because the Phoenicians were known as great sea merchants travelling around the Mediterranean Sea from the Middle East and even around Africa. Malta was a strategic point in the Mediterranean Sea for their business and soon became their base of trade. In fact, many ingredients used in Maltese dishes such as olive oil, wheat, salt, honey, nuts, spices, wine and even domestic animals were brought over by the Phoenicians.

Provence is an area which is situated in southern-eastern France, from the border of Italy to the Rhône. It is believed that in 600 BC, the Greek sailors named Phocaeans from Asia Minor came to today’s coast of Provence and founded a city known as Massalia. It was one of France’s oldest cities and it is today’s second largest city of France, Marseilles. In the second century BC, the Greeks asked the Romans to help them resist invasion by the neighbouring tribes. Therefore, the Romans also founded their first province outside Rome called “La Provincia Romana” which is believed to be today’s Provence. Before it became part of the kingdom of France in 1486, Provence was a semi-independent state ruled by several counts, and it created unique traditions and culture, even language. Provençal food was and still is eaten in the Provence region, and it evolved by time with foreign ingredients brought by the sea merchants, just like Maltese food.

**2.2 Main ingredients**

Traditional and characteristic Maltese dishes are based on the ingredients which were brought by foreign colonisers and invaders around Mediterranean Sea. The main ingredients are vegetables such as tomatoes, potatoes, green, red and yellow peppers, aubergines, marrows, artichokes, spinach, pumpkin, cauliflower, green and red cabbage, turnips, garlic and a variety of beans such as broad beans and butter beans, olives, capers, ricotta cheese, cheeselets, fresh Mediterranean fish, beef, pork, lamb, chicken, quail, rabbit and horse meat. Herbs, spices and of course, olive oil are used extensively.

One famous spice in Malta is cumin. Together with cotton, cumin was an important cash crop since the Arab period. In Maltese, the island of Comino is *Kemmuna*, which means cumin. It indicates that the cultivation of cumin was also widespread around Malta, and exporting of cumin continued during the time of the Knights of St John.

In order to survive the dry winter, Maltese people turn abundant ingredients harvested in summer into preserved foods. Goat or sheep cheeselets called *ġbejniet*, dry tomatoes, capers, olives, salted fish, Maltese pork sausage and bean paste are still popular today. We can find these in one plate called “Maltese Platter’’. A lot of restaurants or bars often serve it as nibbles or as a simple meal.

Maltese food is very much influenced by Italian food. Firstly, Malta is only 93 km away from Sicily. We can find typical Italian food such as pasta, ravioli, baked macaroni, pizza and cannoli or pastries with almonds in Malta. Interestingly enough pastries with almonds come from Sicily but they are originally typical sweets of the Arabs. This is another evidence that food culture is very much involved in the history. Besides being close in distance, it is said that the Knights were keen to have some food and wine from Sicily as Malta did not have enough harvest to provide a luxury banquet. In fact, it seems that two thirds of the wheat consumption was imported from Sicily and even France.

There is also some British influence in Maltese food. The most famous example is English breakfast which consists of toast with sunny side eggs, bacon, sausage, beans, grilled tomatoes and mushrooms.

The main ingredients of Provençal food are basically the same ingredients as Maltese food: colourful vegetables, fresh Mediterranean fish and shellfish. Today, we can find any kind of meat, but traditionally sheep and lamb were most eaten in Provence. The important key which creates the flavour of Provence is garlic, olive oil, olives, capers, herbs and anchovies. In fact, all dishes named *à la Provençale* use herbs such as thyme, rosemary, marjoram, oregano, sage, basil, fennel, tarragon and bay leaves.

Provençal appetizers are quite similar too. One should not miss the tapenade. Tapenade is black olive paste but it is named after capers, called *tapeno* in Provençal, because capers are also an important ingredient together with salted anchovies. Although we can imagine that olive paste was eaten for thousands years, the first recipe was prepared in 1880 by a chef named Meynier from a restaurant called La Maison Dorée in Marseilles. His recipe was then published in a great old Provençal cuisine book called “*La Cuisinière Provençale*” by Jean-Baptiste Reboul in 1897.

