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GASTRONOMY in the Neamț Mountain Area

Connections of the Traditional Mountain Food Universe of the Neamț County (Catalog)

Neamț Branch of the Mountain Forum of Romania





We dedicate this book to all inhabitants of the Neamț county mountain area who contribute through their lifestyle to the preservation of the local cultural values and who constitute the living patrimony of this place.

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Foreword

The right thought for a better life won ~ in the Romanian Carpathians

We noticed a certain state of consciousness in the Neamt county on the importance of ensuring continuity to the natural economic, social, cultural and spiritual values in the Romanian Carpathian mountain area - manifested since the years 1998-2000. This state of consciousness was shown through a positive attitude towards the draft "Law of the Mountain" and through the moral support granted to the Mountain Forum of Romania. On this fertile ground, the Neamț Branch of the Mountain Forum of Romania was created and evolved. With the support of disinterested and diplomatic efforts of a team made up of competent people, with great sense of responsibility, it has become a "model" branch, which gathered the energies of the mountain communities and cooperated fruitfully with the county administrative agents of the county.

The Neamț mountain area, looked over by mount Ceahlau comprises steep slopes, therefore farmers practice mountain animal husbandry and agriculture with great efforts and in difficult conditions, which require steadiness and strict economic calculations, based on long traditions and complementary activities, as forestry, small industries, tourism, crafts, etc.

The Neamt Branch of the Mountain Forum of Romania won the support of the County Council, - by the use of scientific knowledge - information and inspiration, to run a pilot - project, which includes a sum of economic and cultural traditions, based on the quality of the mountain products. Over the last four years of analysis or testing, it has become certain that for the agriculture and animal husbandry, which are the "engine" of the economy and social life of the rural mountain area, the sustainable future orientation and a major economic opportunity lie in the high quality of the 'mountain products'. Their quality is given by the flower and fodder polymorphism of the pastures and meadows, which is a result of the century-old effort of the mountain farmers, based on exclusive organic fertilizers, with "zero" chemicals, with clean water and air - which ends with the 'mountain product', as an expression of the superior quality – given by the richness of minerals, vitamins, essential oils and medicinal principles of the fodder, clean environment and extensive systems of livestock farming.

The intense, pioneering concern for substantially improving the hygiene conditions at sheepfolds and cowsheds - with already eight pilot - sheepfolds - only in the village of Farcaşa, is yet another demonstration of the value of "mountain national pilot" which is a very necessary component of sustainable mountain development, including tourism.

The exhibitions of "mountain products" set up by Neamț Branch of M.F.R., on the occasion of the General Assembly in Durău, in Piatra Neamt city, or during the celebration of "International Mountain Day" at the Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, at the Romanian Academy and the Romanian Parliament, the accompanying cultural and gastronomic richness - were preceding factors of conviction which encouraged us to draw up the book "Gastronomy in Neamț Mountain Area" within the county project.

A confirmation that these ideas have a good perspective is reflected in the recent regulatory documents of the European Union. The regulation (EU) no. 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs and particularly the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) no. 665/2014, set out the conditions for the recognition of the 'mountain product' and the essential role of producer groups, essentially cooperative associations, in our view 'traditional bio-areas" with transformation and recovery abilities that allow obtaining added value, for the direct benefit of the mountain farmers, herdsmen.

In this context, the book "Gastronomy in Neamț Mountain Area" opens new concerns for the capitalization of the "Romanian mountain goodies" and we are convinced that this work will trigger an "epidemic" that will infuse benefits and hope – to all Romanian Carpathians mountain areas.

Congratulations to the Neamț Branch of the Mountain Forum of Romania, to all supporting institutions and to the team who committed to draw up such a complex work with multiple meanings.

Prof.univ.dr.h.c. Radu Rey
Member of the Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences
Director – Mountain Economy Centre
"Costin C. Kirițescu" National Institute for Economic Research



Welcome word

The sensitivity and tenderness with which the author conquers the mountain.

We should start with Blaga's famous quote, which has become an effigy, "eternity was born in the countryside" if we were to approach the excellent monography signed by the collective authorship of the Neamt Branch of the Mountain Forum of Romania. Essay and scientific study, monography and cookbook, the work communicates researcher's accuracy, systematic, pedagogical approach and academic norm. Beyond the very well prepared, thought out chapters (Nature and culture, for instance) we must see the sensitivity and tenderness with which the authors conquer the mountain, after they had been seduced, in their turn by it.

The book is, again, a documented geography, botany, and zoology treaty, a wonderful gastronomy corpus that approaches the reader with recipes and delicious local cuisine, specific to the Neamt county mountain area. Mythology and anthropology are finely inserted within this substantial fabric. Therefore, the book reads very well forwards as well as backwards, as it has a pronounced unscathed practical value, which introduces us all in a mirific world. The mountain peasant household, with its ineffable beauty, its unscathed moral values carries us as through a paradise from the flora and fauna, to the household and animals, the yearly holidays cycles, the calendar of the mountain farming works etc.

One cannot but observe throughout this work a strong ecological trait: the concern for air, water, soil, the brotherhood of man and nature, animals, forest, environment and ultimately the Beauty and Work of the Creator. Moreover, in one place, the authors point out eloquently: "People from the mountains are happy when the harvest is rich, the animals are healthy, and they have moments of tranquility" In the Christian hymnology there is a verse that goes like this: "to the mountains, my soul! "Ancestrally speaking, the mountain people become also people of the mountain, where they meet God and God talks to them, and they, in their turn talk to Him. On this vertical axis, one must see man's relationship with the mountain, and on the horizontal axis there is the goodness and beauty in relationship with the fellow men, as sublime exercise of imparting a good scent to the World, in the Spirit of love. This book transmits the admiration for our fellows. It breathes through every pore the joy of meeting the other. The other person is surrounded by the Visage aura, and does not remain isolated in the egocentrism of the "individual". Thus, the blooming occurs. The person does not remain in loneliness and isolation, but enters the joy of the community. And so, the communion is produced.

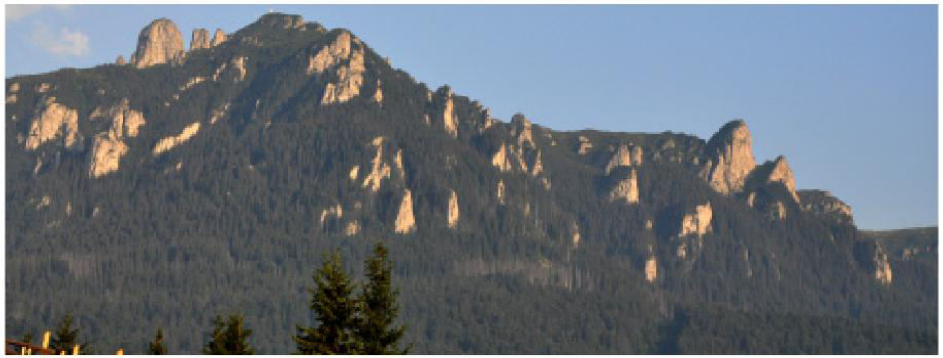
The Lord Christ shared his joy with the Apostles at the table. During the Last Supper. There, they ate and talked. They enjoyed and shared their moods and feelings through words. The authors of this book invite us to sit at the table. To have dinner. It is well known the story of Geo Bogza, where he described the journey of the Lord with St. Peter to the world. They were hosted and offered dinner at a peasant's household. In the morning, at departure time, after the host gave them a few apples in a towel for the journey, St. Peter said to the Lord, "Lord, do something for these people, they have been so hospitable!", "What can I do, Peter?" said the Lord, "Don't you see they have everything they need?", "Do something, God, let them see their own face once a year!", "See their own face, you say? So be it!". And from that generation on, says Geo Bogza so beautifully, Mihai Eminescu was born.

Two milestones, I think, we discover and re-discover through this book about the mountain people, as old as life and history together: 1. the fear of God and 2. the shyness in relation to people. These are the moral benchmarks that father Dumitru Stăniloae, the greatest theologian of the twentieth century postulated in his memorable writings, moral benchmarks which today's generations of children and young people should refer to as models.

I conclude by remembering the story from Patericon, in which a young man asked the old master: "When will the end of the world come, Father?". And Abba replied: "When there will be no paths between people, my son!"

Congratulations to the team of authors led by Mr. Vasile Avădanei who have worked on this book. I wish the Neamt Branch of the Mountain Forum in Romania to gain consistency and glow within the cultural, educational and spiritual area of this space and time in which we live.

Fr. Dorin Ploscaru
Member of the Writers' Union of Romania




The right thought won

How we came to the idea of the book

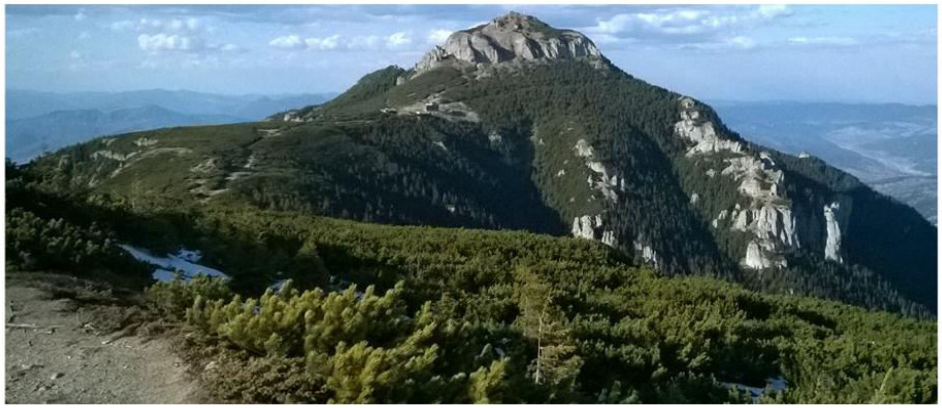
In 2012, when the Neamț Branch of the Mountain Forum of Romania was set up, the question asked was that of finding ways to highlight the local social, economic, natural and cultural specific features, which constitute the starting point in developing a strategy and a work plan for the sustainable development of the Neamț county mountain area. These specific features must be the mark of the association's contribution to the mountain development, within the coordinates established at a national level by the Mountain Forum of Romania.

Following this approach, an opportunity occurred to develop a European collaborative relationship with the Province South Tyrol in Italy, where we met many examples of good practice on how competitive development can blend with culture and traditions. We also observed the peculiarities of the application of the concepts "sustainable development", "organic products". We learned that the mountain area of the Neamț county has an abundance of elements with the same potential for capitalization in a local context, which can distinguish Neamț county as a tourist destination.

We met older and more recent concerns of identifying the heritage elements of the Neamț county, which should mark out the particularities of its cultural specificity and can be valued in projects and programs with impact on the social and economic local life. Many scholars and artists were attracted by various areas of the life of the people living in the Neamț mountain area and created important works, including a wealth of information which preserved and secured the local heritage on the long term. We would also like to emphasize the collective efforts of the Romanian Academy, which made sure that the tangible and intangible heritage of Bistrita valley should not disappear under the waters of the reservoire Izvoru Muntelui and Stejaru hydropower plant, as well as the downstream hydropower plants, which had a profound impact on the lives of communities that live in this area.

Recently, Ms. Elena Florescu, a prominent ethnographer from Neamț county published several reference works through which Neamț county was ensured with the conservation of numerous ethnographic, architectural, spiritual, domestic industry values. We noticed, however, that despite these efforts, an area of people's lives from the mountain area, less visible, more perishable, but equally valuable remains uncovered. It is the area concerning the traditional food, which is an important support for the tourism, public food service, food trade, but also for investments, compliance and revitalization as a solution for sustainable development. They can increase the household income, the living standards and may constitute elements of attractiveness and demographic balance in the mountain area.

Therefore, we considered necessary to focus our efforts on collecting information from the sources, in order to maintain their authenticity and originality. We aimed at registering, as much as possible, the subsistence oriented lifestyle and food life of the local population, the gastronomic show and the specific food elements, as they have been preserved and still exist, but also with more recent influences, which respect for the "customs".



[1] * * *, Etnografia văii Bistriței, Grupul de cercetări complexe Bicaz al Academiei Române, Piatra Neamț, 1973

[2] Elena Florescu, Textile populare de casă din zona Neamț, Ed. Etnologică, București, 2010

[3] Elena Florescu, Arhitectura populară din zona Neamț, Ed. Etnologică, București, 2011

[4] Elena Florescu, Marina Sabados, Cornel Miftode, Biserici vechi din lemn din ținutul Neamț, Ed. C.M. Imago, Piatra Neamț, 2012



Background

In order to build a sustainable mountain development concept it is necessary to define a reference element. One cannot aspire to high goals unless he defines his source, from which to build the foundation. Also, one cannot define a new beginning. Time has no patience to create the comfort of our beginnings. Time gives us continuity. We have only to adapt in order to build elements that capitalize opportunities. The aim is to increase the welfare and the predictability level of some welfare coordinates.

The fundamental problem that concerns us is, above all, the food. If we solve this problem even on the medium term, we can build other personality traits, we can meet other needs.

The Neamț Branch of the Mountain Forum of Romania has recently emerged within the civil society, but it has ambitious objectives. That is why it aims at defining a living root of the written and unwritten history of these areas, in order to build the medium and long term goals and to make plans designed to improve the lives of the residents of the mountain.

The traditional foods of the mountain area are less described in printed publications. This field is perishable and dynamic. Seasonality, the manufacturing conditions, the preservation for limited periods of time, the combination of gourmet recipes contribute to the development of culinary arts and to the added value of the products. The association with the attribute "healthy" increases the attractiveness and encourages consumption "on the spot" through various forms of mountaineering or commercial distribution networks.

From traditional products, traditional recipes and "technologies" one can then build a pyramid, a multilevel model of products, which are obtained through modernized processing operations, with different forms of preservation and storage, using a somewhat modern technological contribution. In this way, various levels of "traditional vs. upgraded" scale can be defined, in order to satisfy different degrees of needs and requirements, so at least some of the features of the mountain products should be valorized.

Is there a traditional specific feature of the Neamț county?

It is difficult to define such a feature, in an area marked by mobility through transhumance, transportation of timber on rafts and especially by migrations from Transylvania to Moldova. All these movements of people, animals and goods had a particular influence on lifestyle and nutrition.

We tried to identify these elements of specificity from the mountain area, temporarily associated to an administrative territorial unit (Neamț county), but naturally bordered by valleys, mounts and crests: Ozana valley, Bistrița middle valley, Tazlău valley and other valleys included therein (Cuejdi, Cracău, Bicaz, Tarcău, Calu – Iapa, Bistricioara, Mastacăn). They create nuances and peculiarities. We proceeded to an itinerary through mountain villages to collect data and information from villagers, farmers, the elderly, scholars, public managers, business owners.

We found differences in approaches, operations, practices, results, which have created a mosaic of positioning hues within a broader territorial framework: the Carpathians, Romania, the Balkans.

Therefore, the answer can only be positive. The knowledge with which we operate is not new, especially the traditions treated as a subject, but their systematization according to certain criteria can make an additional contribution of value and authority, can create new premises for an an important contribution to the reinforcement of the cultural foundation of Romania's position in the European Union.

But there is one more problem! It can be said that the tradition painting is a static one. It resembles a picture, made at a specific time. But everything around moves, develops and modernizes. The dynamics of things creates changes that integrate both known practices and modernized means. Modernisation facilitates work, creates comfort, makes us feel good. Therefore, it is very difficult to define the traditional element.

The time criterion, the age is not enough. We have met old practices and habits that do not have traditional features. We have met traditional elements that work through upgraded technology in order to match requirements of food security and production reproducibility. Finally, we have met traditional practices which are determined in the local mentality by technological primitivism (the temperature of the milk ready to be processed is measured with the elbow). We have adopted an approach that would reconcile all these situations on a continuous integration, which is really the connection between past and future through the present.

To this, the current way of focusing on traditional elements is added. We try to find elements of spiritual emulation in an area where the struggle for existence was and is still tough, where the time for subtleties is very limited. Often, people here barely have time to eat frugally. The expectations to display spectacular dishes are tempered by common dishes. This information offers an integrating Romanian picture, which confirms what history allowed to be named Romanian people: a common universe where there is a mosaic of hues that give a charming color, a gastronomic "tapestry" from Neamț.

In order to be rigorous we appeal to the legal regulations regarding the traditional products: Order no. 690 of 28.09.2004 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Sustainable Development which approve the Norms regarding the conditions and criteria for certifying traditional products. The traditional product is defined as follows:

Traditional product - the product which must be obtained from traditional raw materials, include a traditional mixture or a mode of production and/or processing which reflect a traditional technological process of production and/or of processing and which clearly distinguishes from similar products belonging to the same category.



The last condition is more difficult to fulfill. Currently, in the mountain area of Neamț county, certifications were obtained only in Tazlău village: Florean acacia comfiture, Florean syrup tree, Florean elderberry comfiture, Florean rosehip jam, Florean dandelion comfiture, certified by FLOREAN ANGELICA family business, trout smoked in fir branches, certified by IOSUB CONSTANTIN family business.

While documenting for this work we discovered that there are more local food products in the mountain area which fulfill other conditions besides uniqueness. There are also products which do not belong either to the traditional, or the local cuisine, but they are consumed in the mountain area. In order to show things from a different point of view, we included a classification

☆☆☆ - starless: product without traditional features, but consumed by the mountain people

★☆☆ - one star: product with traditional elements

★★☆ - two stars: traditional product which does not meet the condition of uniqueness

★★★ - three stars: certified, authentic traditional product

The project team

Several categories of persons have made significant contributions to the content of this work:

- the coordinating group including:

The project team: Lazăr LATU (project manager), Gabriela MARIAN (financial responsible), Vasile AVĂDĂNEI (technical expert), Lidia AVĂDĂNEI (tehnical expert), Elena DAVID (data processing), Aurora ENE (environment consultant), Camelia ALIXANDRU (technical consultant), Dragomir PETRESCU (technical consultant), Eugenia PALEU (plant resources and gastronomy consultant).

Territorial collaborators: the drawing up of this work required a documentation caravan on-site. Representative persons from each village were contacted: mayors and/or deputy mayors, heads of farmers associations, local personalities, owners of public food services and tourist facilities, others persons who agreed to participate to the discussions. We consulted several documentary sources with reference to the mountains or to the Neamț county mountain area that were considered useful for the topic.