Among Provençal food, the cuisine Niçoise is the one which is the most influenced by Italian food and therefore it has similarities with Maltese food. In fact, Nice was under Italian rulers and geographically Nice is very close to Malta in the Côte d’Azur. Besides the proximity of geographical distance, the Italian influence exists because of the political marriage of Catherine de Medici. She was the daughter of the renowned family in Florence and she married Prince Henri of Valois who became Henri II. Her exclusive chef and some recipes were brought by Catherine and the French discovered new taste and Italian style of cooking and also table manners. This marriage had huge impact on French cuisine, and this impact affected also the chefs of the Knights of St.John.

**2.3 Wine**

In Malta, it is believed that the origin of wine was discovered by chance when prehistoric people stored summer fruits to survive the dry winters. It is also believed that the Phoenicians introduced two types of vines in Malta, a white grape vine called *Girgentina*, and a red grape vine called *Ġellewża*.

In ancient times wine was considered to be a healthy drink and was even used for medical purposes. In Christianity, wine is also referred to as the blood of Jesus Christ, therefore in the Middle Ages, a lot of monasteries in Europe had their own vineyard. However, in Malta, during the Arab occupation, wine production died due to Islamic teaching which prohibits any alcohol. At the time of the Knights of St John, the cultivation of grapes was revived because the Knights were a religious brotherhood who came from noble families in Europe, and could not stay without wine. Although the Knights and the Maltese nobility preferred to drink wine from Sicily, wine production dramatically improved and local wine was drunk by local people at home or in taverns.

Under the British rule, vineyards suffered because land was replaced by cotton production due to the high demand during the war, and phylloxera reached Malta as well. However, winemaking still survived and today, besides two original grapes, international grapes such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Blanc, Moscato, Grenache, Carignan, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah etc are cultivated and made into great wine in Malta.

When the Greeks arrived in Provence, they brought their favorite products such as olive oil and wine, and they started making wine, particularly rosé wine. France’s first vineyard was founded in Aix-en-Provence. The culture of grape cultivation and winemaking flourished by the Romans and spread to the north and other regions.

As in Malta, Provence’s wine production declined because of Barbarian tribes. Vineyards were ravaged until the Middle Ages, when monasteries revived for their religious use and also for trading. Thankfully, in the 14th century, even nobilities and high-ranking army officers developed vineyards which became the foundation of today’s wine production in Provence.

Provence suffered from phylloxera in 1880. However Provençal wine production survived. In order to keep authentic Provençal wine, winemakers decided to come together and unite their forces. As a result, the Institut National des Appellations d’Origine (INAO) was established in 1935. Millo and Todorovska explains, *“INAO’s role was to specify the areas where certain wines could be produced and define the rules of production. Thus, the French system of Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC) was born. An AOC is delineated zone of production (a regions, subregion, village, or even a plot of land) that has unique qualities due to its geography, climate, soils, and grape-growing and winemaking practice. It is the highest point in the French wine quality pyramid.”*(Millo and Todorovska, 2014, p.25)

Today, Provence has 9 appellations of Provence wine recognised with AOC. Most produced wine in Provence is rosé which is made mainly from Grenache and Cinsault. However, varieties of red wines such as Syrah, Mourvèdre, Cabernet Sauvignon are also available.

**2.4 Olive oil**

Olive oil is most important ingredient in Mediterranean dishes. It is believed that olives were originally eaten by Greeks. In fact, olives are often mentioned in Greek myths and also in the Bible. The Phoenicians then imported olive trees from Greece to Mediterranean colonies including Malta and France.

In Roman times, olive oil was very precious and used for hair and skin care purposes and also as a fuel for lamps rather than for cooking. Along with the colony expansion, the production of olive oil increased and became popular even among ordinary people. The amphoras discovered in the bottom of the sea are also great evidence that trading occurred.

The remains of a farmhouse which had oil-mills, presses and oil storage tanks was found at San Pawl Milqi, and it seems that this was Malta’s very first production of olive oil in the Roman period.

However, after the Roman Empire declined, the Arabs attacked Malta around 870 AD and as a result, Malta became an uninhabited island for about 180 years. It was a time of conflict between pirates; olive trees were cut for building ships and many olive trees died and olive oil production disappeared. However, the Arabs named several villages in Arabic such as *Haz-Żebbug*, *Iz-Żejtun* and *Birżebbuġa*, and this indicates that olives were already popular in Malta. The names of those villages are still used today.

Olive oil was always consumed by locals and the Knights. This was imported mainly from Sicily or France. It seems that olive oil production was not available during the Middle Ages till late 20th century. Hopefully, it is slowly reviving since 2007. Today there are 9 approved Maltese olive oil processors in Malta and Gozo.

Provençal olives and olive oil were also brought by Phoenicians and flourished by the Romans. The main olive tree in Provence is the same as in Malta, *Olea Europea*. Besides being used for skin care and for oil lamps, olive oil has also great religious significance and it is believed that many monasteries in Provence also cultivated olives. However, in the Middle Ages, when people started eating sheep and goat, their flocks damaged olive trees and it seems olive growers gave up its cultivation. Before, olive oil was the only source which was consumed as fat, however, bacon or pork lard were started being common ingredients for peasant food. Nonetheless, olive oil is always essential for Provençal cuisine.

Today, the olive oil industry in Provence is not as huge as in Spain, Italy or Greece. However, Provençal olive oil is recognised and awarded an Appellations d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC). In fact, AOC ensures not only wine, but also brandy, dairy products, and agricultural foods such as olive oil. According to the Association Française Interprofessionnelle de l'Olive, starting with Nyons olive oil in 1994, today 8 types of olive oil (including one from Corsica) are currently recognized as AOC.

**2.5 Oranges**

There are local produce fruits in Malta include prickly pears, pomegranates, figs and strawberries etc, but citrus cultivation especially oranges is the most popular. Caruana mentioned, “Malta and Gozo boast some exceptionally good fruit, superb oranges, blood oranges, tangerines, and bergamots, lumicell or rumicell (which is like a sweet lemon) and other citrus fruit.” (Caruana, 2016. p.257)

Malta’s orange history dates back to Arab times. Oranges are undoubtedly one of Malta's treasures in the food brought by the invaders. The Arabs are renowned as great farmers and are famous orange growers.

There is a famous story that inquisitor Fabio Chigi who became Pope Alexander VII later on, was fascinated by the smell of orange trees, therefore he planted in the courtyard of inquisitor's palace in Birgu. Although the quantity of cultivation was limited, the Maltese orange was described as great by several visitors in the 17th and 18th century and it got a good reputation. The Knights sent it to their original country in Europe, and still today, Maltese oranges are annually sending to former head of states including Queen Elizabeth II of England.

Oranges were also preserved and used as a sauce for cooking. Interestingly enough there is a sauce called “*Sauce Maltaise*” which has a French name. It is believed that the sauce which is made with blood oranges was invented by a chef of the Knights. The Maltese typical soft drink called *Kinnie* also has an aromatic herbs taste together with a bitter orange flavour which is reminiscent of Malta.

Provence’s oranges were also brought by the Arabs. In the 4th century, some citrus fruits originating from Southeast Asia were brought to Southern Europe including Corsica and the Côte d’Azur area, and were then cultivated by the Arabs. Among them, the bitter orange called *bigarade* in France, better known as the Seville orange and is the common orange of Malta and Provence.

Essential oils (neroli oil) and water are produced from Seville orange blossoms. There are some sweets which are made using orange flower water, for example, *gibassier*. This is named after the summit Le Gibas in the mountains of Luberon which is renowned for the production of olive oil, aniseed and orange peel. In Gozo there is one licensed place where orange flower water is produced from the Seville orange called *Ilma Zhar*. It is popular as a digestif.

In Provence, orange wine (*vin d’orange*) is made and drank as an apéritif. In former days, sauce bigarade made from bitter oranges used to accompany duck or game. Nowadays sauce à l’orange is being used instead.

**2.6 Daily lunch**

As a daily lunch and even popular as lunch at the beach in summer, Maltese people often make a sandwich called *ħobż biż-żejt* with maltese bread *ftira*. This consists of a round flat disc bread cut into half with olive oil or fresh tomato or paste (*kunserva*). One can also add fresh herbs such as basil, mint or marjoram, and also fresh onion, garlic, capers, olives, tuna or anchovies and sometimes raw Maltese sausage.

Niçoise’s daily lunch is quite similar, a sandwich called *pain bagnat* which means “bathed bread”, because the bread becomes soaked by the olive oil. The main ingredients are tomatoes, olives, garlic, fresh fava beans, boiled eggs and canned tuna, which is basically the same ingredients as *salade niçoise*.