Territorial reference:

Agapia: Neculai Năstase, Florin Ciotârcă, Nicoleta Ciotârcă, Ion Anița, Constantin Pralea;
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Other collaborators: Gabriela Macsim, Ilie Şerban

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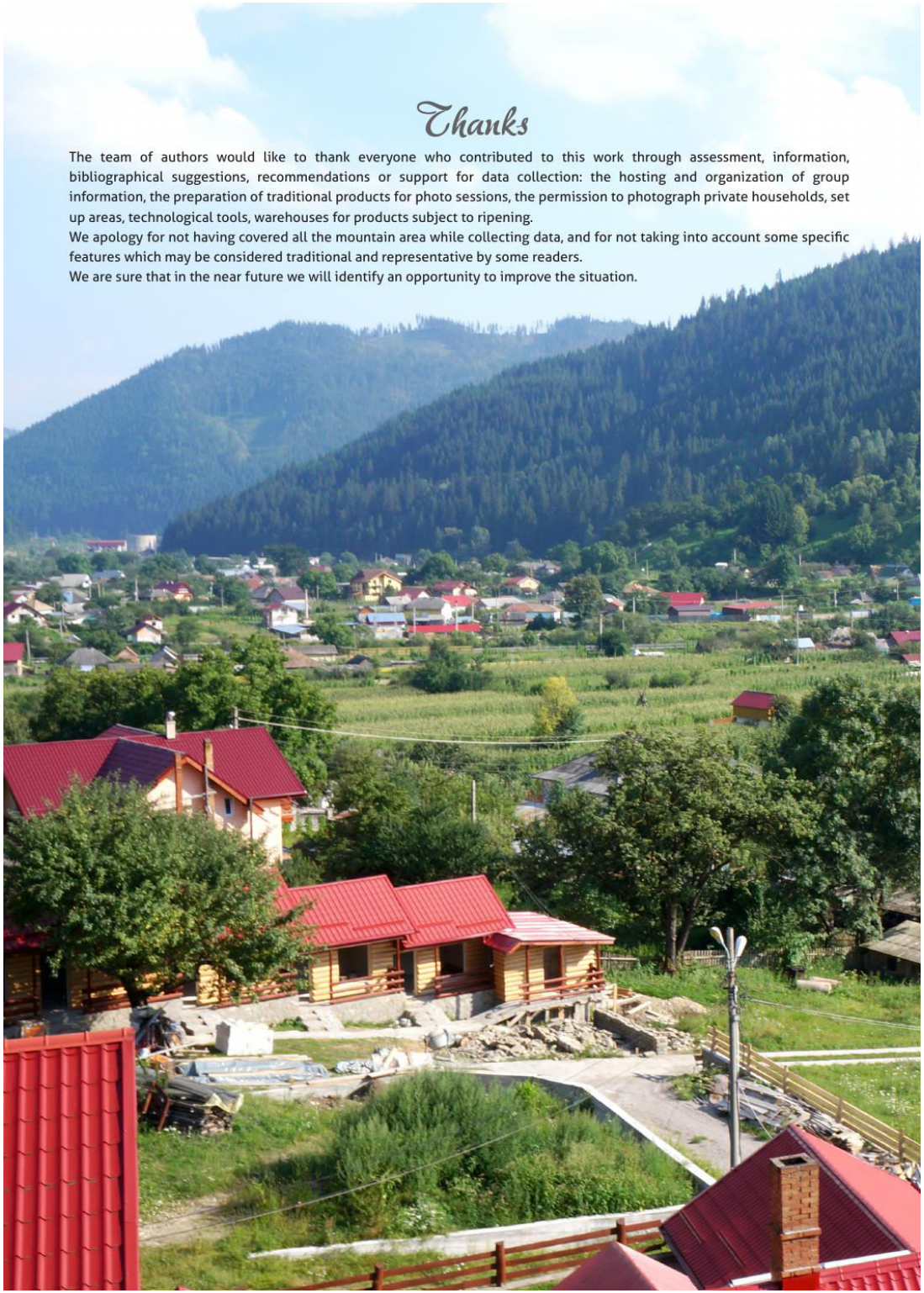
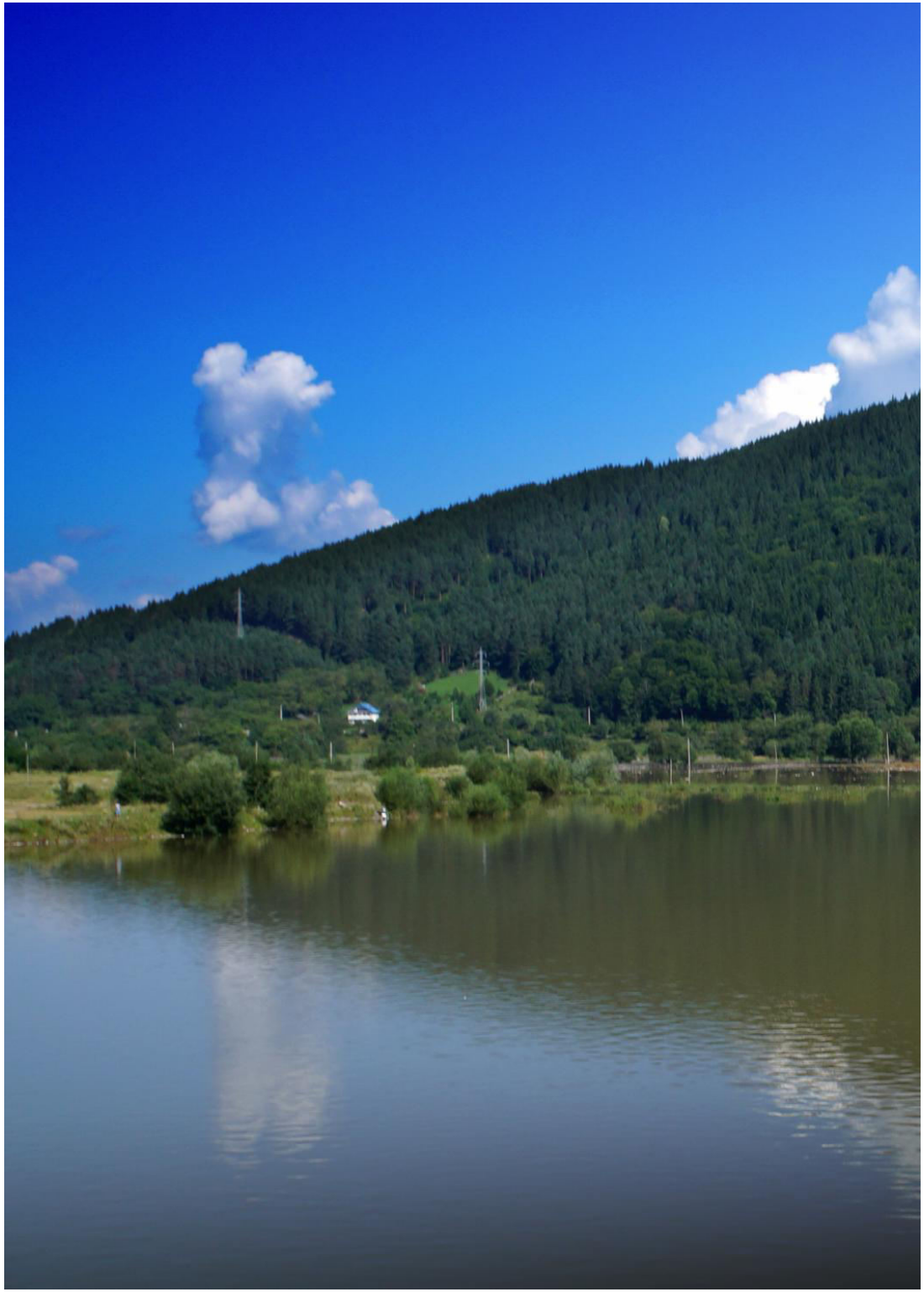
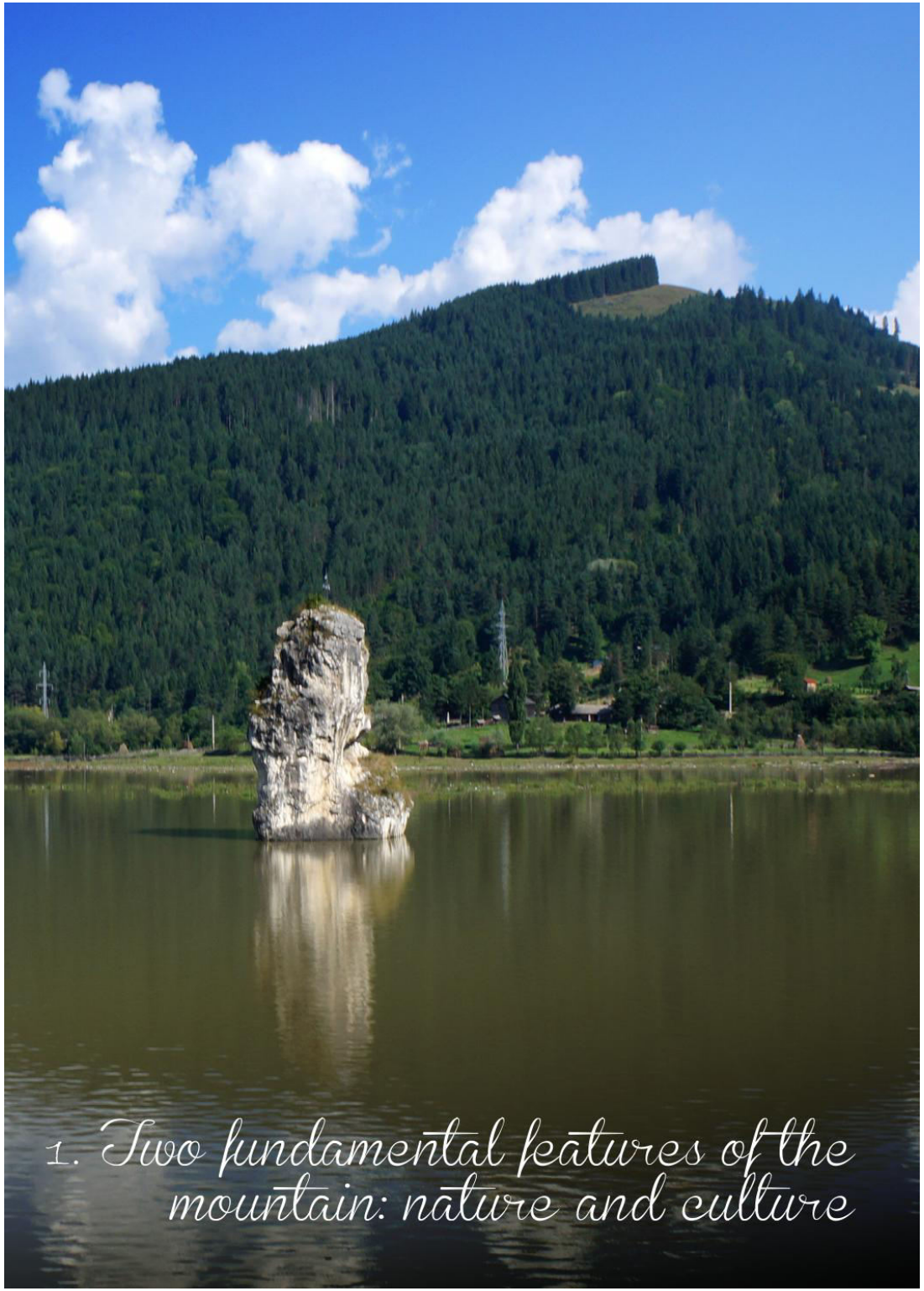
We apology for not having covered all the mountain area while collecting data, and for not taking into account some specific features which may be considered traditional and representative by some readers.

We are sure that in the near future we will identify an opportunity to improve the situation.









1. Two fundamental features of the mountain: nature and culture

1.1. Places

The Neamț county mountain area occupies the western part and includes several defining floors, both for the vegetation and for the spotting of resources that people can access for use (mining, processing, consumption) .

- alpine zone over 1,900 m, mean annual temperature 1.5 – 2.5oC, the average growing season - 90 days. Location: the upper part of Ceahlău, Budacu, Hăşmaşu Mare mountains.
- subalpine zone, 1,400-2,200 m, mean annual temperature 2.0 - 3,5oC, the average growing season - 120 days. Location: Cheile Bicazului, foot of mount Ceahlău, upper part of Tarcău and Stânişoara mountains.
- upper mountain zone: 900-1800 m, favourable for spruce forests, mean annual temperature 5.0 – 5.5oC. Location: Bistrita, Hăşmaş, Stânişoara, Tarcău, Goşman mountain area.
- submontane zone: 600-1500 m, favourable for deciduous forests, the mean annual temperature over 5.0oC.

Location: access valleys of rivers and their main tributaries: Bistrița (middle mountain course and main tributaries: Bistricioara, Audia, Pângărăcior, Oanțu, Secu, Cuejdi, Calu, Iapa, Mastacăn) Bicaz (full pool), Tazlău (upper pool), Cracău (upper pool, with tributary Almaş) Ozana (upper and middle pool).

Access is performed as follows:

- on the mountain transition axis – north to south: Vânători Neamț, Crăcăoani, Negreşti, Gârcina, Piatra Neamț, Roznov, Tazlău;
- towards the neighbouring mountain areas: (to Vatra Dornei), Grințieș (to Toplița), Bicaz Chei (to Gheorgheni).

From geographical point of view, there are 24 municipalities included, selected according to GD 328/2004: Piatra Neamț (with annexes Văleni and Doamna), the town of Bicaz and the following villages: Agapia, Alexandru cel Bun, Bicaz Chei, Bicazu Ardelean, Borca, Borleşti, Ceahlău, Crăcăoani, Dămuc, Farcaşa, Gârcina, Grințieș, Hangu, Pângărați, Piatra Şoimului, Pipirig, Poiana Teiului, Tarcău, Taşca, Tazlău, Vânători-Neamț. Also, several localities, traditionally recognized as mountain areas are added to them: Târgu Neamț, Bălțăteşti, Ghindăoani, Negreşti. We propose Dumbrava Roşie to be included as well, through its mountain area, located outside the built-up areas.

Although the Neamț county mountain area is perceived at a national and regional level as part of the Carpathians, from the social, economic and cultural point of view, we found elements of transition between Bucovina and Transylvania, but also specific elements due to the relief, the river pools, the access ways, the area climate factors, which generated a particular imprint of these places. Moreover, we noticed differences in occupations, cultural traits, resistance to change, the preservation of the cultural core, the respect for traditional rigours. The transylvanian influences are found particularly in villages bordering Harghita county: Tarcău, Dămuc, Bicaz Chei, Bicazu Ardelean, Grințieș.

The study highlights the two inhabited areas - "middle mountain" and "upper mountain", which we call "inner mountain area" and "transition axis from mountains to hills". They are marked on the county map.

One important element that we want to note is that the "front areas" differentiate from the "rear areas". Thus, the sloping side of the mountain creates areas exposed to direct sunlight, during the sun daytime movement from east to west. These are the "front areas". North-facing slopes are less exposed to direct sunlight and areas are called "rear areas". The daily life of the local people does reflect significant differences in terms of biomass production between two categories of areas: the diffuse radiation offsetts the light flows, necessary for photosynthesis. However, there are differences in relationship to the rainfall.

The predominantly northwesterly winds bring a higher meteoric water intake to the "rear areas". In addition to that, the direct radiation, which the "front areas" slopes are exposed to, accelerates the evaporation processes of water. In this way, differences in the dynamics of water and soil reserve occur. Therefore, the grasslands of the "front areas" suffer from thirst, while those in the "rear areas" enjoy sufficient supply of water for longer periods. On the food chain, these differences are reflected in the amount of grass consumed by cattle grazing on the two areas and then in the production and mixture of milk. Farmers say that these differences are noticeable for 10-14 days, which is reflected in the cost, production, quality of the dairy products during the grazing period.



[5] Costache Rusu, *Resurse complementare ale pădurii din zona Neamțului*, Ed. Academiei Române, 2007

[6] Theodor Maruşca, *Cercetări preliminare asupra gradienților naturali şi socio-economici montani pentru stabilirea pe baze ştiințifice a subvențiilor agricole în funcție de altitudine şi alte handicapuri*, Al 3-lea seminar anual al Centrului Național de Economie Montană, Bucureşti, 2014.07.04



1.1.1. Climate features

Of course, the Neamț county mountain area has its peculiarities of temperate continental climate, with hot summers and cold winters, with a balanced distribution of rainfalls throughout the year and throughout climate cycles, which are noticed every 5 years. However, local climatic peculiarities appear too, they are sometimes favourable, sometimes ... they bring inconvenience and additional costs.

We would like to highlight some particular elements:

- when weather forecasters present and refer to the mountains, they include also the weather station Ceahlău. The overwhelming majority of weather bulletins on Ceahlău temperature report the lowest temperature of all mountain stations. This brings out a disadvantage which is reflected in the costs of life: the house fire is required for more days in order to maintain suitable ambient temperature, the spring agricultural works are delayed, and the autumn works are shifted earlier;
- the houses placed on slopes confront with accessibility difficulties, which become more serious throughout the extended freezing periods and through increased risk of floods and even avalanches;
- it can be said that the axis which separate mountains from hills creates microclimate areas where temperatures are somewhat higher than the area average, which induce adjustment difficulties for some householders in villages situated in these areas, because they have not found the most appropriate solutions to adjust the agricultural and animal husbandry activities to the regional climate rhythms;
- there is an area within Pipirig village where a warmer wind blows, that melts snow earlier in the spring and brings a surprising gift for households;
- there is also an area within Tarcău valley where a thermal inversion occurs, that has a beneficial effect on the local climate;
- the climatic aspect is prominent in Ceahlău areas (the neighboring villages, especially in Durău) and Tarcău and can be used for medical treatment through ionized air and appropriate humidity. The proximity to Cheile Bicazului and to resort Borsec (combining great air with water) extend these favorable areas. Neguleşti, Oglinzi, Agapia are added to them. Some of these localities became spas, others are better known by the locals and have not been promoted enough.

1.1.2. Settlements

Neamț county mountain settlements have undergone fundamental changes within the last century. An important transformation occurred, which was driven by two processes of the 20th century. One is related to the increased accessibility, due to national road building and the railway line Piatra Neamț - Bicaz. Roads were built, following watercourses as much as possible and they gave access to Vatra Dornei (along Bistrița valley), to the Mureș pool (along Bistricioara valley to Toplița, and along Bicaz valley to Gheorgheni).

Where it was not possible to follow the watercourse, passes through mountains were built, following the traditional routes, such as the pass from Poiana Teiului to Pipirig. Worthy of mentioning are the crossing through Cheile Bicazului and the turn to Borsec, which, although do not belong to the county, they allow the transition from Neamț county to other regions, as mentioned before.

Other localities benefited from the modernization of tight roads, which are usually continued by forest roads, but the connections have not been justified in order to cross the mountains. Thus, the north - south transit axis from mountains to hills includes roads: along Topolita river (Agapia village), Cracău river (Crăcăoani village), Cuejdi river (Gârcina village), Calu și Iapa rivers (Piatra Şoimului village), Mastacăn river (Borleşti village), and Tazlău river (Tazlău village). Within the mountain area, the following tight roads are mentioned: along Secu river (Vadu rivillage), Pângărăcior and Oanțu rivers (Pângărați village), Tarcău river (Tarcău village), Bicăjel river (Dămuc village), Secu river (Ceahlău village) and Ozana river (Pipirig village).

The settlements moved along these communication channels, and abandoned the old settings, which were located mainly on the peaks. The connectivity, trade and cultural exchanges improved. The architecture layout improved too, by changing from huts to nicer, wooden and stone houses. The huts still remained as temporary shelters in hay or pasture areas, related to activities taking place here on a seasonal basis.

Currently, the general configuration of the villages is the scattered type (specific to the mountain area) but customized for each area, in order to take advantage of all local favourable elements: terraced valleys, broad valleys, slow slopes with greater accessibility to gentle hights, more pronounced side valleys created by streams and torrents.

On the other hand, Bistrița valley is marked by the impact of the hydropower landscape which starts from Poiana Teiului and continues towards the hilly areas following Piatra Neamț. This disrupted deeply the mountain lifestyle both by occupying important territories with water, and by forced displacement to higher areas or to the cities of Piatra Neamț, Târgu Neamț and Bicaz. These cities include neighbourhoods where streets bear names related to the areas of origin of the population that settled there (Hangu, Poiana Teiului, Audia streets, etc.).