Another snack which is iconic of Malta is *pastizzi*. It is the most popular savoury snack that consists of pastry filled with salty ricotta cheese or mushy peas. It is said that since the 18th century, *pastizzi* existed and were enjoyed by locals and also by French and British soldiers as there are naval documents which describe their preparation. *Pastizzi* can be found almost in every corner of town still today.

A traditional and speciality snack of Nice is a large chickpea flour pancake called *socca* which comes from the North African cuisine. We can find it at the market in Nice and it is popular as a midmorning snack together with rosé wine.

**2.7 Vegetables**

Maltese dishes are always accompanied by vegetables. They are served with green salad or fried, grilled, baked and mashed potatoes, and/or grilled vegetables. Grilled vegetables are often flavoured with cumin seeds or simply cooked with olive oil. It is believed that *Kapunata* comes from “*caponata*” in Italy. Grilled summer vegetables such as aubergines, bell peppers, zucchini, onions, tomato sauce, garlic, basil with a large amount of olive oil are used to make *Kapunata*. In Nice, there is a similar recipe called *Ratatouille*. Although *Kapunata* and *Ratatouille* have practically the same ingredients, the way of cooking is slightly different. *Ratatouille* has to cook each and every vegetable separately because it is important that all vegetables are cooked uniformly before they are finally combined.

Vegetables can also be main dishes. Stuffed vegetables especially stuffed marrows grilled in the oven or put into a soup, a pie with fried vegetables are still common in Malta. In Nice, there are also stuffed vegetables such as tomatoes, bell peppers, onions, aubergines and marrows called *Farcis de légumes*.

For dinner, a variety of soups line the table. *Minestra* is a thick vegetable soup including beans and pasta or rice. As we can guess from its name, it is exactly like the *minestrone* in Italy. *Soppa tal-Armla* which translates into widow’s soup is also vegetable soup but accompanied with *ġbejniet*. The name is given because it is made with cheap and easy-to-obtain vegetables that even a widow can afford. It had been a common meal during and after WWII. One famous vegetable soup in Nice is the *soupe au pistou*. As its name suggests, it is a summer vegetables’ soup accompanied with a sauce made from fresh basil, garlic, olive oil and gruyère cheese called *sauce pistou*.

**2.8 Meat**

One common way of cooking meat in Malta is simmering. Beef, pork, chicken, horse meat and even snails etc, are cooked as stew in Malta. Among the many meat stews, rabbit stew is considered as Malta’s national dish. There is a tradition called “*Fenkata*”, which means that Maltese people cook rabbit stew for the family reunions. There is also another tradition which dates back to the time of the knights that people eat rabbit the day before the June 29th festival called “*Imnarja*”. People gathered in Buskett Gardens which was a hunting spot at the time of the Knights and enjoyed rabbit dishes together. This festival was also an important event for married couples because during

their engagement, future husbands promised future wives to bring them to the festival after their wedding day. That is why rabbit became a symbolic meal perfect for any social gathering and family reunions.

There is a rabbit connection between Malta and France. During the reign of grandmaster Ximenes de Texada (1773-75), the hunting of rabbits was prohibited. However, after the restrictions were lifted, rabbits were again available, especially because the domestication was introduced. Although there is no document about this, French monks were renowned for the domestication of rabbits in their monasteries. It is believed that this knowledge was probably brought over to Malta by French Knights. Since ancient times, not only in Provence, but also all over France, rabbit was common meat and often eaten by ordinary people with different recipes according to the region. There is a recipes’ book which contains more than 18 different recipes for rabbit found in Malta, and it is believed that this book belonged to the French chef of the Knights. In fact, 12 out of 28 grandmasters of the order of St.John were from France, Provence and Auvergne, therefore French influence was definitely in the Knights’ kitchen.

Interestingly enough it is said that pork stew known as *Majjal għad-dobbu* is a corruption of the French word “*en daube*” which means stew. In Provence, *daube de bœuf* or *daube de lamb à la Provençale* are the specialities of the region. The meat is slowly cooked in red or white wine together with olive oil, garlic, herbs, onions and often accompanied by carrots.

**2.9 Fish**

Nowadays, thanks to the development of fishing technology and also fish farming, we can constantly eat a variety of fish and shellfish. For example, swordfish, red rockfish, grouper, dentex, red mullet, sea bream, lumberjack, yellowfin tuna, mackerel, john dory, seabass, angler fish, squid, cuttlefish, octopus, prawns, sea urchin and whitebait. These are all eaten in Mediterranean.