Households have a structure adapted to both urban and mountain activities. The vast majority of lands both inside and outside the built-up areas are fenced in order to limit the uncontrolled access through "shortcuts".



1.2. People

The population of the studied area is characterized by diversity due to displacements of the population during various historical periods: migrations from Transylvania, transhumance, marriages and sites in the area (the constructions of road networks and railways, the hydropower site on Bistrița valley, the mining). However, there remained a population with stable features, which reflect particular communities and influence decisively the local public and private life.

People's lives are marked by the efforts of ensuring primary living conditions: housing, food, clothing and thermal comfort during the cold season.

Human nature is influenced by the seasonality of activities: work (traditional and modern activities) and entertainment (community celebrations, religious holidays). Mountain people are very sensitive, they want to be asked about all projects proposals which are to improve their lives, they are sober in making decisions (they defer them until the last term) and are reluctant to the new (they hardly adjust to new solutions, even if they are in their favour).

The level of culture is suitable, it includes a mixture of religious spirituality and life experience stored over generations. In the past, the departures downhill on rafts or with sheep flocks during transhumance were cyclical and the people returned to their origin. Gradually, new ideas "from the field" broke through and were used in different circumstances, within a slow progression process.

The rupture that accompanied the strongest change was featured by the forced industrialization (in accordance with the world economic development) which brought new people, new cultures, new rhythm, bigger economic effects (higher incomes) in comparison with the results of the traditional labour. The mountain population was damaged and bewildered, while its society stratified.

Most of them got used to easier work, which generated higher incomes and abandoned the traditional occupations. Some went to foreign countries or moved to the city with provisional intentions, which extended up to uprooting. Another part remained within the limits of traditionalism, either due to an inability to understand the "new times" or due to a hard desire to preserve traditional mountain life and work. This solution translates into a special tribute and a wearing, long-term impact, which produce major slippage when generations change.

Recently, the agricultural mountain activities have been subject to subsidizing policies, but the lack of consistency of the message accompanying them caused greater confusion, or encouraged passive waiting and the convenience of secured income, with long-term negative effects on the mentality and on the fight for performance.

The demographic and cultural dynamics are significant in the preservation of traditions. The impairing demographic factors are:

- young people leaving for schools (secondary and higher education) which do not include elements of mountain life or mountain-oriented applications;
- the aging of population through increased life expectancy and declining birth rates;
- The exodus of people of working age to the city or to other developed countries of the European Union, where they obtain higher and easier incomes (this reduces the social cohesion);
- the pressure of modernization values and paradigms and that of competitiveness lead to productivity gains and cost savings, which traditional mountain production cannot keep up with. The added value elements are not emphasized convincingly enough to offset the other deficit elements;
- the intercultural exchanges occur with various intensities, that are supported by promoting policies and by investments in which Romanian elements, again, are disadvantaged.



1.3. Occupations

As always, people's lives have been marked by the struggle for existence, the procurement of food directed and subordinated all human activities. The supply chain is defined as follows: food for animals (pasture and grazing during summer, dry fodder and indoors feeding in winter), milk and meat, dairy and meat products, kitchen (agricultural products from the garden are added) and procuring a balanced diet throughout the whole year. Despite the efforts, the supply chain is incomplete because the productivity depends almost exclusively on the physical capacity.

The difference is covered from the exploitation and use of wood: barter "wood against food (agricultural or fodder products)". Also, the balance benefit/cost is unfavorable. Bartering involving the same wood (forestry) has long been a solution. More recently, entrepreneurs from all fields turned to logging, due to the low costs and the ease of making money. In those circumstances, the barter "wood against products" turned into "wood against money" and lost its traditional social importance. The subsidy policies must be supported by communication to maintain the interest for the traditional activities of the mountain people.

In terms of importance and volume of activities, there are main occupations (farming, agriculture, forestry) and secondary activities (hunting and fishing). Also, women perform important domestic works (kitchen and textile manufacturing activities).





1.3.1. Agriculture

The extension of agriculture in the mountain area considers the climate risks (rainfall, frosts, limited sunlight - both as number of sunny days and as land placed on the northern slopes). The occupation was optimized by restricting the range of crops and by adjusting varieties of plants resistant to cold. The main driving force that creates motivation and determination in mountain farming is the proximity of the resource to the consumption place. The problem of food supplements "from the field" remains, where traditionally the exchange "wood against food", "wood against fodder" is performed. This exchange was intensely practiced in the period of rafting.

For human nutrition

The direct concern is to ensure food for human nutrition (individual, family, community). This has led to the development of a mountain agricultural sector supported by learning and adjusting to the mountain conditions. Practical knowledge of plant growing (large batches of field plants - as much as they are locally available), vegetable growing (mainly root crops), horticulture (trees and fruit shrubs) and apiculture (beekeeping is quite spectacular in the mountain area) is required. Nature is stimulated by maintenance (weeding - mainly manually) and by additional fertilizing with manure and purine. There is a staunch restraint against using chemicals application in the mountain areas. Crops are available to meet the needs in fresh and preserved form.

More recently, the mountain people showed concern for taking over and cropping certain species of wild flora for higher yields: buckthorn, wild strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, mountain ash etc.

The required knowledge includes information about crop technologies, assortment technology, maintenance, harvesting, preparation for storage, storage conditions and preparation for consumption.

For animal feed

The concern for feed is indirect. If animals are well fed, one obtains good quality and large quantity of milk and meat. One must perform in three directions which require different knowledge:

- mountain grazing throughout summer and autumn: the animals have access to grass and other fresh resources;
- fodder crop production, especially red clover (Trifolium pratense) and alfalfa (Medicago sativa) for additional intake of plant proteins; usually, they are consumed dry, in the winter;
- hay production: summer scything and aftermath scything. Dry hay is produced to ensure feed during indoors period;

Knowledge about the structure of the meadows, the mowing and hay drying operations, the storage conditions and the preparation for consumption is required.

1.3.2. Zootechny

Zootechny has the highest impact on mountain residents because important biological improvement between the physical demand of the daily activities and the availability of the food energy has been made. In this respect, meat is one of the most important nutritive vehicles.

The concern for ensuring this type of resource created two categories of occupations: animal husbandry and shepherding, whose origins are lost in the mists of time.

Animal husbandry

There is a limited variety of animals suitable for the mountain area: cattle, sheep, goats (less often and more recent), pigs, poultry and rabbits (rarely met). Their number is linked to the size of the property (in order to ensure the fodder resources), size of investment (housing - folds, stables, winter stables, processing tools), dedicated time, physical ability (and knowledge), size of association (usually of mutual aid) and understanding.

This occupation requires important practical knowledge. The social position within the community of a householder is highly influenced by the number of animals he owns. Hence, the respect, the leadership attributes, the trust from other householders etc. result. And animals give good feedback whether the owner is industrious and "worthy".

Animal husbandry requires knowledge of both zootechny and veterinary medicine. The good health provides less daily effort (not including the recovery efforts) and higher quantities of milk, meat, eggs etc. In general, the reflex is to sacrifice the animal that shows signs of impaired health. Only epidemics attract external expertise and specialized regional approach. Particular attention is given to the regeneration of the livestock and animal breeding for additional resources. The population control becomes a tool in planning the consumption of meat sources. The number of individuals is increased by relatively stable physiological mechanisms, the human skills decrease the uncontrolled mortality; thus, intervention is possible as slaughtering for meat (lambs, calves, goats, piglets) in order to decrease the number of animals within the limits of affordability both for the family and for the nature providing fodder resources.

The assessment of the feed is related to the head of cattle. Hay consumption is not whole. One must take into consideration

that the amount of feed intended for a cow can also feed five sheep (Farcaşa).

Shepherding

If the animal is well fed, then the owner enjoys a rich harvest, as the feeding of animals is a chief concern of the owners. Shepherding occurs in the best time of the year to ensure milk production.

A shepherd calendar includes general stages and customizes elements of accessibility, microclimate, interaction with other local factors. Generally, sheep and cattle programs are recorded:

- sheep and goats grazing starts around the date of 1st May (Armindeni). It lasts until 14th October (Good Friday) and 26th October (St. Demetrius) and is accompanied by milking. Thereafter grazing may continue, but without milking, until the first snow.
- cattle grazing begins mid-May and ends also on 14th October (Good Friday), then they enter the stalls. When weather allows, cattle will feed on the lands adjacent to the house after picking the harvest. Milking takes place during the entire grazing period and continues in the stalls.

For the internal mountain area, the calendar is restricted to 120-150 days, while the transition area from mountains to hills extends to more than 150 days. The autumn period is clearly different: while cattle enter the stalls, sheep still graze until snowfall.

Although it seems trivial, the driving of animals to pasture has several key elements:

- rotational grazing: the pasture is divided into lots; grazing is performed one time per lot, giving time to other lots to regenerate;
- animals do not exhibit thirst, but the production is affected; they must have access to drinking water at least two times per day;
- rest: animals have physical limitations; a period of rest at noon is needed for energy recovery;
- crowding: the flock and herd are forms of animal "social interaction", but also the means of spreading disease and parasites. A skillful shepherd detects and destroys individuals' attempts to become dominant, which creates a state of stress and decreased milk production;
- salt: the mineral intake is important for the metabolic balance in ruminants. Therefore, they have access to lumps of salt, placed especially for them in the yard;
- sheepfold: the whereabouts of the sheep and cattle are important for their hygiene and for the land. Especially due to rainfall and manure, the land becomes muddy and is contaminated with pathogens that can easily reach the milk. In some areas, the sheepfold is cleaned two times per week. In other areas, the sheepfold is moved from time to time to the grassy field. In terms of land quality, sheepfolds bring important nutrients for the ground. If this contribution is in excess, imbalances may arise in the floristic mixture of the pastures. There are also other details which rely on shepherd's skills: the permanence of milking, the periods of heat and the administration of treatments.

The planning of births decisively influence the production of milk and meat. One must consider that the period of pregnancy is generally three and a half months in sheep and goats and nine months in cattle. The planning of births is performed for late winter and early spring for two reasons:

- it is designed to maximize lactation during May - June - July (when the grass is tender);

It is intended that the slaughtering of lambs, kids and calves to be made in periods adjusted to certain spiritual calendars: at Easter, lambs are slaughtered, in early summer, calves are slaughtered, in relation with rituals or periods between fasting times. Meat consumption is also threatened by perishability and it is necessary during peak agricultural activities (scything and hay gathering) and forestry (logging). All these require competence and give substance to shepherd's occupation.





1.3.3. Forestry

Wood is a forest resource that has been used since ancient times as currency to add up to the necessary resources, to feed people and animals, as well as for other necessary household and personal items.

Wood is an available (yet) resource for construction, furniture, firewood and other goods. Woodcutting is considered of secondary importance in terms of this study. It can be crucial for the person who deals exclusively with it. That is why we only mention it here, without going into details.

1.3.4. Domestic activities

These activities are considered "light" chores and are performed particularly by housewives. In the family division of labour the woman does the cooking, sewing, weaving, embroidery etc. for providing the necessities of life.

The kitchen

If you eat well, you live well. The kitchen plays a decisive role in nutrition in several ways:

- to ensure the nutritional content of food;
- to associate types of food to favour digestion, and to avoid uncontrolled biochemical activation;
- to avoid monotony in the diet, which generate nutrient deficiencies and routine of digestion (variation);
- the amount and sequence of foods eaten at one table;
- the time between meals;
- the preparation form in order to be easily digested, and the presentation form in order to be attractive;
- the gustatory display that brings the excitement and pleasure of eating; here we are already talking about art (culinary).

The mealtime is one of the main supports for social interaction anywhere, including the mountains. Eventually, the promotion of tourism itself is based on a healthy eating message. What happens beyond the fireplace becomes interesting and useful. Moreover, the culinary delights give colour, harmony, distinction, appetite and easier digestion. They involve all senses: sight, taste, smell, balance, the sound that comes from crisp, from tableware (dishes)....

For these reasons, the kitchen becomes a complex ground of artistic events or simplifications (frugal), depending on the available time, the association with an event, the available materials and, especially, on skills, since we address the occupations chapter.

The title of "housewife" is associated primarily with the quality of cook. Some women become famous in the culinary art and are required to participate in the preparation of meals for events or other collective occasions.

Manufacture

Domestic activities take place outside agricultural and zootechnic seasons. They are practiced among other household activities within a quite accurate program. The spinning, sewing and weaving meet the domestic needs of getting dressed and the thermal comfort. Traditionally, the clothing and the inner decorations with the role to insulate the household were made in the house. The skills and artistic sense have helped in creating artistic designs meant to please the eye and to bring comfort and harmony.

Women in particular deal with this occupation among other light chores: feeding and watering the animals, cleaning the garbage, monitoring births and growths of lambs, calves and goat kids. All these are performed in addition to raising children, which is the main concern.

Manufacturing is also a secondary activity, outside the aim of this study.

1.4. Resources

In the mountain area, the generosity of nature is only apparent. The intensity of photosynthesis and the complex chemical and biochemical reactions that follow are affected by sunlight, temperature, and the growing season. Instead, the exploitation of the mountain resources is farther from the affordability threshold than the hilly and plain areas. Therefore, the picture of their inexhaustible nature is somewhat distorted.

The resources which the mountain people have access to are divided into several categories:

- the ones offered by the generosity of nature: they only have to be picked and consumed, after more or less processing (gastronomic skills are displayed here): berries, herbs and mushrooms;
- the territory ones, that can host other resource: farmland for cereals, vegetables, fruit trees; grassland (pastures and meadows). Here, the plant resources develop and regenerate in annual cycles, through solar energy (photosynthesis);
- the animal resources, as complex forms that give value to a part of the plant resources (feed): cattle, sheep, goats, poultry, etc. To them, the fish resources are added and, more strainedly, the hunting resources.

1.4.1. Resources from the generosity of nature

There are several mountain resources which do not require human effort but for harvesting.

Berries

Berries have a great potential of exploitation and capitalization. The following categories of berries are available in Neamț county: wild cherries, dogwoods, hazels, roseberries, wild strawberries, sea-buckthorns, wild apples, wild pears, sloes, gooseberries, dog roses, blackberries, raspberries, elderberries, rowan, guelder-roses, bilberries, lingonberries etc. Junipers and hops are added, from which the female cones are used.

The fruit is used according to its physical form. There is a wide range of applications: fresh consumption, drink with honey, dietary tea, cider, liqueur, sour wine, nectar, brandy, wine, concentrate juice, syrup, cream, sauce, compote, paste, puree, jelly, jam, marmalade, sorbet, candied fruits, roasted seeds etc. A lot of applications are dedicated to confectionery, patisserie for various products: ice cream, cakes, soft drinks, desserts etc.



[7] Costache Rusu, Cercetări privind valorificarea unor produse ale pădurilor din județul Neamț, altele decât lemnul, Teză de doctorat, Univ. Suceava, 2007;

Medicinal plants

The special mixture of spontaneous (and later cultivated) plants led to the correlation of consumption with the beneficial effects on human health. In time, remedies were identified, some with very visible effects. Therefore, the inhabitants of the mountains made room for such activities. There were local celebrities in every generation, masters in the art of using medicinal and aromatic plants: elderly women, monks from monasteries, some doctors and more and more pharmacists.

In Piatra Neamț, Vorel pharmacies have been recorded since the early nineteenth century, with remedies resulted from medicinal plants. In Neamț county, 1.750 plant species have been identified, of which 150 have medicinal properties . A list of plants with medicinal properties in Neamț county is shown below .

Bark (cortex), flowers and inflorescences (flores), leaves (folium), shoots (turio, gemmae), fruit (fructus), seeds (semen), the aerial parts (herba), roots (radix) and rhizomes (rhizoma) are harvested.

The therapeutic effect, acknowledged for human use, is manifested in respiratory, cardio - vascular, digestive, renal, nervous, rheumatic, skin diseases etc. They are used in the form of teas, ground and compressed forms, decoctions, syrups etc. but also as creams, poultices, water/alcohol extractions etc. They have positive effects also if consumed as food: salads, soups, side dishes, sticks, dry mixtures etc. Of course, the approach is differentiated according to plants and diseases.

Mushrooms

Neamț county is characterized by an abundance of mushrooms that complement the food diversity. They are found both in the woods, and on meadows. It should be noted that mushrooms that grow spontaneously are divided into edible and poisonous. Hence, an important risk in recognizing the edible ones, as there are quite numerous cases of poisoning each year. The value of edible mushrooms is represented by their nutritional mixture (proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, nitrogen bases, vitamins, enzymes, and minerals).

The most popular mushrooms in the Neamț mountains are : honey fungi, white fungi, forest white mushrooms, boletus, penny buns, brown boletus, red boletus, orange boletus, pinewood king bolete, chanterelle, saffron milk-cap, peppery milk-cap, black morel, russula, red russula, green russula, oyster mushrooms, blue stalk mushroom and others.

They are collected manually, during memorable expeditions, generating experiences and memories.

1.4.2. Territory resources[11]

The specificity of the relief, with steep slopes, does not allow all areas to meet the local human needs (housing, agriculture, animal husbandry). It is obvious that affordability is a significant barrier against the capitalization of land. Where there are no forests, on the peaks, slopes and valleys, one can use grasslands, which the community distributes as destination for pastures or hayfields.

The river valleys that are narrower or wider, usually host human settlements, which include both built areas and land for agriculture. The table below reports the mountain resource areas for each village. Currently, these areas are owned by people or municipalities and are leased. Few places include properties reconstructed by pre-war landowners, and they are available for hire.

It is important to consider while evaluating the land resources, their placement in relation to the sun exposure. Thus, differences appear between territories in the four cardinal points (east, west, north and south), as well as the exposure to the dominant wind, the availability and abundance of water, forest and land neighborhood etc. The generosity of nature is directly dependent on these features, resulting in grass and hay production, as starting elements of the supply chain.

Agricultural land

Usually, they are placed within the built-up areas, next to the house. One can rarely find larger agricultural areas outside the built-up areas.

In areas with large valleys, agricultural areas are delimited outside the built-up areas as well. These lands always experiment various crops and the idea of competitiveness is maintained in relation to the hilly or plain area. The products obtained in mountain crops are surprisingly well suited in combination with animal products. Especially root crops (carrots, beetroot, tarragon), but also aerial ones (beans, pumpkins, cabbage) meet the household needs both in fresh and preserved form.

The most cultivated among large crops are corn, potato, oats, etc. Their advantage is that they require no pesticide treatment, as the population of aphids (vermin) is extremely rare at these altitudes. Smaller surfaces are intended to vary the fodder: clover, alfalfa and oats.

Until the '60s-'70s hemp was cultivated for textile applications, but also for seeds (female plants). The ethnobotanical substances had not yet entered the circuit and the seeds did not have high concentrations of drug in the mixture (now its growth is restricted). Hemp seeds were used for

[8] T.Chifu, D. Mititelu, D. Dăscălescu, Flora şi vegetaţia judeţului Neamţ, Memoriile Secţiunilor Ştiinţifice ale Academiei Române, seria IV, 10, 1, 1987;

[9] Costache Rusu, Idem, 2007,

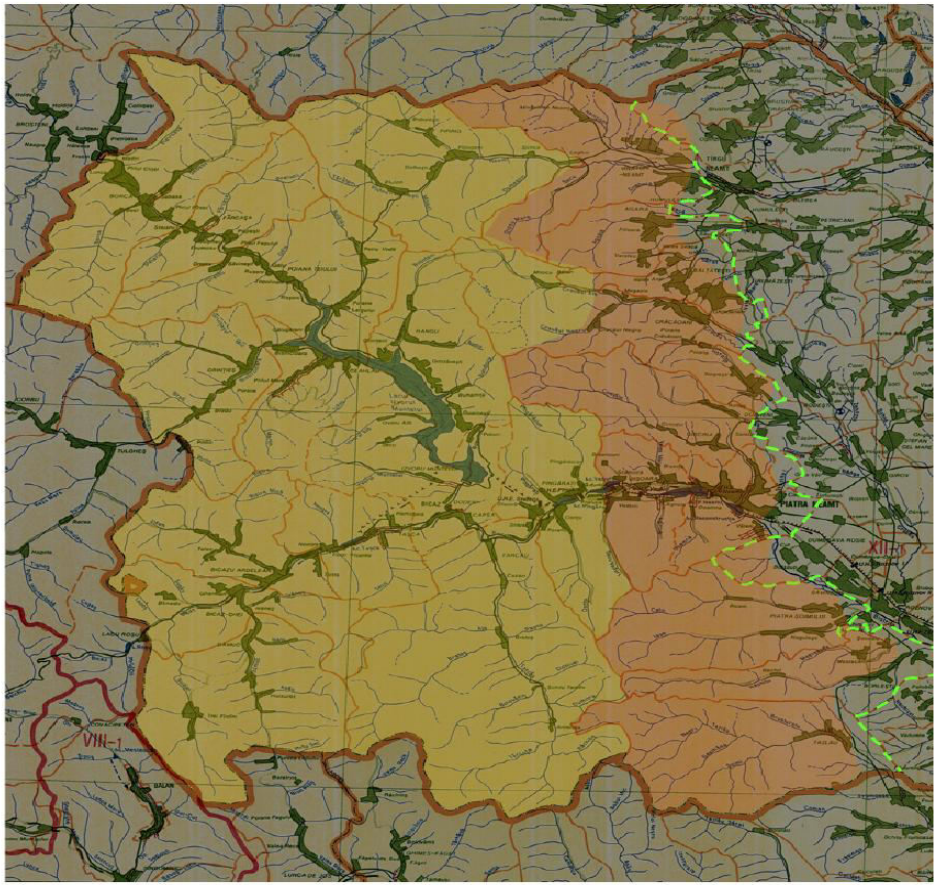
[10] Costache Rusu, Idem, 2007

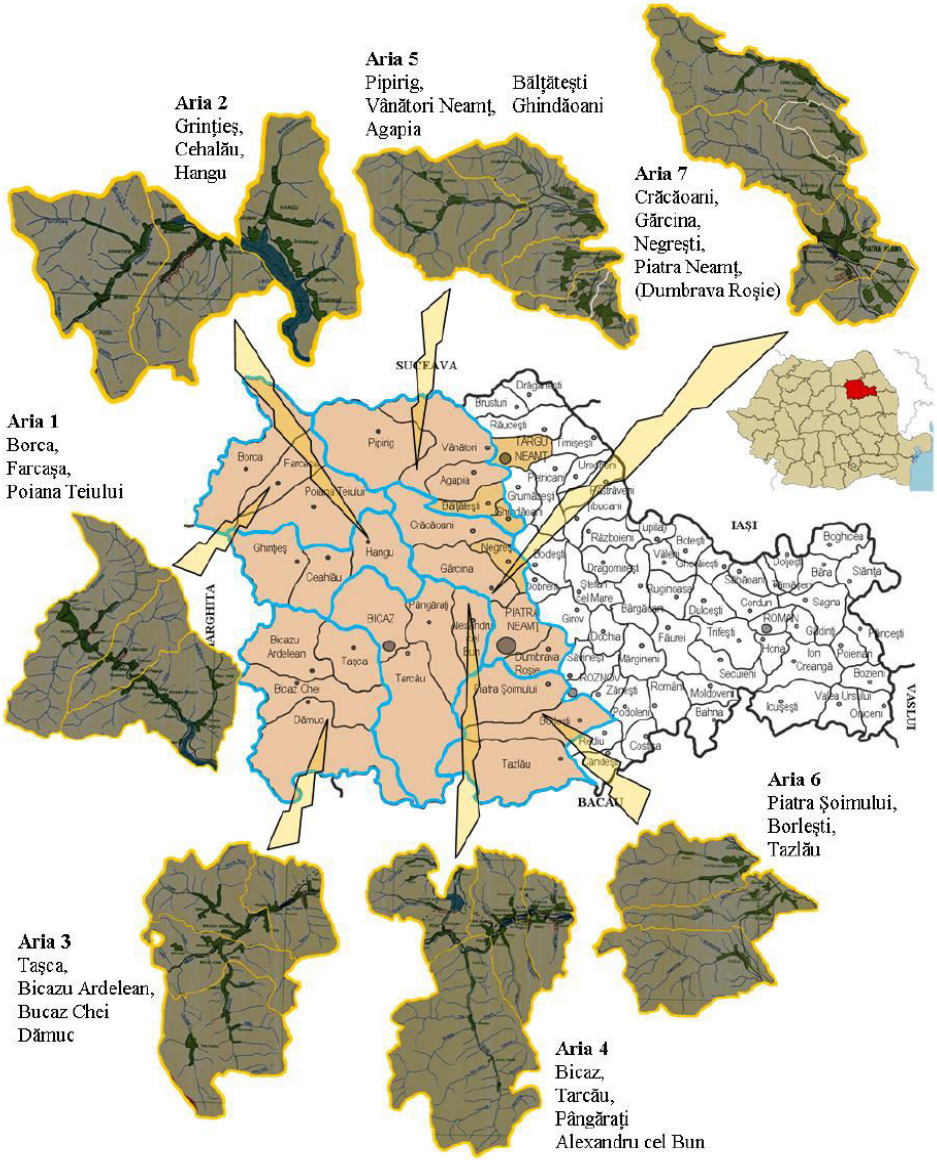
[11] *** Anuarul statistic al Județului Neamț, Institutul Național de Statistică, 2012

a Christmas kind of delicacy called " Lord's swaddling clothes" or „julfa".
Fruit trees and shrubs make their way into the mountain agricultural diversity as well. It is true that you can set up orchards only in small areas. Instead, trees are found in yards, gardens, on headlands.
The mountain parameters that influence production are: the altitude, orientation, tilt and slope exposure.
Varieties with medium and high resistance to cold temperatures are preferred.
An indicative list includes:
- trees: sour cherry, apple, pear, plum, walnut, cherry, quince;
- shrubs: black currant, red currant, bilberry crop, raspberry, sea buckthorn, strawberry.
From their fruit, housewives prepare their fruit jams, compotes or cut the apples to pieces and dry them in the sun („cârmoji") or dry pears in the oven with „loznita" (type of sieve which allows hot gases from the oven to pass) and in the sun. A large quantity of apples and pears is kept over winter in the basement.

Pastures

Additionally, a concern for ensuring animals' food has developed. Actually, ensuring food for animals is as serious a problem as it is for humans. Generally, grass (green) and hay (dry) are the main resources for animal feed. Grasslands (meadows and pastures) vary the approach of these resources. In the mountain area, meadows can stretch up to the forest, in the submontane, mountain, upper-mountain and sub-alpine zones. The alpine zone in Neamț county is not associated with shepherding, as it is small and has important restrictions of biodiversity protection.





(Surface, ha)	Total	Agricultural land	Arable land	Pasture land	Meadow land	Orchards
Bicaz	13.890	2.717	130	1.434	1.150	3
Agapia	5.868	2.400	1.343	782	160	115
Alexandru cel Bun	8.421	1.765	450	632	665	18
Bicaz Chei	10.234	3.761	95	1.653	2.013	0
Bicazu Ardelean	11.170	5.300	234	1.159	3.901	6
Borca	20.518	5.798	231	2.328	3.236	3
Borlești	10.765	5.511	2.922	1.464	1.010	114
Ceahlău	9.557	3.400	158	1.707	1.530	5
Crăcăoani	13.479	3.527	915	1.145	1.437	30
Dămuc	17.813	6.271	125	4.134	2.011	1
Farcașa	9.233	2.813	157	1.178	1.474	4
Gârcina	12.251	2.658	805	959	875	18
Grințieș	13.870	2.209	167	503	1.529	10
Hangu	12.165	4.703	209	1.854	2.640	0
Pângărați	12.190	3.117	329	948	1.833	7
Piatra Șoimului	14.590	2.530	909	1.276	318	5
Pipirig	19.681	4.071	273	1.388	2.386	24
Poiana Teiului	16.564	5.335	297	1.805	3.227	6
Tarcău	39.890	1.646	113	841	688	4
Tașca	9.563	2.766	117	1.235	1.413	1
Tazlău	16.194	1.727	412	475	831	8
Vânători Neamț	16.709	4.183	1.489	1.799	854	41
Total	***331.751***	***87.331***	***16.281***	***34.062***	***36.396***	***564***

The distribution of territory resources in Neamț county mountain villages
Source: Neamț County Statistical Yearbook, 2013

There is a floristic diversity which gives specificity to each bounded areas of the mountain area of Neamț county, which affects the milk quality and differentiates the local assortments for the same type of product. On the 7 designated areas, the floristic combinations differ in the sub-alpine zone in areas 1, 2 and 3, in the upper-mountain level in areas 4 and 5 (partly), and in areas 5 (partly), 6 and 7 a mixed combination of partly mountain - partly hilly zones prevails.
The mountain meadow plants are divided into three categories.
- grassland perennial grasses (35 species). More important are: crested wheatgrass (Agropyron pectiniforme), smooth brome (Bromus inermis), orchard grass (Dactylis glomerata), tall fescue (Festuca arundinacea), Meadow fescue (Festuca pratensis), red fescue (Festuca rubra), perennial ryegrass (Lolium Perennial), reed canary grass (Phalaris arundinacea), timothy- grass (Phleum pratense), smooth meadow-grass (Poa pratensis) etc.
- perennial meadows legumes (20 species). More important are: birdfoot trefoil (Lotus corniculatus), alfalfa (Medicago sativa), sainfoin (Onobrychis viicifolia), alsike clover (Trifolium hybridum), red clover (Trifolium pratense), white clover (Trifolium repens) etc.
- other families of fodder (15 species). More important are: yarrow (Alchileea milefolium), lady's mantle (Alechemilla vulgaris), caraway (Carum carvi), chicory (Cichorium inthiybus) dropwort (Filipendula hexapetala) meadow cranesbill (Geranium pratense), bistort (Polygonum bistort) tormentil (Potentilla erecta), plantain (Plantago lanceolata), self-heal (Prunella vulgaris), sorrel (Rumex acetossa), dandelion (Taraxacum officinale), thyme (Thymus montanus) etc.

Their rate varies from area to area, which lead to variations in the quality of milk and milk products.
Types of hays (according to Maruşca): alfalfa or red clover hay, vetch hay, meslin alfalfa or clover mixture with different perennial grasses, natural hay with high rate of legumes; small grass natural hay (from hill and mountain), high quality hay (red fescue, windgrass, etc.), hay grown from tall grasses (timothy, orchard grass, oatgrass, etc.), natural hay (from hills, mountains) medium quality hay with weeds.
The flower structure of the grassland in the inner mountain area, predominantly with leafy herbs differs from that of the meadows of the transition axis mountain – hill, where the dominant species are straw plants. This is reflected in the production and quality of milk and milk products.
These differences are, however, not so serious as to disqualify some of the
products.

[12] Teodor Maruşca, Vasile Mocanu, Vasile Cardaşol, Ioan Hermenean, Vasile Adrian Blaj, Georgeta Oprea, Monica Alexandrina Tod, Ghid de producere ecologică a furajelor de pajişti montane, Editura Transilvania, Braşov, 2010

1.4.3. *Animal resources*[1]

Animals are a more elaborate form of solar energy storage turned into biological forms , with human input. We included in this category both domestic and wild animals, suitable for hunting.

Domestic animals
The zootechny solution to managing the mountain food resources was discovered during the first social division of labor. It is being rediscovered by each generation.
The meat supply in mountain household comes from cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry. In addition, throughout their life, cattle and sheep bring milk supplies. Meat and milk are fundamental food supplies, consumed such as and prepared in a wide variety of forms.
Therefore, animal husbandry is the key to the existence of the mountain life. Naturally, most of the time is allocated to the breeding and processing of the products they provide. If the livestock is treated with care, the veterinary medicine is not supported with the same "enthusiasm", probably because it is more specialized and less accessible. It is true that there are veterinarians in both public and private practices.
The staff here is professional and guarantees the safety of livestock with assistance, treatments etc. The argument, however, which supports the above mentioned idea is the fact that the improvement of the animals is less spectacular. The reproduction is achieved naturally, and the breeds, the meat and milk production depend almost entirely on the generosity of nature. In villages neighboring Harghita county, people purchase animals from organized breeding stocks belonging to communities there.
Each mountain household own 1-3 cows, 8-15 sheep, 10-40 poultry (chicken, guinea fowls, turkeys, and sometimes ducks and geese) and 2-4 pigs. Some households own 1-2 horses for traction. Goats are rarely met in the mountains. They do not have a traditional support, but adapt well.
The traditional native biological material was not competitive. Things have started to improve since productive breeds were purchased. As far as sheep breeds are concerned, the dominant breed was and still is "ţurcana", with coarse wool, and sporadically "ţigaie". At Vânători Neamț, the breed "bucălaie de Haţeg" is also mentioned.
In cattle, the biological heritage has long relied on Romanian breeds (Albă, Roşie, Porumbă, Bălţată, Brună). It has been improved in recent history with Simmental, Pinzgauer, Holstein (through breeding).
In pigs, there is a concern for biological improvement; pigs are purchased from the fair or from families dealing specifically with pig farming. Frequent breeds are Bazna, Marele Alb, Mangaliţa, Landrace.



[13] Alexandru T. Bogdan, Benone Păsărin, Sorin Chelmu, Amalia Gianina Străteanu, I. Surdu, Marcel T. Paraschivescu, Poziţionarea ştiinţelor zootehnice la baza conceptului original referitor la dezvoltarea prioritară a României europene ca putere verde agro-alimentară, Ed. Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 2009.

Fishing stock

The traditionally available water surface was formed almost exclusively of rivers. Currently, there are several solutions to increase the fishing stock in a controlled manner: running rivers, Bicaz, Vaduri, Bâtca Doamnei reservoires and fish farms. Many monasteries in the county have set up fish ponds for their own needs within the normal biological production.

Traditional species: bass, minnow, chub, grayling, huck, barbel, trout, gudgeon, sneep, bullhead etc. As a result of the hydropower facilities, reservoires have included: crucian carp, carp, bream etc. Also, species of farm-raised trout, brook trout or rainbow trout were adjusted to these lakes.

In terms of culinary quality, differences are noticed between river fish and farm-raised fish.

Fishing is scheduled in such periods of the year so as not to affect reproduction. There are no concerns regarding the artificial restocking of watercourses in order to preserve the population structure in rivers. Instead, the number of trout farms has greatly increased, as the investment are stimulated by grant programs.

The hunting stock

A lot of wild animals are protected by law, and some of them may be hunted according to a hunting season that does not affect the reproductive favourable period.

It consists of:

- big game: bear (Ursus arctos), deer (Capreolus capreolus), wild boar (Sus scrofa), wolf (Canis lupus), chamois (Rupicapra rupicapra) etc.
- small game: fox (Vulpes vulpes), hare (Lepus europaeus), marten (Martes martes), wild cat (Felis silvestris), lynx (Felis lynx), polecat (Putorius putorius), badger (Meles meles), etc.

They form food chains (they eat each other) for which reason they often get out of control: they are either threatened with extinction or multiply too much. In such cases it is allowed, or even recommended to organise hunting parties. The usually hunted animals are: wolves, foxes, polecats, badgers, martens etc.

The hunting stock is maintained during winter by providing fodder, which is difficult to obtain by animals alone, under the snow.

More recently, there have been attempts to raise wild animals under semidomestic regime, but the legislation is still very restrictive in this respect and shows no signs of adjusting to satisfy refined culinary preferences.

Gastronomy includes an important segment devoted to the preparation of game meat.



1.4.4. Energy issues

The mountain area requires a significant energy consumption to ensure comfortable microclimate environment for good living conditions. In Neamț county the climate is harsh, the number of days with temperature below 10°C is larger than in the hill and plain areas. These days require additional warmth for heating the dwellings and for cooking.

A home energy audit allows us to estimate the resource needs throughout the year. Securing energy resources is one of the top concerns of the mountain householders, the solutions are both active and passive.

Active solutions: the energy supply is favorable through the proximity to forests, especially beech forests, but also other species. Firewood remains the main energy resource. The marked trees are cut, moved, and all their parts are used. The more massive part is cut to manageable sizes, so as to be easily placed in the stove.

The calorific value has always been sufficient to ensure heating and food preparation and has served mountain people since Prometheus time. It is true that recently more active and more powerful resources have been identified.

They entered the mountain community life with both positive effects (of comfort and convenience of use) and negative effects (like pollution).

The firewood deposit is part of the usual structure of a mountain household:

- stacks of chopped wood, attached in line to the barn walls, pens, and other premises.
- round stacks of cut wood („boacșe");
- the habitual trunk, with ax, wedge to split the wood, along with the saw buck.

Recently, entrepreneurial initiatives of preparation and delivery of firewood have occurred as favorable solutions for householders who devote more time to other activities.

Passive solutions: they are more numerous and have been applied over time to prevent waste and reduce costs. Among the most common are:

- a limited number of fires: a wall stove is built which will heat the living room while food is prepared daily into the kitchen. In winter, it is a decisive solution, and in summer, when no heating is required, the kitchen moves into the yard. Two fires in the house already show signs of prosperity and progress;
- building materials suitable for home. Wood is a suitable solution, especially as it acts as thermal barrier during in summer (it prevents heat accumulation) and in winter (it prevents cooling). Helpful in this respect are also the wool carpets and rugs, allowing favourable thermal accumulation during the winter;
- children sleeping together, allow a stable temperature under the covers and good neighbourly heat; also, it acts as a constraint, favourable to emotional communication approach;
- stalls for cattle do not require heating because they emanate a sufficient amount of heat for minimum comfort;
- preventing any form of thermal losses for dwellings, stables and pens.
- placing corn stalks in front of the doors, flooring stables on the parts exposed to the wind.



The heat sources for the processing resources or for preparing food are:

- cooking stove with three burners, covered with circles (to correlate with the diameter of pots), with hearth, grate and ash collector;
- trivet used as support for buckets, cauldrons, large pots for cooking in large quantities;
- grate that works with beech charcoal;
- „cujbă": a pot support, used at the sheepfold, built over a fire pit;
- sources of cold, warm and hot smoke for more special operations;
- brandy boiler (distiller) with cooling system for condensation;
- oven for bread, cakes, rolls, but also for drying unripe grains before milling, or for drying pears;
- „lozniță" for drying chopped apples and pears;

There are also other sources used for non-alimentary purposes (iron workshop – smithery which consists of a stove equipped with bellows for additional air intake).

1.5. Cycles of nature – cycles of life – spiritual cycles

Nature is the determining factor in terms of access to resources, both through regeneration and by permitting exploitation, processing, storage (preservation). The snows, rains and warm times help or hinder people to carry out activities related to ensuring their existance.