A fish seasonally caught between August and November and loved by the Maltese is *lampuki* (dolphin fish or dorado). An excellent way of cooking *lampuki* is either fried in butter or made in a pie.

A Maltese fish soup with plenty of fish caught in the Mediterranean is called *Aljotta.* It is prepared by putting the fish in a mesh bag to extract only the fish stock so that bones and excess fish do not come out. *Aljotta* is named after a word ‘*aglio*’ which means garlic in Italian as garlic is a main ingredient when cooking fish.

Provence’s typical regional fish soup is definitely *Bouillabaisse.* What is different from *aljotta* is that first the soup is served with small toast with garlic mayonnaise called *aioli,* and then the fish is served after the soup accompanied with potatoes and therefore it is more of a fish stew than a soup. Originally it was a fisherman’s daily meal but by time, it gained a lot of reputation and became more refined.

**2.10 Honey**

It is believed that the first name given to Malta was *Melita,* which is derived from Greek and means honey. It might be from the colour of the limestone which was available on the island or it might be that honey already existed. There is an anecdote that Caius Verres, the kleptomaniac Roman praetor who governed Malta was accused of stealing 13 jars of honey from Juno’s temple. This indicates that honey was collected in Roman times. But in any case, what is sure about Maltese honey is that it was used as a sweetener until the Arabs introduced sugarcane in the 17th century, and it can be produced all year round from wild flowers. Among them, wild thyme honey is considered as a national treasure and it has an international reputation. During the time of the Knights of St. John, it was forbidden to pick up wild thyme since honey and beeswax were not only used as sweeteners but also as medicines.

As in Malta, honey was used as sweetener in Provence. Since the Middle Ages, the honey of Provence has been highly regarded, especially lavender honey, together with chestnuts, thyme and rosemary honey. These flowers give aromatic flavour to honey, and therefore such fragrant honey gained a good reputation.

Besides the Mediterranean climate, Malta and Provence are similar in topography. Both have an area called *garrigue* which derives from rock, typical Mediterranean dry shrubland with plants and herbs in arid limestone soil which help to produce excellent flavoured honey.

**2.11 Nougat**

*“This word is Semitic and is derived from the Arabic language. Sicily, Malta’s neighbouring island, has a similar sweet, it is possible that it originated during the times of Arab rule, as both Malta and Sicily experienced long years of Arab subjugation.”* (Camilleri, 2018. p.173-174)

A soft candy made with honey, egg whites and nuts known as nougat is a typical sweet around the Mediterranean. However each country has its own name. In Malta, it is called *Il-qubbajt*, and in France, nougat.

It is believed that the origin of nougat is from the Arabic world. In fact, the very first recipes of white nougat were described in an Arab book from Baghdad in the 10th century. It seems that nougat was taken as medicine rather than enjoyed as confectionery.

The main ingredients of *qubbajt* are a mixture of nuts, honey and raisins. There are three types of nougat based on these main ingredients: honey, carob, and a mixture of both. There is also black nougat which is made without egg whites. Each and every nougat maker has his or her own recipes which were handed down from their father and grandfather. Maltese nougat is originally a typical sweet of the village feasts. It is a tradition that people buy a nougat for the family and even for the colleges before the feast is over.

It is said that the origin of the name “nougat” in France came from the latin word “nux gatum” which means a nut cake. There are various theories about the arrival of nougat in France, one theory is that nougat was brought from Turkey to Marseille in the sixteenth century as Marseille was the main port for trading in Western Europe.

It is said that honey is the key to make good quality of nougat, and pure lavender honey produces the best flavour. Also in France, nougat is a feast sweet, especially on Christmas. In Provence, there is a tradition that families eat lean meal before going to midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. It is called “*le gros souper*” and at the end of meal, 13 different desserts which signify Christ and his disciples are put on the table. Both white and black nougat form part of these 13 traditional desserts.

**Chapter 3**

**Methodology**

To complete this dissertation, I used “Action Research” as a methodology. This chapter describes action research in detail.

It is said that "action research" was first introduced by Kurt Lewin in his book "Action Research and Minority Problems" published in 1946. Lewin described action research as one of the ways to challenge society to change, and many researchers have used action research for the purpose of changing society and the environment. As the name suggests, action research refers to both action (activity) and research (study) and is a practical research method that brings together research and theory through practice.