The sequence of the four seasons throughout the year (spring, summer, autumn and winter) brings opportunities and risks to the mountain communities. In mixed forms, they are: snow, floods, landslides, avalanches (very rarely noticed in Neamț area), water reserves in the soil, rejuvenation and regeneration of the nature biological potential after more or less intense exploitation. The annual natural cycles are different from one year to another in terms of climate and weather. The "weather forecast" is performed according to the orientation of the new moon phase: if the "cup of the moon" holds the water, then a month of drought will follow; if the "cup of the moon" spills the water, then a month of rainfall will follow.

People's lives and work adapt to these rhythms: in the spring, nature prepares grass for grazing that will result in good milk. A shepherd calendar is set: from 1st May (Armindeni) to 14th October (Good Friday) grazing with milking takes place. By the middle of this period, hay is prepared for winter. It is stored in the household or placed in the meadows (a winter camp for sheep and cattle is settled there). Autumn grazing, without milking, occurs after Good Friday until the first snow. The period of mating is established according to the desired schedule of lambing in the spring period. For the winter period, a sheepfold within the household or a meadow camp is set. At snowmelt, the animals descend from the camp to the household and, as spring follows, they will also be fed indoors (with dry feed).

Among these activities, some of which require greater or smaller efforts, while other are repetitive, people find time to rest, to perform other household activities or to exploit other resources to ensure the basic needs.

People respect fastig times and the celebrations that follow them, with all the accompanying spiritual rituals. The annual calendar of activities is marked: the sheep shearing, the harvest day, the mountain day, rustic feasts and wakes (the parish patron saint, the village patron, souls day). In the periods between fasting times there are weddings and baptisms, which will mark the rhythms of social regeneration.

1.5.1. Traditions

The traditions are the most exposed elements of the mountain culture, as they are constantly attacked by elements of modernity:

- the ergonomic improvement of the household activities;
- new solutions for the achievement of supply optimization and resource consumption;
- diversification of activities of economically active population and their turn for jobs in the industry;
- school attendance among young people;
- interaction with tourists;
- interaction with people who come from other areas and perform activities in the mountains.

These pressures have created the premises of interaction and mutual transformation:

- The temporary resolution of the basic needs paves the way towards comfort and taste refinement, accompanied by modern, simplified, fashionable products, or which provide communication facilities. A room with a traditional look cannot integrate a computer as a communication tool; a plasma TV can hardly be placed among the icons; instead, folk music stations and public TV stations may be watched, as they include packs of programs addressing also people from the mountains;
- The resistance to the aggression of civilizing factors depends on the personality of each person and to his/her resistance to change; how would a university student attending courses look like, dressed in a folk costume!?! If he/she is not assertive enough in supporting the cultural message, he/she will be quickly swallowed by the great majority, wearing "European" clothes;
- For tourists who are amateurs of outstanding experiences, the countryside is appropriate for carriages or sleighs, for rides on less traveled roads: new guided activities occur;
- The mountain cuisine has many virtues, which make the delight of the guests; however, "special" tourists, who are on a diet or who are not accustomed to certain foods should be given attention too.

One should not forget that the diversity of the mountain rural traditional dishes is adjusted to activities that require intense physical labour, while most tourists perform sedentary office work, in front of a computer or a control panel; in the two described cases, digestion and assimilation occur differenty;

The spontaneous plants and the berries are replaced by the cultivated ones, which have a slightly different mixture and need attention throughout the growing season.

All these disruptive factors change the aura of authenticity and affect the cultural and traditional trait. It is the tribute that the mountain area pays to the continuous development process. The mountain area is pictured as the last barrier against the loss of traditions in the desire to continually increase the living standard, with all the accompanying risks that change implies.

A significant element that gives vulnerability to the traditional trait is the modernization process which is currently taking place with an intensity that cannot be managed.

The building of houses, clothes, music, menus of the restaurants is increasingly affected by imports of solutions, designs, recipes imposed by more intensive marketing activities.

The civil society spokesmen attempt to express a reaction to these changes, which can affect the local heritage, but these events are not selective and do not take into account the inherent particularities of their viability, so that these efforts are becoming slightly utopian.

The cost of the restorations or redevelopment processes find resources, however, the maintenance costs are not covered and the struggle of valorizing them erodes over time.

Therefore, modern tools on paper and on computer, used to preserve any type of information, images, scripts, lifestyle, spontaneously or carefully elaborated may become elements of cultural heritage preservation, and mountain areas can but benefit from these attributes.

They are added to the "feast" type of events (imported as well) which occur more and more frequently and mobilize resources, even for one day a year, in a struggle to revive these traditions: customs, costumes, food and drinks.

1.5.2. Values

In general, the values of the mountain life are defined in direct relation to traits acquired in a very restrictive natural environment, which lead to appropriate attitudes and decisions:

- Living in dignity - a balanced lifestyle, in which the family has a crucial role, and the household chores are shared between man and woman according to the physical and intellectual demands; the man takes over the most difficult tasks, which include plenty of hard physical labour and travelling over large areas, while women assume "lighter" household chores, parenting activities, house-cleaning, preparation of meals, providing of clothing, the financial management;
- Life in the community – means participating to decisions and activities organized by the community, protecting the right to be different and giving recognition to the special work and living environment;
- Respect for nature – the management of resources in the interest of maintaining sustainability and a reasonable use of the natural resources, in order to cover the cost of a modest and frugal life; it is not a conscious issue, but the exploitation of resources (mostly forested) occurs within the affordability and regeneration capacity of nature;
- Solidarity – people run some activities in teams, where cooperation and understanding work;
- Tolerance - barriers that encourage discrimination are overcome: gender, age, nationality, education level, religion, ethnic origin (it is true that the boundaries are quite fragile);
- Recognition of performance - unlike the pastoral legends, householders who achieve performance (in animal breeding, forestry and other traditional fields) are respected and accepted as rulers;
- Honesty - compliance with moral correctness, good faith, honor;
- Hospitality – the welcoming and accommodation of guests, treating them with respect and solicitude to make them feel well and leave with pleasant memories;
- Faith – the belief that human actions are tracked and rewarded or punished by the divine power and the integration of the entire life within these limitations as ambitions, aspirations, egos.

These values are different both in intensity and in visibility from one place to another, from one area to another.

The permanence of the values depends on many objective and subjective factors. One of the main destabilizing factors is "breaking" the continuity between generations. The value system is that intangible heritage, which is transmitted as a legacy from one generation to another.

Of course, it undergoes changes, adjustments, improvements; but there is a hard core that should not be affected. Confounded by the profound changes taking place, the mountain people hope that these changes will only temporarily affect their lives and things will return to a known path. Which is what we also hope.



1.5.3. The Orthodox food calendar

People from the mountain respect the rigours imposed by belonging to the Orthodox Christian faith. One of these rigours is the fast period, when people abstain from eating animal products (meat, milk, eggs). Between the fast periods the consumption of these products allowed and, according to the season, several types of meals prevail.
The fast periods are as follows:

- every Wednesday and Friday, except for those marked as "harți" in the calendar (indicating an exception);
- on the occasion of important holidays: Epiphany Eve (5th January); Beheading of Saint John the Baptist (August 29th), Holy Cross (14th September);
- longer periods of fast and prevailing food between fasting periods:

- Lent - 40 days before Easter. Easter time is variable, it may take place during April or early May.	Until fast, cottage cheese, milk may be consumed.
	After Easter, lamb and spring cheese are consumed;
- Fast of the Holy Apostles: 16th June (variable) - 28th June.	Până în post se consumă brânzeturi de primăvară.
	After fast, eggs, various dishes and summer cheeses are consumed;
- The Assumption fast: 1st August to 14th August	Until fast, fish and stew are consumed.
	After fast, cream with cheese is consumed; The chicken from that year get feathers – meaning they may be slaughtered.
- Christmas fast: 14th November to 24th December.	Until fast, mutton, turkey are consumed.
	After fast, pork, turkey, ewe's milk cheese are consumed.

During fasting period, no animal products are consumed (milk, meat, eggs and derivatives). The rigours of religious practices make a distinction between the consumption of meat and dairy products. According to this calendar, there is also a schedule of preparation, preservation and consumption of food. Thus, the daily menu can include fresh or stored products, or preserved by various recipes. People make sure that by opening various containers or vessels, the quality of the content will not be affected if the consumption takes several days: the opening of cheese tubs, the demijohn with "jintuit", the jar of braised meat ("tochitură") etc.
In the sequence of fast times and periods between them, the pantry offers raw or processed vegetables and fruit, prepared for more or less complex dishes. The body does not suffer from deficiencies of essential elements. At the same time, it undergoes detoxification processes, so that everyone should feel better and cope with the daily mental and physical demands. Of course, we consider also the spiritual and religious impact, which is part of the spiritual calendar.
We propose in this study to maintain a line of traditional practices with a solid argument in favour of preserving them, due to their practical value. Of course, such an approach is subordinated to the standards which limit the risks of exposure to an unhealthy lifestyle.





1.6. Lifestyle

1.6.1. Mentality

We find it significant to quote George Calinescu, who observed with great sensitivity the Romanians' sense of belonging to the community. People from the mountains integrate into these considerations:

"The Romanian traveling to the West was amazed by the superficial aspects, but he never entered the substance of things and did not seek to emulate them. The town (and village, A/N) exists as an administration abstraction, not in the spirit of citadel. ... The city relies on the community, which displays a moderate collectivism, called civic spirit. Each person lives for oneself, but also inside the city, and first of all he is proud of the city and secondly of his house. The walls fell around the cities in the West a long time ago, but the spirit of the city remained. The Paris citizen lives first of all in Paris, then in the neighborhood and in an entirely superficial way in the apartment. The city is actually lived in and the houses are simple night nests. Therefore, nobody steals chairs, benches, statues, but wants to use them. In Romania, the cities (and villages, A/N) are some sort of camps where each person brings his own house. ... The churches have no chairs and pews and will never become refuges.
That is why there is a total lack of interest for the city life and a lot of individualism. The city has no communal palace. The palace should be a collective monument. Maybe around it, stone porches could be built, where one could sit, it might be a monument ... able to reassure us and give us a spirit of gratitude for being residents of the city. ... When the local authorities themselves plan the building of such a monument, the citizens get angry: What do we, poor people, need a town hall for !?!". Naturally, they have their tents with walls, cellars and kitchens and this reaches them. The Romanian citizen invites you to his home to proudly show you his "household", that is his food products. When he brings his wine from the cellar, he believes he made a great impression on his guest." (Travel notes 1973)

This analysis is the most suitable explanation regarding the formal nature and predictable failure of the projects which propose solutions to support the local development. Things are even more pronounced in the mountain communities, which have more barriers in the management of the space of action. These elements are very tied to people's sensitivity, who will not accept such a description, neither will they realize it. The balance between the social life and the community life remains very vulnerable and will always be looking for the best values. We will never know what we lose if we give up the common (material and spiritual) heritage in favour of some tempting and very volatile benefits.
The mentality of the mountain people is a psychological and sociological complex. After having lived for millennia according to an almost invariable model, the mountain people were faced with new situations and developments, due to the technological revolutions which have changed the economic and social rules, less and less compatible with the traditional lifestyle. In addition, recent political regimes have marginalized the mountain areas and did not include them in educational and investments programs, in order to allow them to adapt to the new times. Faced with this situation, the mountain people accepted a more modest social role, without aspirations and without the necessary skills to adapt to the new challenges. Thus, the distance between the economic and social progress, to which the people from the hills and plains areas (which we like to name "the frontiers of knowledge") adapted somewhat better and the deficit of adaptive solutions for the mountain development is growing rapidly, and with it, the temptations of a better life.
The mentality stores a mix of traditional values and the failures of adjustment, in which some see a good side and some, a bad side. The good side is linked to a hoard of lifestyles and practices that generators of policies have ignored at their time and are now trying to salvage what one still can in the mountains. But their message is sterile and shallow, inefficient and it supports the loss of the preserved values (both tangible and intangible). The bad side is linked to the scarcity of resources allocated to education, for increasing the adaptability, for employment and entrepreneurship, for investments.
Above all, the exodus of the human resources to urban areas or to developed countries, impoverishes the mountain area in virtues and viable solutions. On one hand, the social sustainability decreases by the departure of the active labour forces (physical and social), on the other hand, the social cohesion is reduced.



[14] G. Călinescu, Sentimentul cetății, Magazin istoric, nr. 5 (410), 2001, (text adaptat)

1.6.2. The household layout

The layout of the household reflects the residents of the mountain complexity of life and their concern for a healthy diet. The owned area of land located within the built-up area is divided by three areas: courtyard, garden, orchard.

• **The courtyard** is the social part of the household. The home is in the center, the stable is placed on a side. The yard is the place where guests are welcomed; here also the cart is located. In front of the house there may be a garden with flowers for the aesthetic delight of the household. The yard is the area where small events occur: feasts of religious holidays, memorial services, weddings, christenings. The courtyard hosts trees that bring shade; here, meals are served in summer or snacks and drinks with the guests from the village or from far away. In confined spaces (behind the house) a variety of birds are kept: fowls, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowls.

• **The garden** provides food for the fast period: vegetables for fresh consumption and for preservation: pickles, vegetables, dry - on a string, or stored in the basement, if consumed in the first half of winter. There is a strict consecrated sequence of cycles: plowing and sowing are performed after sheep leave for the herd (around the 1st of May). By Good Friday (Bicaz Chei), or St. Demetrius (Farcaşa) the harvest must be gathered. In winter, the garden turns into sheepfold.

• **The orchard** is an important element of image for the family. In general, the orchard is placed within the household area. The predominant trees are apple and pear varieties, adjusted to the mountain environment. Under the trees, grass grows or vegetable seedlings are planted. The fruits are kept in the cellar, in crates or in hay, where they undergo changes and become tasty. Animals are not allowed in the orchard, as they like to chew on the tender bark.

• **The house** is the core of a household. The inside has a simple structure adjusted to a living environment, optimized according to situations, where access to resources was limited and sparing. A "couple of houses," as Ion Creangă says, consists of 5 rooms. The main access is in the front, through a hall. On the right side there is "the good house", a room with multiple functions: here, the dowry and the Sunday clothes are kept. Here the guests are welcomed during the summer, from here the bride or groom go to the church to get married or the family member departs from the dear ones to go to the cemetery. In the back of the hall there is the pantry (oriented to the north to preserve the low temperature): here, a good deal of products are stored, that do not require very cold temperatures for storing: potatoes, fruit, onions, garlic or other dry vegetables. On the right side of the hall there is the living room, used both in summer and in winter. The architecture of this room is varied, depending on each householder's solutions. Because in the rural areas the contact with mud is unavoidable, the house has a porch on the left side, which is also the "secondary" entry of the house. Usually, here is also the kitchen with hob and hearth, while the stove is included in the separation wall with the living room. The living room includes sleeping beds, the table where children learn or dinner is served during holidays. The side porch is connected to the living room. In summer, the heat of the stove would affect the comfort and the cuisine is moved to the yard (the summer kitchen). The summer kitchen has both adjustments and facilities to prepare daily meals and for seasonal preservation activities: syrups, jams, canned vegetables and fruit. Under the house there is the cellar which preserves the chill of the earth and a relatively constant temperature throughout the whole year. Here, the tins, the pickles, vegetables, drinks are stored.

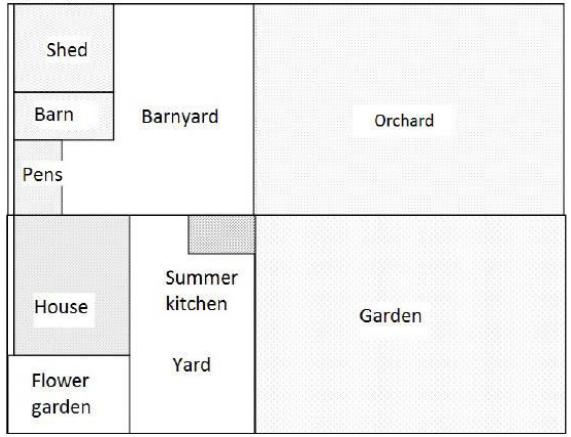
• **Functional constructions**: usually in the yard, next to the house, there are the stable for cattle and possibly for horses, the pens for pigs and chicken. Their configuration is adjusted for access to feeding and watering and to cleaning the litter. The manure from animals is collected and placed on a platform, as far away from the inhabited area as possible. Throughout the year fermentation occurs. In spring, before plowing, the manure is spread on arable land for an additional supply of natural fertilizer. The stables and pens function in semi-open regime: they are closed only at night to ensure the safety of animals against kidnappers.

• **Outdoor kitchen items**. For preparation activities that have no direct connection with the daily meals, a shelter is built, usually near the summer kitchen. Here are placed:

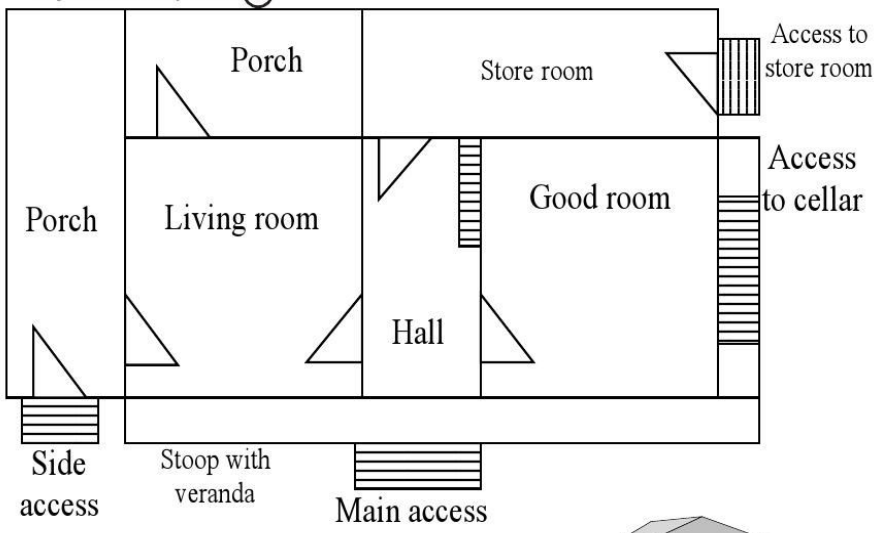
1. Trivets for occasional larger scale preparations: patrons, weddings, memorial services etc. (soup, steak) or for seasonal activities: brandy, canned vegetables and fruit ("zacusca"- vegetable stew, jam). It is made of a hearth, above which a circle supported by three legs that can support a boiler or a large pot is placed: often used for preparing soup, cabbage rolls.
2. Oven for bread, rolls, cakes, cabbage rolls or roast. It is a brick building with hearth and curved roof which will allow a hot temperature.
3. Smokehouse with warm and hot smoke for smoking pork, fish, cheese products or for smoking or drying plums and other fruit. It is made of a hearth connected to a a trough, through which the smoke travels to a case, equipped on the inside with hanging racks for food to be smoked. At its bottom, a tray is placed to collect the melted matter coming out and gradually falling.

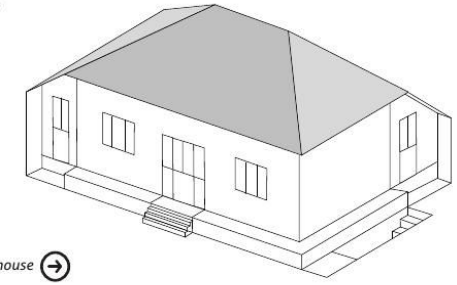
• **The firewood household.** The necessary firewood supply, used for heating in winter and cooking throughout the year, is cut and stored in a separate shelter. The wood is sometimes stored along the external walls of the outbuildings (under the eaves). The household usually includes a family composed of husband, wife, 2 to 4 children and possibly grandparents. Within a natural temporal dynamics, grandparents help the young family to "build-up", then, as their physical strength decreases, the children grow and become important aids in the house activities. The replacement of generations occurs naturally, in a continuous "passing on of the torch".