Action research as a methodology is defined as “problem identification”, “data collection”, “plan an action”, “practice the action”, “data analysis”, “reflect on the observations”, “revise the plan”, and then again, “problem identification”.

Action research is a great way to improve the practice. This is because action research involves action, appraisal, and critical reflection. The actual changes are made based on the collected evidence.

In other words, it is a research that plans and implements an action for self-growth, observes the results of the action, and reflects on the results. That is why I chose this research method because I thought it was necessary for me to grow as a guide and to engage in the reflection process in order to improve my guiding techniques.

Besides the growth of the guide itself, there are also other benefits of conducting action research such as the possibility of expanding the network between guides and existing guiding methods, and also the environmental improvement of sightseeing spots.

Now, let me elaborate on the actual action research that I did.

A half-day tour based on the contents of this dissertation was used to practice action research. I did a food tour to eight participants about history, similarities and differences between Maltese food and Provençal food that I researched. The details of the participants are two French, four Maltese and two foreigners, aged +30 to 65.

As a tour location, I chose *Is-Suq tal-Belt* (the Valletta city market) in Merchants’ Street in Valletta and a bar restaurant called *Casa Ellul* which is situated in St.Lucia Street in the heart of Valletta.

I had considered visits to open farmers’ markets and local restaurants, however, I finally chose the Valletta city market, because although not only Maltese products are available at the market, I could actually introduce Maltese dishes through the products. Besides this, I wanted to give a meaningful tour for different types of tourists and even tourists who visit Malta on cruise ships. Also, because it is an indoor market I thought that it might be a tour that we can enjoy all year round without worrying about the weather.

I started my tour by describing the history of the open market and *Is-Suq tal-Belt,* and the origins of Maltese & Provençal food history*.* During my tour, I stopped in front of a number of shelves which were well equipped with wine, confectionery, vegetables, meat, fish, honey and oil and explained them in detail.

After visiting the Valletta city market, we moved to a bar restaurant *Casa Ellul* for some tastings. As I said, it is situated in St.Lucia Street therefore very close to the Valletta city market and easy to find. I offered them a Maltese platter which contained local products such as Maltese sausage, sun dried tomatoes, stuffed olives, *bigilla*, white beans, *ġbejniet* and *galletti*, and glass of Maltese local red wine and white wine tastings.

After having a good time with good food, we had a discussion about Maltese food and Provençal food as there were two participants from France, and at the end of the tour, all participants were asked to answer five questions which were collected as feedback. In the next chapter, I will analyse the feedback I received from them.

\*Appendix 2

**Chapter 4**

**Analysis and Discussion of the Results**

I asked the participants to answer five questions as follows. I will analyse excerpts from the answers that I got for each question and make a note for a future tour.

Participants: 2 French, 4 Maltese, 2 Foreigners

Age: +30 - 65

Questions:

1. What were your expectations of the tour ?
2. Did the tour live up to your expectations ? Why ? Why not ?
3. What would you have changed ? Added ? Removed ?
4. What was the most interesting part of the tour ?
5. Would you go on a food tour again ? Why ?

**Question 1. What were your expectations of the tour ?**

*“An overall presentation of Maltese food influences and how Provençal food and Provençal influences march.”*

*“History of main traditional Maltese food items. Comparison with Provençal food.”*

*“Got historical background of Maltese cuisine. Try some samples.”*

*“I was not sure what to expect. But I was looking forward for this food tour.”*

Before I started my tour, I gave the participants my tour contents, such as comparison between Maltese food and Provençal food and informed them about the location and the tastings. Therefore, they had an idea of what they will be doing during the tour. Providing information about the tour in advance, such as the title and the summary of the tour, is effective in increasing the expectations of the participants, but the dramatisation may cause disappointment, so I think that balance is important.

I would like to highlight another answer: *“Explanation about main Maltese ingredients and dishes and discovering similarities with the Provençal cuisine. Perhaps one or two recipes.”*

I did not consider explaining the recipes, however, I think that this is very good idea since recipes offer a clear explanation of Maltese food.

**Question 2. Did the tour live up to your expectations ? Why ? Why not ?**

*“Yes, perfectly. We were shown the indoor market, taken to a wine shop where we could drink local wine and taste maltese food.”*

*“Yes, explanation was clear, tour objective achieved, tour guiding - friendly disposition, clicked with audience.”*

*“I would have liked to go to a farm or a factory where food is produced. On the other hand the literature review you gave us was very good and we learnt a lot.”*

*“Yes mainly. Similar ingredients. Arab and Greek influence were well explained.”*

*“Yes, chosen a suq as a place to see products and Ellul restaurant was perfect. Even though suq is not how it used to be.”*

I am glad that I got a comment about my guiding as this was one of the main aims of my action research. I also received good comments about my presentation especially about Arab and Greek influences as these were very important in shaping Maltese food and Provençal food.

Regarding the location, although visiting the indoor market satisfied them and they enjoyed the food and wine tasting, there was someone who expected to visit a farm or a factory. In that case, I should have explained more clearly about the concept of my tour and that it was even for short-stay tourists. However, as it was nice weather, we could do tastings outside of *Casa Ellul* which is situated in a narrow street in the heart of Valletta, and it helped me to make them comfortable and feel authentic.

**Question 3. What would you have changed ? Added ? Removed ?**

*“Nothing, but maybe if people don’t know about Provençal dishes, show photos or use smartphone / laptop. Note that in Nice there is a speciality “Socca” made from chickpeas, “suq” is the Arab word “souk”.”*

*“More direct indication of food items in the food market. More time for audience to browse in the market. More on food preparation (ex - bigilla)”*

*“I would recommend to add a list of places in here to go to try offer traditional maltese dishes.”*

*“Perhaps would it be interesting to show pictures of some of the dishes.*

*There is also a special dish of Nice, “La Socca” ; chickpeas pancake, et les citrons de Menton.”*

*“Voice intonation, pointing some features of a suq building - it is still a gem of architecture - this to add, nothing to remove.”*

These answers are actually very important and helpful for me, because knowing different points of view, discovering new information and knowledge are necessary for the growth process as a guide.

Although I included it the literature view, I forgot to talk about “*Socca*”. As it is very popular in Nice, I got two comments about it. It's a shame that I forgot, but I will keep it in mind to mention properly next time.

What I realised from the answers is that a presentation should not only be delivered orally but also needs some visual backup. The dishes and the ingredients were familiar to me but for most participants they were not. As one of the answers suggests, the easiest and best way is to show a picture.

I also found from the answers that tourists would appreciate a list of recommended places such as local restaurants, places where one can do tasting or buy local products around Malta and Gozo. This will give them an opportunity to visit or taste on their own after the tour. Promotion to tourists will lead to dynamize local restaurants and tourist destinations. Also, as I said, that will match my idea to create meaningful tours for different types of tourists. Besides short-stay tourists, there are many other types of tourists, for example, some of them may have time to spare, some of them are considering revisiting the islands in the future or are actually revisiting and seeking new discoveries.

Although I did not include the details about the building of *Is-Suq tal-Belt* in the literature review, I explained this briefly to the group. However, I should have shown some pictures and explained how it was before, as it is indeed a piece of unique architecture in Valletta.

**Question 4. What was the most interesting part of the tour ?**

*“Everything was interesting.”*

*“Origin of food terminology and tasting.”*

*“The tasting of course but also the information you gave us. It was very well researched.”*

*“The degustation of wines and the traditional platters. (Excellent sausages)”*

*“Relevance and origins of some elements of maltese kitchen.”*

There is nothing more to add to this. Everybody enjoyed the tastings! I feel successful that the history of local food also fascinated the Maltese participants. Knowing the culture leads to protecting it, and I think the job of a guide plays a part in this. The comment on the terminology makes me also happy that I could explain properly about the connection between the name of the food and the history and culture. As one of participants mentioned, Maltese sausage flavoured with some herbs was characteristic and certainly delicious.

**Question 5. Would you go on a food tour again ? Why ?**

*“Yes, in a different city to discover the main influences and taste local specialities.”*

*“Yes, interesting and engaging.”*

*“Yes, because I like to know the history and origin of various dishes and try them.”*

*“Yes, I would. It is always exciting to sample new foods.”*

*“Of course, because I like the food.”*

All answers were positive, including those not listed here. As I expected, besides having a meal, people are very interested in food while traveling. Many tourists are also interested in the food culture of different countries and the history or origin of the ingredients and dishes that even they naturally know.

**Chapter 5**

**Conclusion**

As a conclusion, I would like to describe some of my reflections on the tour itself and what I would include in a future food tour.