The standard structure of the household



The general structure of a house





The general structure of a house

The changes of history were not reflected in sudden and irreversible social transformations, but in slow and bearable evolutions.

Certainly, the recent urban developments influenced also the structure of the house: two storey houses, bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens provided with modern equipment (oven, pastry oven, deep freeze, dishwasher etc.) appeared, that raised the living standard in the rural areas.

Overall, the household embraces a model based on self-management: a household production is intended to meet one's needs. In the past, a kind of contentment "with what God gives" prevailed. Thus, when abundance occurred, during good years, one would share it with less fortunate people. It is a major challenge to aim to achieve a higher production and to capitalize it on the market. Such aspirations are still very rare.

With a sober living, one can ensure food throughout the whole year. Only weather variations from one year to another can affect this plan (sometimes seriously). Perhaps for this reason, people from the mountains cannot make predictions and cannot substantiate annual budgets, as the people "from the field" or in cities do.

The territorial diversity

There is a territorial variable component, even if the area under study is relatively small. Thus, on Bistrița valley, variations are visible from the entrance to the mountains, on the territory of Piatra Neamț and Alexandru cel Bun, in that the valleys are wide, then they narrow a little, as they have to give way to reservoirs. From Stejaru to Tarcău the mountain becomes more visible, and will become authentic after Bicaz. From Poiana Largului upstream, the valleys are very narrow and people make efforts to coexist with the rugged slopes. Also, occupational and cultural changes on the same sphere occur.

The communities of Bicaz basin also have a differentiated cultural and occupational configuration, marked by the neighborhood with mount Ceahlau and by being better sheltered from the currents crossing the Carpathians from west to east.

Ozana valley, although shorter, creates clearer variations from the entrance (very wide valley in Târgu Neamț, then narrowed in two major steps at Vânători Neamț and Pipirig) configures communities with different cultures and natural features, but strongly uniformed by monastic settlements (Neamț, Secu, Sihăstria, Petru Vodă).

The transition between the mountains and the hills is inhabited by altered mountain communities, but still rated. The valleys cannot be defined any more, although the communities are linked to specific rivers, because their mountain course is significantly smaller than the hilly ones. Here are mentioned rivers and brooks like: Agapia, Cracău, Almaş, Cuejdiu, Calu, Iapa, Mastacăn, Tazlău.

The mountain areas of these villages lie mostly outside the built-up area, which makes the mountain feature more prominent in the work of exploiting natural resources, and less in culture and spirituality. Even so, such a leveling would displease the community from Piatra Şoimului (which is entirely mountainous) and would distinguish the one from Tazlău and Agapia. Moreover, Tazlău and Agapia form a complex mixture of mountain and hill that gives specificity and uniqueness: sometimes one can notice characteristic elements of hill and mountain, and sometimes neither of them.



1.6.3. The life of the mountain people

The life of the mountain people is bipolar. In winter they stay at home, which they leave every day for performing chores and needs for the house, and in summer they go to the mountains for grazing and scythe. In spring and autumn the household is more animated, as the specific activities for the warm and cool season overlap: the preparations for summer, respectively for winter.

One could say it is a relaxing activity, but the reality is different, the life of the mountain people is particularly harsh. Although apparently there is a well-defined activity, with precise rules and principles, the mountain farmers devote their mind, heart and physical strength to animal husbandry. That makes them strong and resilient in front of nature.

Their boldness stems from the particular predictability that comes from the animal husbandry, the strong point is given by the repetitive nature of all activities, according to a clear shepherd calendar, involving the sun and the moon. They do not know and do not need to make plans and risk analyses. For them, there is a particular quality management system, at least as rigorous as the one initiated by J. Juran.

(I)

Animals, the mountain peasant's pride

Animal husbandry in the mountain area is a millenary tradition. Every household from the mountain villages is concerned to have valuable animals, well fed and well cared for. A typical mountain farm may include: 1-4 cows, 5-15 sheep and goats (goats are fewer and, as some say, are not traditional in the mountains), 20-40 birds (chicken, turkeys, guinea fowls, ducks, geese), 2-3 pigs.

Some of them are cared for by the householder, some other by the housewife and some other by both of them, as well as by the children. More recently, in each village a certain number of householders stands out by raising a large number of sheep. At Tazlău, Piatra Şoimului, Crăcăoani, Poiana Teiului, Agapia, Pipirig, Vânători there are now owners with up to 400 sheep.

Their herd size depends on the ability of the householder to work, as this in strongly related to the ability to feed them.

The personality of Nechifor Lipan remains emblematic (from the novel "Hatchet" by Mihail Sadoveanu), described indirectly through the ability to manage large herds of sheep, to produce large amounts of cheese, to sell and buy sheep, to overwinter them by transhumance. Even more, Gheorghe distinguishes as heir, with the mind and soul of this millennial activity.



The cow (Bos taurus). It is most useful animal to man. It is raised for milk, meat, leather, dung. There are several indigenous breeds with regional varieties: Bălțată românească (3000-5000 l milk /year), Brună românească (3000-3500 l milk /year), for the mountain area. Recently, imported breeds, were brought for improvement: Pinzgauer, Simmental. As a result, a variety of combinations of breeds has been noticed lately, by intercrossings, more or less based on improvement. Source: [6], 524,





The sheep (Ovis aries). Also one of the most useful animals for humans due to its: milk, wool, fur, leather (and skins). It is a less demanding animal, resistant to aggressive mountain climate. The most common breeds in the mountain area are "țurcană" (90-100 l milk /year), adapted to wet weather, with coarse wool and "tsigai" with semi-fine wool (80-90 l milk/year). The herdsmen from Mărginimea Sibiului distiguished through their concern for achieving improved, genetically stable breeds. The herdsmen from Neamț county bought more performing and stronger breeds from them. Source: [6], 530, http://agroromania.manager.ro





The goat (Capra hircus) joined more recently and shyly the mountain environment (especially in the transition mountain - hill area). Some sources argue that they have been present there for a longer time, but we have not found a constant and persistent tradition to justify this claim. The goat is less demanding regarding the climate and feeding, but it may become a pest as it feeds on young branches (affecting horticultural crops). It gives up to 750 l milk/year. Source: [6], 534,

The pig (Sus scrofa) has been tamed for a long time from boar. Through continuous improvement, disproportionate breeds were obtained, less agile and with more meat or fat. Traditionally, the pig offers: the fat, meat, skin, hair, nails, manure. Its fertility, fecundity, precocity are used by increasing the intensity of raising, thus turning it into a very accessible animal for ensuring food. Common breeds are: Large White, Bazna, Mangalita etc.
Source: "The Guide ..." 537, 535, 536







The chicken (Gallus bankiwwa). It is present in many species, with very diverse feather colours. One can use from it: eggs, meat, feathers and manure. It grows and multiplies rapidly, feeding on anything (omnivores). Known breeds: Rhode Island (red and white, for eggs and meat), Leghorn (white, for eggs), Transylvanian Naked Neck (white, black, greyish-white, for meat and eggs), Plymouth (for meat and eggs).
Source: [6], 538

The goose (Anser anser). It has been domesticated since ancient times. It is raised for meat, down, leather (it make fewer eggs). It is not conditioned by the presence of water. Herbivore. The Romanian common breed is known for its resistance to diseases and bad weather.
Source: [6], 544





The Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos). It has been domesticated more recently. It is raised for its meat, down. The eggs are consumed with caution, as they may create imbalances in digestion and assimilation. They prefer being near water holes. The Romanian common breed is less demanding and is known for its resistance to diseases. Another species of ducks has been noticed as well: muscovy ducks. They have a higher production of eggs per season and are more convenient to raise, because they are silent. Source: [6], 542

The turkey (Meleagris gallopavo). It is resistant to mountain conditions, but requires special nutrition: nettles, corn. The meat is tasty and contains no cholesterol. It is bred for meat and eggs. The most common breed is called "Bronzată" ("tanned").
Source: [6], 546





The guinea fowl (Numida meleagris). It has a particular plumage, thin neck and small head. The growing conditions are accessible. The meat tastes similarly to that of the pheasant. It also produces many eggs. The noises it makes rush rodents away from the household.
Source: [6], 547

1.6.4. The provision of feed

The pasture

Currently, the pasture belongs to the village. Previously, the pasture belonged to various owners (boyars, monasteries, the state). It is rented every year in accordance with the size of the flock.

A correlation is made between the size of the herd and that of the ascribed pasture area, so as to ensure the food supply, but also the ability to regenerate (affordability).

It provides the food during the warm season: in late spring, all summer and fall, until the first snow. The nutritional value and the abundance of pasture, the water availability, the location and its accessibility are factors that mountain farmers take into account when negotiating with the local authorities.

The pasture maintenance is performed only on the cleaning of sprouts segment. The cleaning period must not exceed two years, otherwise it would affect the qualitative and quantitative indicators.

The other defining elements are ensured through natural mechanisms: regeneration, floristic structure, quality etc. In fact, even by shepherding these processes and mechanisms are indirectly influenced. The flock is constituted as a distributed model operating on segments: the mechanical fragmentation of the soil, the mechanical fragmentation of structures related to grass, the tearing of grass by grazing and treading, the forced biological regeneration associated with the microbiological regeneration through faeces.

Also, the mechanism of digestion and of the metabolic processes, suitable products for human consumption are obtained: milk and meat. Their quality and properties are influenced decisively by grazing.

The scything period

The feed supply for winter is mainly ensured by hay. It is the same resource, grass, but in dry condition. The meadows are usually privately owned, spread on the territory, on coastal plateaus, on the peaks and hummocks. The accessibility is difficult, due to the slope and it is difficult to mechanize. Therefore, the main instrument is the scythe and the physical strength of the one who wields it.

The scything period starts at the end of June and lasts almost the whole month of July. The furrows of mowed grass dry on the ground or on frames (the solution is adopted as the frequency of mountain rains and the prolonged contact with the ground is likely to depreciate the qualities of hay). The hay is dried completely in stacks, then is built in ricks or rows. Often, covered haylofts are built in order to safeguard them against bad weather. The stacks are insulated with a fence in order to prevent the access of wild animals, which are starving in the winter.

Scything requires physical effort and a good physical condition and it is an opportunity for young people to demonstrate their virtues. Women contribute to the building of hay. The stacks are built either in the backyard or in the meadow. In the latter case, the animals are brought to that place and winter camps are built. The animals stay here until the snow melts (February-March). Then they are brought to the village for the spring season.

If the rainfall is sufficient, aftermath is obtained as well. A second scything session is performed by late August and September, the resulting hay is shorter and more dispersed. Usually, it is used in the spring because it is easily digestible and ensures milk to feed the lambs and calves.



Crops
For situations where a deficit of feed is anticipated, one appeals to forage crops: clover (Trifolium pratense) and alfalfa (Medicado sativa), rarely oats (Avena sativa). For clover and alfalfa 3-5 scythes per year are performed, due to their rapid growth, thus ensuring an excess of proteins and other nutritious ingredients, needed to ensure the food and health for the animals. The decisions regarding the type of culture take into account that it covers arable land, which is insufficient in the mountain area.

The acquisition of feed
Usually, with all efforts, one cannot provide sufficient feed throughout the year, thus it is completed with purchased feed from "the field". The used currency is wood. This exchange used to be done by rafting, as water transportation was cheap. Other solutions were carts in collective expeditions. In the days of Ilie Moromete, people from the plains came to the mountains, offering supply of fodder or grain.
Usually, their price is higher in the mountain area (the factors which influence this price are the supply-demand ratio and the transportation costs).

Usually, one purchases hay, corn stalks, grains, oats etc. Also, food for human consumption is often purchased (cornmeal, flour, potatoes), and it is transported from to the mountain area by car.

The processing of feed
The feed does not need to be highly processed. Only corn stalks are finely chopped and mixed with bran to ease the consumption, particularly in cattle. For sheep, corn stalks are cut in longer lengths, and they "pinch" the leaves.

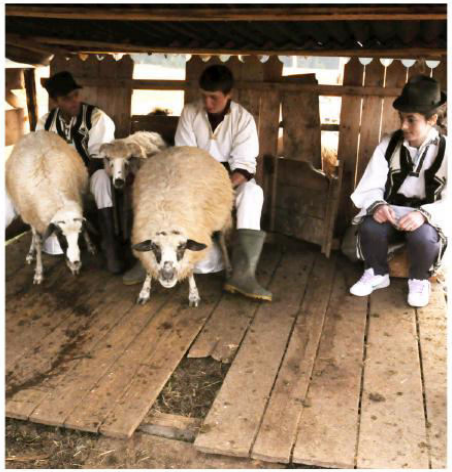
Feeding
Cattle and sheep eat constantly, and during specific breaks, they chew the cud. Thus, permanent food supply should be ensured in order not to go hungry. Also, three times per day they water. What is left from cattle is distributed to sheep. The feed is also varied with barley stalks or straw (from the field).
It is considered that the portion of feed for a cow can also feed five sheep (Farcaşa). The feed administered to cattle in winter includes hay for cows and sheep, aftermath for sheep, manually chopped stalks, cobs pounded and kept in brine.



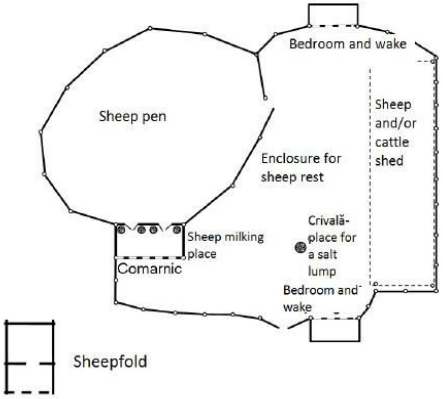
1.6.5. The sheepfold

The sheepfold is the summer camp, the center of gravity for grazing. Here, cattle and sheep are gathered for milking three or two times a day; here, they are sheltered and rest overnight, here, milk is processed and curd cheese and "urda" cheese are yielded. It can be set in a fixed place, or it can move each year depending on pasture condition, the proximity to places with more and better grass. In fact, there is another term to define the camp of sheep, the pen. In this context the sheepfold remains only intended for the cheese preparation.

The sheepfold structure
Paradoxically, we talk about the sheepfold as a way of organizing the camp for grazing. But the traditional vocabulary depicts the sheepfold as only a part of this organization. The structural components are connected with the activities taking place:
- "coşer" = a larger enclosure for sheep rest;
- "strungă" = a tighter enclosure for the milking preparation;
- "comarnic" = a unit built for sheep milking. Sheep enter here, one by one to be milked by hand. The "comarnic" may have 1 to 3 entries for sheep and 2-6 milking stations. Milking is performed manually behind the sheep (an unhygienic procedure). The unit is roofed for shelter and shade, the roof is called "pătulă". It may include shelves and other accessories attached to the structure of resistance, which are useful in various activities.
- the place destined to cattle milking is at the border of the fold; milking is performed on the right side of the cow; the procedure can be mechanized using vacuum milker;
- the huts = shepherds resting places, set around the fence to rest, but also to be able to watch overnight. Here, the shepherds sleep with dogs nearby. They signal if the fold is attacked by wild animals ... or thieves.



- the (proper) fold = the space dedicated to milk processing and to the temporary storage of cheese. This space is closed and undergoes rigorous control regarding hygiene conditions and safeguarding from insects. It may include building elements like shelves and other accessories attached to the structure of resistance, that are useful while preparing curd cheese and "urda" cheese (storage and drying, or hanging). It also includes the necessary tools in the manufacture of cheese.
- crivală = the place where a salt block is placed for the sheep to lick;
- sheep pen = fenced land area for "strungă" or "coşer";
The processing of milk is complete at the sheepfold, as all categories of by-products are capitalized; the last by-product, whey, and the water used to wash the instruments (rich in nutrients) are used to prepare food for pigs, which are brought here especially for this purpose.



The sheepfold location correlates with two important factors:
- the amount and frequency of rainfall: the soil crushes under the feet of sheep and cattle and turns to mud, creating discomfort for animals and becoming a source of illness;
- the amount of accumulated manure may exceed the assimilative microbial capacity of the soil and may compromise fertility. It also creates other sources of diseases, attracting flies, unpleasant smell etc.
In these circumstances, it is necessary to move frequently "strunga" and "coşer" locations in the proximity of the sheepfold, so that the soil should not be affected beyond affordability.
The grazing area is growing explosively by invasive vegetation and the floral rebalancing is achieved after about three years.
In other grazing areas, cleaning is performed twice a week to maintain a cleanliness level within an acceptable limit.

Shepherd calendar

The calendar of the stock farmer		
	Sheep, goats	Cattle
1st Feb. – 15th March	Births Preparation of curd	Births Preparation of curd
1st Apr. – 30th Apr.	Lamb slaughter	-
26th Apr – 1st May	Sheep gathering, lambs weaning, the separation of lambs and barren ewe	-
1st May 15th May	Grazing on grassland	-
15th May – 21th May	Moving to pasture	Catlle gathering, calves weaning, moving to pasture
after 21st May	Grazing on grassland	Grazing on grassland
1st Jun. – 10th Jun.	Milk measure	Milk measure
15th Jun. – 30th Jun.	Sheep shearing	-
15th Jul. – 15th Aug.	Scythe period (winter feed)	Scythe period (winter feed)
14th Sep.	Ewe weaning, the separation of rams from the flock	-
14th Oct.	The first returning of sheep to their owners, the beginning of fall	-
after 14th Oct.	Grazing on farmland	Grazing on farmland
after 25h Oct.	Mating	
after 10th Nov.	-	The start of indoors feeding
1st Dec.	The last returning of sheep to their owners, the indoors feeding	.

The sheepfold starts operating around the date of 1st May (Armindeni). The gathering of sheep also includes the separation of lambs, barren ewe (sheep that did not lamb that year) and milk ewes. They usually graze separately. Since that date, sheep climb the mountain and graze on meadows until 15th to 21st May (sometimes until the 1st June). This is the time when cows are brought too (where folds are mixed). The grazing of cattle takes place separately from the sheep. However, they are sheltered in neighboring places, and cow's milk is processed with sheep's milk.

A mixed herd includes 100 to 300 sheep and up to 40-60 cattle. They can be grazed separately, and in many villages cattle are brought home every night.

Grazing is performed by parceling out the land and by rotating one parcel to another in order to allow the regeneration of the grass. Lactation depends on the amount of grass on the grassland.

From 1st May to 15th July, when the grass is rich in nutrients, milk has superior qualities. In the next period, grass becomes predominant cellulosic and the dairy products have lower quality. As there are no maintenance and irrigation activities, it depends directly on the annual rainfall regime and the biological regenerative capacity (the structure and floristic diversity, the regeneration capacity between grazing stages etc.).

Grazing continues after 14th September, but sheep are no longer milked, because the lactation is reduced and the udder requires a rest period (the weaning). In the inner mountain area, sheep and cattle descend to their households (meadows in the proximity of the village) on 1st October.

During this period, some of the sheep are slaughtered. Those that have not been milked in summer (barren ewes) are fatter.

Cattle can be milked also outside the grazing period, and the milk is used for homemade dairy products.