The most regrettable point is that as I was concentrating on delivering the presentation properly, I did not consider passing on any extra information. I should have shown them some visuals and also given them some recommendations related to local food as I mentioned previously. I must remember that food can be enjoyed visually and images are helpful. I will definitely include these in my future tour. Another thing that I want to try to include in the future tour is to find local people and let them explain some Maltese dishes and perhaps some recipes. I believe that contact with local people is enjoyable for tourists. The guide also has a role to connect tourists and locals. It would also be better if I can show them demonstrations of some simple recipes. I could coordinate this with restaurants in the Valletta city market or somewhere nearby.

What I realized after finishing the tour was the need to learn about the history and culture of other Mediterranean countries. As a guide working in Malta, knowing Malta's history and culture is paramount, but the movements and cultural developments of the ancient, medieval and modern people of France and other Mediterranean worlds are also important and need to be constantly compared to Malta. By doing so, I think that I can discover new things that are characteristic of Malta.

Although I did it in English, it was certainly a valuable experience to deliver my own tour to French people and get feedback. I was nervous, but I tried to speak clearly and kept eye contact with the participants in order to check if they were following my explanation. I am glad that this effort was transmitted and achieved the results of practising guiding for about 3 years.

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**Appendix 1**

Half Day Tour

Date: 07 December 2019

Location: Is-Suq tal-Belt & Casa Ellul in Valletta

Participants: 2 French, 4 Maltese, 2 Foreigners

Age: +30 - 65

Genger: 4 Females, 4 Males

Introduction

History of Maltese open market and *Is-Suq tal-Belt*

Maltese & Provençal food history

Presentation about Maltese food and Provençal food in detail

Food & wine tastings at Casa Ellul

Conclusion

**Appendix 2**

History of *Is-Suq tal-Belt*

In my opinion, one of the easiest ways to discover the local products is to visit the market. I chose to visit the indoor market in Valletta better known as *Is-Suq tal-Belt* (the Valletta city market) for my tour.

*Is-Suq tal-Belt* is situated in the heat of Merchants’ street in Valletta. As its name suggests, it is a street where trading and markets were open since Valletta was built. Today, it is still a busy street with many shops and restaurants, even on the roadside.

There is a signboard “Victory Kitchen” on the façade of a shop in Melita street intersecting with Marchants’ street. During WWII, supplies were limited because Malta was blocked by enemy vessels and therefore it was completely isolated and closed down. All commodities were in short supply or unavailable. The government had to control the amount of supplies especially food, therefore they made a place called “Victory Kitchen” in order to control supplies and provide food to civilians. People used to come and pick up their food from here. The menu was quite varied and included macaroni with tomato sauce and vegetable soup. Goat’s meat stew was served as well although it reduced the milk supply. There were about 42 victory kitchens around Malta.

Since the time of the Knights of St.John, the market was held in this area, and during the British occupation, they built an indoor market. The building was built with iron. It was the very first building which used iron after the British Naval bakery in Birgu. In fact, both buildings were designed by the same English architect, William Scamp. There is a movie called “Midnight express” which was shot in several places in Valletta, and in the former indoor market. You can see how it was from this movie.

The present building was completed in 2018 as part of a project of Valletta 18, the capital of European culture. Today, the building hosts a variety of food courts on the ground floor and in the basement, there is a market. It looks more like a supermarket rather than market, but we can find traditional Maltese food and products.

“*Is-Suq*” means market in Maltese, but the market in Valletta is called “Monti”. The reason is that the open market in Valletta was held in the place where Monte Di Pieta stood. Monte Di Pieta is a charitable institution which lends money to those who are in need at modest interest rates, on the security of gold, silver or other precious objects given in pawn. It was set up by the knights and is still in operation today. This is also the console for the gold and silversmith, the only place where we can have official stamps, like 24 carat gold or 18 carat gold etc. This is why, as you can see, a lot of goldsmiths and silversmiths are located in this area. In fact, St.Lucia street used to be call Gold Street.

Today although the scale is very small, an open market is held every day near the main gate of Valletta. Besides this, there are various markets held all over Malta, depending on the day of the week. The most popular one for both tourists and locals is the Sunday fish market in Marsaxlokk. Another famous market selling daily goods is the market in Birgu and the farmers’ market in Ta’ Qali.