The scheduling of births is very important. The gestation of sheep lasts 5 months (about 147 days) and that of cattle lasts nine months. In general (with some exceptions) lactation is scheduled in early summer (until 15th July) when the grazed grass yields the most valuable milk. Another criterion for scheduling births is linked to Easter, when lambs are slaughter in large numbers.



The schedule of births	
Area 1	**Borca:** Around 25th October (St. Demetrius) mating occurs; lambings are scheduled for the period February to March.
	Farcaşa: Around 25th October (St. Demetrius) mating occurs; lambings are scheduled for the end of February to the beginning of March.
	Poiana Teiului: Around 14th October (Good Friday) mating occurs; lambings will take place from March to April.
Area 2	**Ceahlău:** There is a reference calendar: on 14th October mating occurs and lambings take place around 9th March. This calendar is applied when Easter occurs the following year in the second half of April, or the beginning of May. If Easter occurs one month earlier, this calendar is anticipated with one month. From ancient times, Easter Sunday has been announced 3 years in advance so that the scheduling could be done properly.
	Grinţieş: There is no special sheepcot for rams in the village. From 1st to 14th September ewes are brought to neighboring localities from Harghita county. Lambings take place from January to February.
	Hangu: Around 14th October mating occurs. Lambings are scheduled around 9th March. The schedule takes into account that lambs should weigh around 8 kg at Easter, when they are slaughtered.
Area 3	**Taşca:** Rams graze separately from ewes. Mating occurs on 25th September. There is no scheduling.
	Bicazu Ardelean: Traditionally, mating occurs on Good Friday (14th October). Currently, rams are no longer separated from ewes in summer.
	Bicaz Chei: Rams are not separated from ewes throughout the year. Therefore, there is no scheduling of lambings. Lambings may occur two times per year.
	Dămuc: One calculates six months before Easter. Gestation in sheep is about 147 days. One should add one more month for the lamb to be slaughtered. This is how mating is scheduled. The reference date for mating is 25th October.
Area 4	**Bicaz:** Mating occurs on Good Friday (14th October). Lambings start at the end of February.
	Tarcău: On 15th August rams are separated from ewes and are brought back on 25th October.
	Păngăraţi: Mating occurs on 14th October. Usually, one calculates that lambs should have an acceptable weight at Easter.
	Alexandru cel Bun: Scheduling is performed according to the date of Easter the following year: mating occurs from 14th September to 14th October.
Area 5	**Pipirig:** Mating is scheduled around 14th October (St. Parascheva) so that lambings occur at the end of February to the beginning of March.
	Vânători Neamţ: The scheduling of lambings is more complicated. It depends on the weather too. It is also linked to the date of Easter the following year.
	Agapia: Lambings are planned so that by Easter lambs should weigh 10 to 12 kg. The reference date for mating is 1st October, but it also reaches 15 August. Lambings begin on 15th January.
Area 6	**Piatra Şoimului:** Scheduling is based on the date of Easter. By that time the lambs must weigh around 10 kg. Therefore, mating occurrs around 1st of September and lambings start even from December.
	Borleşti: Mating starts on 1st November.
	Tazlău: Mating is scheduled around 14th October (St. Parascheva) so that lambing is scheduled for the end of February to the beginning of March.
Area 7	**Crăcăoani:** Mating is scheduled around 14th October. Lambings occur from February to March.
	Gârcina: The rams or male goats mate around 1st November, so that births occur in March, with lower probability that lambs should freeze.

Activities outside grazing animals

In winter, sheep descend to the village, to their owners households.

They are fed indoors and kept in sheep pens, which may take different forms:

1. The indoor feeding in a semi-open regime. It is practiced in several villages. The sheep pens are placed on the agricultural land next to the house, which gets rich from animal manure and will be good for crops the following spring.

2. The indoor feeding in the meadow. In some places (Hangu Agapia) the stacks are formed on-site. The sheep are moved to these stacks and they consume them in turn. The snow is cleaned and the sheep pens are placed on marked parcels, so that the manure should thicken the land. The excess of manure on meadows would lead to their depreciation. Therefore, the sheep pens move frequently, covering partial areas of land to supplement hay.

Since February, lambings occur and a closer supervision is required because it is cold outside and the lambs could freeze.

The preparation of curd

There is a variety of approaches in every village for the preparation of curd. However, we have identified the elements of a reference procedure:

- the lambs are slaughtered before eating hay (3 days to 2 weeks old), the selection for slaughter considers different criteria: to be males (Poiana Teiului), the sheepskin should be "good for hats" (with aesthetic and regular curls) (Agapia, Pipirig, Hangu, Poiana Teiului) to come out of twins (Piatra Şoimului, Pipirig, Hangu, Poiana Teiului), "to to provide sufficient meat for some steak" (Crăcăoani);
- the sheep stomack is taken;
- both the rennet clot, formed in beestings and the stomach are removed as washed;
- the rennet is then put back, water (Farcasa) or milk (most commonly), salt (in high concentration, will also have a preservative role) (at Alexandrul cel Bun iodized salt is preferred); pungent cheese (Bicazu Ardelean, Damuc) are added;
- it is clung outside to dry. After two weeks it is good to use. At Grințieș, the curds are used only the following year.

They are used as follows:

- large charges of 3 to 5 curds are prepared. They are cut and the inner, solidified mixture is removed;
- the material is finely ground and crushed;
-it is dispersed in water and dissolved. From a curd, one prepares about 1 liter of solution. The result is a charge of 6-7 liters of solution.
- it is put in "tigornicer" (a special tray used for preparing the curd) (at Ceahlău it is named "chegornicer") and used until inished.

The curd strength depends on several factors, which makes the quality of the resulting cheese random. Therefore, one prepares large charges of a curd solution. The first charge is for adjusting; a fixed amount is added to it. According to the quality of the resulting curd cheese, the amount to be added to the next charge is established. If the solution is too weak, the curding time too is long and if it is too intense, it changes the organoleptic properties of the curd cheese.

In general, 100 ml of curd per 100 liters of milk should be added, i.e. a wooden spoon to 10 liters of milk (a bucket) (at Alexandru cel Bun, 100 g solution is added to 40-50 liters of milk). The temperature of the milk has to be suitable when the solution is added. At Bicazul Ardelean it should be similar to the water temperature in a summer day. Usually, the suitable temperature is that obtained after milking. In many folds, the temperature is maintained by placing the cooking vessel near the fire. The curd is added as follows: one pours the solution into the wooden spoon, then in the bowl or dilutes it with a quantity of milk. After that, it is left to rest for curding.

For a fold of 250 sheep, 25 curds are needed every summer.

At Tarcău, Borleşti, Dămuc, bought curdling substances are used.

Other relevant items

Most lambs are slaughtered for the Easter feast, when it is a custom to prepare roast lamb. At the same time, a selection of ewe-lambs for the rejuvenation of the flock is performed. The sheep, whose lambs were sacrificed, are to be milked every day in order not to disturb lactation. This operation is performed until the gathering of sheep.

Cattle grazing activities are almost the same. A herd includes 50-100 cattle, and milking is done manually or mechanically. It may take place also during the cold season. Cattle are fed inside a well-insulated stall. Regular manure removal is necessary to maintain a favourable environment. Manure is built on a platform near the barn, where fermentation takes place. Rotted manure is spread on arable land to maintain fertility. The purine is stored in a tank. It is also used as a fertilizer for crops.

The sheep pen is a revival operation of fertility. At Hangu, hay stacks are scattered on the meadow where they come from. They make sure that the grass is not eaten by wild animals through a wooden fence. Over the winter, sheep eat these stacks of hay in turn, by migrating from stack to stack. Consumption occurs in the same time with covering the place with manure.

When summer comes, the soil microbial processes intensify and optimize the intake of manure distributed to the surface. It is envisaged that a more intensive grazing creates imbalances as it leads to soil burning. At Farcaşa, sheep pens are settled each year only in the vegetable garden, during indoors feeding. At Tarcău, sheep pens are moved periodically both in winter and in summer. At Poiana Teiului, sheep pens used to be settled during winter, but this custom was abandoned.

The activity in the sheepfold throughout the (summer) day

In the sheepfold all activities are very precisely scheduled. In early summer, three milkings a day are performed, and in the second part of the summer and autumn the sheep are no longer milked at noon; this period of the day is dedicated to rest.

Sheepfold bargaining

The sheepfold is led by a shepherd who has the following responsibilities: taking over the sheep with marks (currently eartags are used), preserving the integrity of each sheep, grazing, milking, milk processing, payment of shepherds, delivery of the quantity of cheese to the owners, collecting the payment for grazing in cash and in kind, delivering the sheep at the end of the grazing period. For the grazing period, the payment is made in cash or in corn by Good Friday (14th October). For the fall period (by snowfall) the payment is just cash.

In the villages on the transition axis mountain – hill, folds are accepted on categories, folds for sheep, goats (the goat is considered the cow of the poor), cattle (Grințieș), herds (which return home in the evening). The folds in the mountain villages are mixed: they include about 300-400 sheep, up to 100 goats and 6 to 20 cows.

The main benefit of sheep, goats and cows is milk. Therefore, the sheepfold bargaining includes the obligations of the parties to grazing, which list the income of the owners. In older times, wool (exploited in domestic textile manufacturing) was considered too, but the interest in it has dropped drastically lately.

We met a variety of ways of assessing the quantity of cheese: it is estimated that a kg of sheep cheese results from 4-8 liters of milk and a kg of cow cheese, from 8 to 11 liters of milk. Such an assessment weighs heavily in establishing the quantity of cheese that returns to the owner for each animal. In general, the bargaining of sheepfolds is differentiated from one community to another, and is the result of the clash of interests between owners and shepherds. In many places, the interest of the shepherds is gaining more ground, as they manage to impose increasing milk quotas for them. And this may be the cause of a decreasing number of animals, as they do not generate convenient earnings for owners any more.

Shepherds timetable (Piatra Şoimului)
5.00 – 6.30 a.m. morning milking
6.30 – 7.00 a.m. shepherds breakfast
7.00 – 12.00 a.m. grazing
1.00 – 1.30 p.m. noon milking
1.30 – 2.30 p.m. break (rest)
2.30 – 7.00 p.m. grazing
7.00 – 8.30 p.m. evening milking

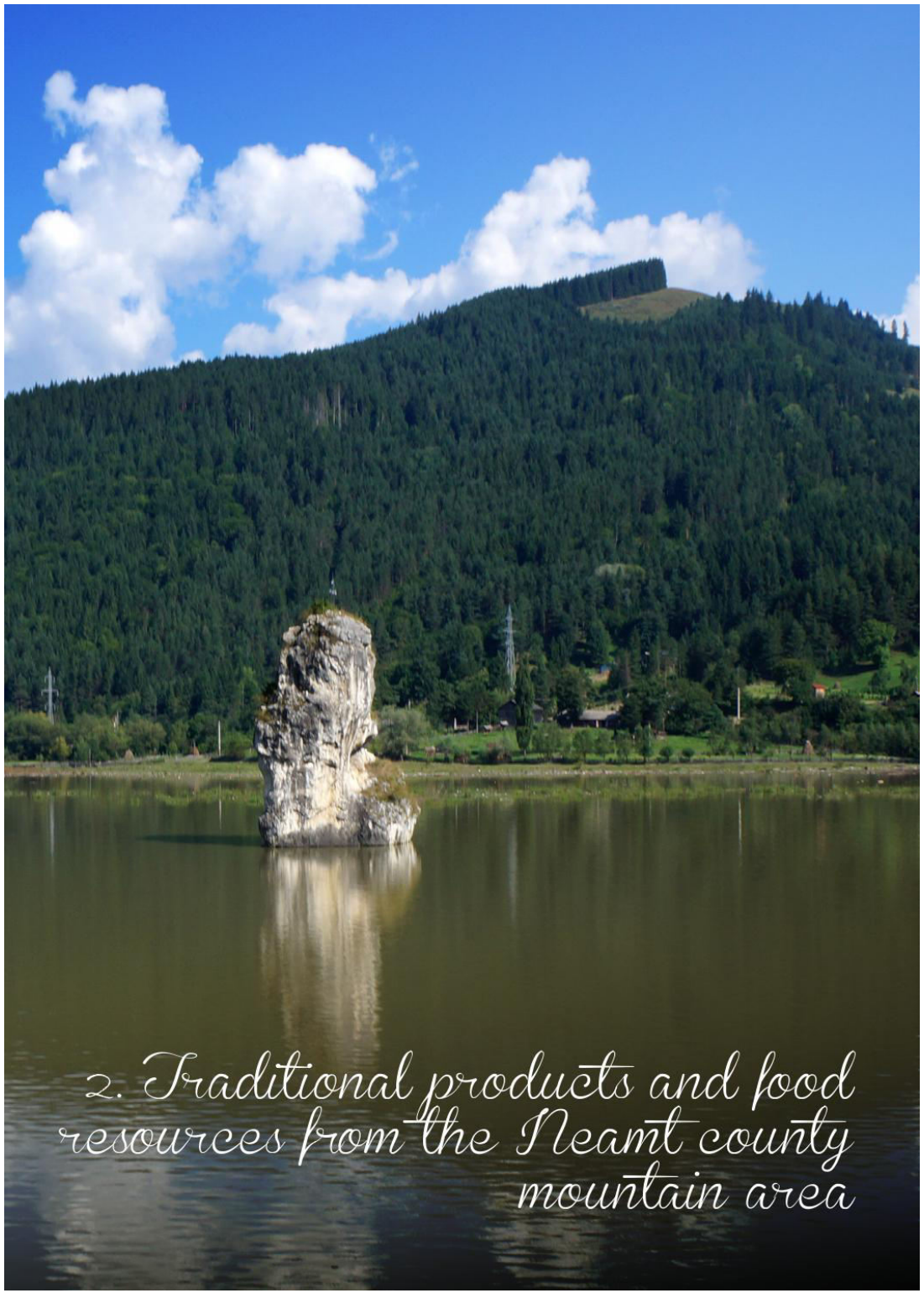


Sheepfold bargaining:	
A1	**Borca:** There are sheepfolds and mixed folds, the milk is measured for cows a week after climbing the mountain (21th May). For each sheep the owner receives: 5 kg curd cheese, 1 kg "urda" cheese, 1 liter "jintuit" (fat whey) or 400 g butter.
	Farcaşa: There are sheepfolds and mixed folds, the milk is measured a week after climbing the mountain (25th May). The sheep milk is measured according to a day's production, for each liter of milk owners receive: 5 kg curd cheese, 1 kg "urda" cheese, 1 liter "jintuit" or 400 g butter. For the cows, the ratio 11: 3 is used; for 3 liters of milk, 11 kg of curd cheese are received; if one wishes also "urda" cheese, it is subtracted from the total amount of cheese. The owners bring corn to the fold: 1 kg per sheep and 5 kg per cow.
	Poiana Teiului: The sheep milk is not measured, the owner receives 5 kg of curd cheese, 1.5 kg of "urda" cheese, 1 kg of butter for 3 sheep. He gives 1.5 kg flour per ewe. He also gives a curd for 3 sheep. For summer time he pays money only for barren ewes. Cow's milk is measured after 15th May, on two milkings of the day. At an average of 20 l/day the owner receives the equivalent of the cheese (in curd cheese) from1/3 of milk, that is, 70 kg of cheese. If he wishes "urda" cheese as well, it is deducted from the amount of curd cheese. The owner gives only 10 kg of flour and 1 curd (he does not pay cash).
A2	**Ceahlău:** A sheepfold includes 200 to 300 sheep. The milk is not measured, sheep owners receive 6 kg curd cheese, 1 kg "urda" cheese, 300 g butter for each sheep. The owners give 2 kg maize per sheep and a curd for 3-4 sheep.
	Grinţieş: A complex sheepfold includes about 200 sheep, 25 cows and 50 sheep. There are also folds only for cattle. The milk is measured only for cows (not for sheep). For each liter of milking, the owner receives 10 kg curd cheese and 2 kg "urda" cheese. For each sheep the owner receives 7 kg of curd cheese and 1 kg of "urda" cheese.
	Hangu: A sheepfold includes 200-500 sheep and 20-40 cows. Milk is measured a week after mountain climbing (1st June) and only in cows, during evening milking. For 1 liter of milk, the owner receives 10 kg curd cheese, 1 kg "urda" cheese and 300 g butter or "jintuit". For each sheep the owner receives 7 kg curd cheese and 1 kg "urda" cheese. The shepherds receive money and corn for the summer period (2 kg/sheep and 5 kg/cow).
A3	**Taşca:** A sheepfold includes 300-500 sheep and 20-60 cows. The sheep milk is measured from three milkings, the cow milk is measured from two milkings. The measure is taken in cows after 1st June. The amount of the evening milking is multiplied by 10 and thus results the amount of cheese the householder receives per cow. The sheep owner receives 7 kg curd cheese, 1 kg "urda" cheese, 300 g butter per head of sheep. The owner must give the sheepfold 1 curd for 3 sheep.
	Bicazu Ardelean: There are folds bargained "in turn" (each owner works one day at the sheepfold by scheduling and takes the harvest of the day). There are sheepfolds and mixed folds. A fold includes 200 sheep and 60-70 cows. The measurement is performed in the first week of June: the morning milking for sheep and the morning milking for cows. For every liter of milk the owner receives: 9 kg curd cheese, 1 kg cow "urda" cheese, and 5 kg sheep "urda" cheese. The owners contribute with 1 curd per cow and a curd for 3 sheep. Also, he brings corn to the fold, 1.5 kg / sheep and 7 kg / cow.
	Bicaz Chei: Most folds are "in balance" with the bargaining of the shepherds. The measurement of milk is performed in early June in sheep and cows. One measures the amount of milk milked during the day. The owner receives for each measured liter 9 kg/sheep cheese and 1 kg of "urda" cheese. Shepherds receive wages in cash, to which cornmeal 7 kg/cow and 2 kg/sheep, and milk from the morning milking are added. A sheepfold is "in turn". The owners perform all daily chores in turn and take all resulting products.
	Dămuc: Sheepfolds are either "in the balance" (taken over by the association) and "in turn" (served by the owners in turn). They include 100-200 sheep and 30-40 cows. Milk is measured in mid-June (3 weeks after the arrival of cows). Milk is measured from the evening milking. For every liter of milk the owner will receive: 9 kg curd cheese and 1 kg "urda" cheese for cows; 7 kg curd cheese for sheep. Shepherds only receive wages in cash.

A4	**Bicaz:** There are sheepfolds. For each sheep the owner receives: 5 kg curd cheese, 1 kg "urda" cheese. He may receive "jintuit" upon request.
	Tarcău: The number of folds is established by the Breeders Association General Assembly. One sheepfold includes 300-400 sheep and 20-30 cows (the mixed ones) (there are 13communal pastures). The animals climb the mountains on 10th to 15th May and on 14th September they descent. On 10th October pastures are closed. Milk is measured 2-3 weeks after setting the sheepfolds. One measures the production of milk for a day. For every liter of measured milk the owners receive: 9 kg curd cheese, 1 kg "urda" cheese, 1/2 kg butter for cows; 6 kg of sheep cheese, 1 kg "urda" cheese, 1/4 kg butter for sheep. Shepherds wages include money and corn (2 kg/sheep, 10 kg/cow).
	Păngăraţi: Only sheepfolds are set, on a contract basis. They include 500-1000 heads. Each owner receives 8 kg sheep cheese, 1 kg of "urda" cheese and 200 g butter per sheep. The payment is cash only.
	Alexandru cel Bun: The owners receive: 7 kg curd cheese and 1 kg "urda" cheese per ewe, 10 kg curd cheese and 1 kg "urda" cheese per goat. When people come for sheep-shearing, they also receive "jintuit".
A5	**Pipirig:** A fold includes the sheep of a big owner or a group of householders. It includes 100-150 sheep and 10-15 cows. In the village there are cows that go with the herd every day and come home in the evening. On 10th May sheepfolds climb the mountain. The highest sheepfold is 1,540 m (on top Bivolul, at Hălăuca). After a month of grazing, milk is measured. For each sheep the owner receives: 55 kg curd cheese, 10 kg "urda" cheese, 1 kg butter, 10 l "jintuit".
	Vânători Neamţ: Sheepfolds include 200 to 800 sheep and 10-50 cattle. The milk production: in sheep, 300 g in the morning, 250 g at noon, 200-250 g in the evening; in cattle, 20 - 25 l/day, in goats, 0.5 - 1.5 l/day. For the summer period each owner receives: 6 kg curd cheese and 1 kg "urda" cheese per sheep; 12 kg curd cheese and 2 kg "urda" cheese per goat, 60-80 kg curd cheese per cow.
	Agapia: There are folds of 200-300 sheep, with no cows. 6-7 families own 100-150 sheep. The rest of the families own 10 – 20 sheep. The cattle are 1-3 in every family, rarely 20 cows. The gathering of sheep takes place from 1st May to 30th September, and cows go out to the pasture from 15th May until 15th September. Milk is not measured. Each owner receives 5 kg curd cheese and 1 kg "urda" cheese per sheep. The owners pay cash and 1 kg of maize per sheep. Also, he must give 1 curd for 5 sheep. Cows graze in the herd and are brought home at night.
A6	**Piatra Şoimului:** A fold includes the sheep of a big owner (200-300 sheep and goats and 10 cows), which can receive up to 50 sheep from small owners who do not pay anything, they do not measure the milk and receive 5 kg curd cheese per sheep in summer. There are also "partnership" folds. Around the folds also 3-5 pigs are raised (which belong to the shepherds).
	Borleşti: Sheep go to the sheepfold and the cattle go to pasture during the day and in the evening they return home (the bargaining is done only for money). Each owner receives 4 kg curd cheese and ½ kg "urda" cheese per sheep and 8 kg curd cheese, 1/2 kg "urda" cheese per goat. Curds and "jintuit" are administered by sheepfolds on their own.
	Tazlău: Here goats prevail. There are folds that are owned by a family and include sheep from other households (not too many). A fold includes 150 sheep or goats and up to 60 cattle. The milk is not measured. The owner receives 8 kg curd cheese per sheep (goat). The owner does not pay the the summer period. The autumn periods are discussed separately.
A7	**Crăcăoani:** A sheepfold consists of the sheep of a big owner (200-250 sheep), which can include up to 50 sheep from small owners, who receive 6 kg curd cheese and 0.5 kg "urda" cheese per cheep. Shepherds receive money and corn, 2 kg per sheep.
	Gârcina: The folds include sheep or goats only. There are many owners with many sheep or goats, who form their own fold. The owners receive 6 kg curd cheese per sheep and 8-10 kg per goat. For this, they pay cash, and give also 2 kg of flour per animal and 1 curd for 4 sheep or 4 goats.







2. Traditional products and food resources from the Neamt county mountain area

2.1. Milk and dairy products

Milk is an important food source for both the needs of individual households and for marketing. Milk is consumed as such, but also in a variety of milk products, obtained by fermentation, maturation, etc.
The domestic consumption uses boiled milk, which is drank with polenta in the morning or in the evening.
Dairy products can be made in house, as long as the cow is milked every morning and evening and is in the stable or comes from pasture. The most important dairy products are produced in sheepfolds at early 'technological' stages, then they continue in the household of every family.

2.1.1. The sheepfold

Sour milk ★★☆
(Pângărați)
The milk is boiled, cooled and put in a clay pot or a jar. A "nest" is added, that is some cream from a previously prepared milk pot, in its final phase. It serves as a fermentation accelerator. The pot is kept warm near the stove for 24 hours. The curdling process takes place simultaneously with the separation of the cream in the upper layer.
The upper layer is removed and collected in a separate vessel. The resulting sour milk is kept cool until consumption. It is served for breakfast or dinner, alone or associated with fatter meals as digestive stimulant. At Pângărați, instead of the cream nest, a ball of sour milk cheese is added. It is kept warm, in the light, throughout a day. Then it is kept in the refrigerator for up to 2 days (while it is consumed).
Before consumption, the cream from the upper layer is removed and is used for other forms of consumption.

Soft cheese ★★☆
Raw milk is allowed to curdle in a clay pot. After curdling for 24 hours, in a warm environment (20 - 25°C) curdled milk is obtained. The temperature must not be too high because otherwise the process would intensify and would give no time for the cream to separate. Then the cream is separated and put in a strainer to drain. After removing the whey, a ball of soft cheese result. It is served with sour cream and hot polenta.



"Zburat" ★★☆
It is a kind of homemade "urda" cheese, obtained by fermenting an equal mixture of fresh, boiled and cooled milk and sour milk. The curdling process takes place very quickly. The mixture is separated in a strainer. It is served at breakfast or dinner, with hot polenta or bread. At Agapia, a more detailed description is provided: 3-4 l of milk is turned into into cheese milk cheese (without curd). After the whey is drained and removed from the strainer, it is mixed with 4-5 liters of milk and brought to a boil over low heat. One waits for 5 minutes for the whey to separate at the surface, it is placed in the strainer and allowed to drain overnight. At Piatra Şoimului the raw milk is allowed to curdle. After maximum two days, it is mixed with fresh milk (1: 1) and kept at 30 - 40oC. It is allowed to drain in the strainer for one day.
Before consumption, the cream from the upper layer is separated is above and used for other dishes.



Sour milk cheese ★★☆
It is obtained similarly to soft cheese, but once the curdling has been noticed, it is kept for about 3 hours near the stove plate (at a temperature of 32 - 38°C), a process of maturation takes place while they whey is removed from the curdled structure. It is put in a strainer to drain. The result is a more consistent cheese with dietary properties. It is eaten as such. It is important that the pots should be thoroughly washed, sterilized (boiled) and kept upside down in the fence. Otherwise, the product quality may suffer. Most frequently, an unpleasant taste of bitterness occurs. These products are primarily made of cow's milk, during the inside feeding, as milking continues and the cows are at home. Also, milk and cream separation can be made during the summer too, but one must to go to the fold to take fresh milk. Until processing, the milk is kept cool in the cellar.



Cheese with brine (Farcaşa) ★☆☆
The boiled milk is mixed with brine (1:1) and then it is heated like "urda" cheese. Subsiding occurs and a sweet cheese is formed, which is consumed within 24 hours. Generally, milk proteins change and subside (similarly to "urda" cheese).
If there are no natural available sources of brine or they are too weak, a correction is neccesary by adding salt until raw eggs float on it.
The resulting cheese has a low salt content (the salt stays in the whey) and even has a sweet taste.



2.1.2. Dairy products manufactured at the sheepfold

The main dairy products manufactured at the sheepfold are curd cheese and "urda" cheese. Secondary products are fat whey ("jintuit"), "jintiță" and whey. There are products that are manufactured in a short time to avoid alteration. During this period, the biochemical processes that occur are favourable to the manufacturing of quality products, good for consumption. The scheme of these activities is shown below.

The process of preparing cheese in the sheepfold

Curd cheese (Pângărați) ★★☆

Curd cheese is made either from sheep or cow's milk, or from a mixture of cow and sheep milk in different ratios. Curd cheese made from sheep milk is harder, while the one made from cow's milk is lighter (less flavoured). By mixing them in certain ratios, one obtains a product with combined properties, closer to consumer satisfaction. At Damuc,it is stated that the best mixture ratio is 7:3 (cow/sheep milk).

The result of one milking is 200 l cow milk and 100 liters sheep milk (in sheepfolds which include an average of 20 to 25 cows and 120-150 sheep).

At Poiana Teiului it is generally reckoned as follows: the morning milking results in 12 kg curd cheese, the noon milking results in 6-7 kg curd cheese and the evening milking results in 10 kg curd cheese.

After milking, the milk is strained through at least 3 layers of cheesecloth, is put on a "hârzob" (a kind of branch basket) above the "închegătoare" – a 200 l wooden curdling tray (at Grințieș it must be made of beech or ash). The jet of milk must not fall directly on the strainer. A cup is put upside down on the strainer and the milk is poured on the bottom of the cup so that it should be dispersed on the strainer at a lower speed (Tazlău). The milk is put in a bucket.

Then, the curd is added.

It has been noticed that the preparation of curd is different from one area to another. However, the preparation follows a general procedure that combines rigour with probability. The batches of curd solution are prepared in an amount that could cover the need for several days. One prepares a batch of 7-10 liters, with 3-4 curds, finely grinds the solid part and dissolves it in water or sweet whey (Poiana Teiului). The solution is kept in a "tigornicer" (at Ceahlău it is called "chegornicer"). The amount of necessary curd is determined by its power and by the quantity of milk from one milking. The curd is diluted with milk for rapid dispersion and added to the strained milk. If it is too much – the curd cheese will be too hard, if it's too little – the curdling time will be prolongued and it will not reach the desired consistency.

The necessary amount of curd is set according to its strength and to the amount of milk. Usually, the first cheese is for trial and measurement. In general, the ratio curd/milk is 100 g/100 liters. At Alexandru cel Bun the ratio is 100 g/50 liters.

It is kept to rest at room temperature near a stove in use (28 - 30°C) for 40 minutes - 1 hour and a half (the temperature is tried with the elbow). Three-quarters of the time it is checked whether the curdling process has started, by cutting the curdled mass with a wooden knife. If after cutting the surface with the wooden knife, a stable line remains, it means that the curdling process is ongoing. If the surface is recovering, the curdling has not yet started. The trial is made every 10 minutes. After noticing the start of the curdling process, one must wait 15 more minutes.

Then, the curdled solution is beaten with "brighidei" (a special stick for beating the milk) until it becomes homogenous and dispersed like milk. The curdling process continues. The content is pulled to the middle of the recipient with a wooden spoon ("leafă") where a round mound is formed.







The curdled mass is separated from the whey. There are many variants.

V1. In some sheepfolds, the subsided mass is transferred to a "budaca" (a sort of wooden pot) in hands.

V2. In most sheepfolds, the curdled mass is taken with a strainer. First, most of the whey is drained, then the strain is put on a „crinta" (a wooden pot, in the form of a trough) which had been previously covered with a "hârzob". There, the whey continues to drain. To intensify the separation, the strainer (cheesecloth) is spinned.

The whey which has been collected so far is used to prepare "urda" cheese.

In "budaca" or "crinta" one starts the "jintuit" process (the separation of cheese from whey). The subsided mass is kneaded, broken, pressed, by squeezing in hands for 5-10 minutes. The separated liquid is called "jintuit" (it is a fat whey) and has a whitish colour. From 100 liters milk, 2 to 2.5 l "jintuit" result. There are several variants of separating the fat whey:

V1. The mass from "budaca" is put in a strainer. A rolling pin is passed through the holes of the strainer in order to remove all the whey. The straining is intense. It is kept in the strainer 2-3 hours to remove remaining amounts of whey.

V2. "Jintuit" is gradually collected during pressing and breaking the formed mass of cheese. The strainer is hung 2-3 hours in order to remove the remaining amounts of whey.

V3 (Grințieș) The curd cheese is removed from the strainer. It is cut into 4 pieces. Each piece is squeezed by hand until no longer runny whey. Then smaller portions are cut and the squizzing continues. From 17 kg curd cheese, 4-5 liters "jintuit" (fat whey) result.

At Dămuc the strainer with curd cheese is left for 10 minutes, then is put in a "veşcă" (tree bark) with holes and pressed. The pressure is weak at the beginning and then gradually increases (by adding weights). The pressing process takes 2-3 hours.

It is removed from the press and/or strainer and placed on the first shelf, where it is held for a day to dry. Every three hours it is moved on a grate to expose all parts to air.

Then it is put on the second shelf. Here, the leavening process occurs. At Damuc, Alexandru cel Bun, and Grințieș, in this phase, the cheese is also exposed to smoke. A tough crust is formed and the curd cheese gets an intense yellow color. The smoke is warm and is produced from green, beech wood (the indicative parameters must be constant). The leavening time is 7-10 days. From 150 liters milk, 10-12 kg curd cheese result.

"Urda" cheese ★★☆

The whey resulting from the separation in the curdling pot is boiled for an hour and a half at moderate temperature. It is stirred continuously with a "tăujer" (wooden shovel) (at Vânători it is called "swallow"). A white curdled solution is formed (from proteins that have changed by boiling). During boiling, "urda" cheese is formed: the curdled mass rises to the surface and even foams. It is the time when mixed portions of liquid and solid fragments are gathered with a wooden spoon and served fresh or stored in a barrel. This is called "jintița". The fire is made of hardwood (beech, hazel, hornbeam). Fir, poplar or willow is not recommended because they produce flying ash, which may reach the cheese. The remainder is allowed to sour without stirring. It is removed with a strainer or with a wooden spoon and put in a strainer to drain, hanged on a nail or on "hârzob". The liquid part is called whey (light) and is used as additional feed for the animals around the sheepfold. The solid part becomes "urda" cheese, shaped as a ball, which is removed after a day and put on a shelf to dry. From 100 liters of curd milk 3.5 to 4 kg of "urda" cheese result.

Jintuit ★★☆

"Jintuit" results from the separation of the curdled mass by kneading and tearing. From 8 - 12 kg curd cheese results 2 - 3 kg "jintuit" which is collected in a "bărbânță" (wooden pot made of staves) (at Ceahlău it is called "bârdăi", at Vânători it is called "budălău"), and may have different uses: to obtain butter, to prepare soups, to drink. Its consumption may cause drowsiness (specification from Grințieș).





Jintița ★★☆

If during the preparation of "urda" cheese, the mixture does not separate the curdled mass, to form the ball of cheese, it is called "jintița" and can be eaten warm (Vânători).

Sheepfold butter ★★☆

In the collection pot for "jintuit", a maturation process occurs (leavening) for 1-2 weeks. A solid level separates on the surface, which is put in "budălău" or in the skimming machine. It is beaten with "brighidei" (at Grințieș it is called "bădău") until the butter comes out. Butter has an even consistency. It is removed from "budălău" and placed in cold water in a "bărbânță". It is washed in 2-3 cold waters, then placed in a "budaca". What remains is called "zară" (a sort of buttermilk) and used in "diresleală" (the souring of soup).

Butter is put in a wooden or stainless steel bowl and placed in layers, among which a little salt is sprinkled for preservation. At St. Mary, the sharing of butter occurs at the sheepfolds which included this product in bargaining.

Autumn buttermilk (Ceahlău, Gârcina) ★★☆

After 1st September the temperature starts dropping. Sheep still give milk, but not so much. Curd cheese is no longer produced (the amount is insufficient for a charge). Milk (from sheep only) is boiled in a (metal) pot and let to curdle. Then it is put in a tub. Boiled and cooled batches are added in the tub until it is full. Then it is closed, kept in the cellar and opened at Christmas or Easter (then it will have the consistency of a paste).

Features of differentiation
The smoking of curd cheese is performed in fewer folds (Dămuc, Grințieș, Alexandru cel Bun). In other folds, the curd cheese is drained for 2 lunches (without pressing) it is hung on a nail and then transferred to leaven on the shelf.
At Borca, a variety of cheese is prepared, without passing through draining kneading, breaking, pressing. Curd cheese is moister and is more suitable to turn into "telemea" cheese. It also contains an excess of fat.

Cheese curdled with brine (Farcașa, Borca) ★☆☆
The cheese is prepared by milk curdling in the presence of brine. Brine is natural water, with high salinity near saturation level. The mountain area is full of accessible brine springs. Basically, a process of casein and protein curdling occur in the presence of a strong electrolyte. Cow's milk is heated near boiling. A cup of 10 g of brine is added gradually per 10 liters of milk. Curdling and the separation of the solid matter start immediately. It is not heated much longer, then is left to cool. It is drained through a cheesecloth and served fresh or homemade "caşcaval" cheese is made of it (which is not a traditional product).

"Caşcaval" cheese (Tarcău, Agapia) ★☆☆
One starts from the ball of cheese obtained by draining from "sour milk cheese". The cheese is kneaded, passed through the mincer or grated with a large grate. It is placed in a cast-iron kettle. A pack of margarine or a little oil or half a pack homemade butter is added. Also salt to taste and a teaspoon of baking soda are added. For the colour, two eggs are added. In some variants, cream is added, which will lead to a softer and oilier product. It is heated at normal fire for one hour while stirring continuously. Melting and mixing take place, resulting in a cream with bubbles. It is put in a mold and then cooled. The result is "caşcaval" cheese without crust, that is put on a shelf to dry.
In other variants, it is put on the cooking stove, on the big ring, from which the cover was removed. The result is a form of smoked cheese.

Long curd (Poiana Teiului, Gârcina, Alexandru cel Bun, Grințieș, Vânători) ★★☆
Curd cheese is prepared in the same sequence of operations, except for the draining of whey. The result is a heavy curd cheese, 4 kg heavier than the drained curd cheese, made of the same amount of milk.

"Telemea" cheese with curd ★★☆
(Poiana Teiului, Gârcina, Alexandru cel Bun)
It is prepared from curd cheese which has not drained the whey. It is cut into chunks, placed in brin (from Gârcina) concentrated (raw egg floats) and allowed to rest for 2-4 weeks and then supplemented with whey or t all the liquid is throuwn and replaced with a weaker brine.

Leaven for curd (Gârcina) ★☆☆
At Gârcina, there is a family of shepherds (who came here around 18th century) who use curd only at the beginning of grazing. Then, the same culture is used from a batch to another. They proceed as follows: after the mass is curdled and before the removal of whey, a quantity of product is taken and kept cold (traditionally, the cold source of a sheepfold was a spring in the neighborhood). The pot or "budaca" was kept in cold water or spring and thus it can be preserved for two subsequent batches (10 - 12°C). In other villages, the cold source comes from the ice cellar (a cellar filled in January with blocks of ice, wrapped in sawdust or straws).
10 kg of preserved curd are added to 100 liters of fresh milk. Curdling occurs through the same mechanisms, the working temperature is the same. The large quantity of added curd reduces the formation period of curdled solution. It is true that the curdle strength is weaker, but the resulting curd is more pleasing to the consumer. Prior to the addition of culture, the milk is pasteurized (heated to a temperature, which the immersed hand would bear when counting up to 20), then removed from the fire. In this way, one makes sure that the curd cheese will not have bubbles. For a category of consumers this is very important.



Curd cheese boiled in "jintuit" (Gârcina) ★☆☆
Before leavening, curd cheese is immersed in hot "jintuit" for a few minutes. As a result, the pores close, the color changes to yellow and fats are no longer lost.

Tarcău butter (Tarcău) ★★☆
At Tarcău, butter is not obtained from "jintuit", but from an amount of milk intended for it directly from milking. One uses a "ștean" (tall and slim wooden pot, h = 1.2 m; d = 15-20 cm). Milk, which will not be used for making cheese, but will be intended for other uses, is put separately. In this pot cream, separated for a week, using daily 5-6 l fresh milk, is collected. Once a week, it is beaten with "brighidei" for 1 - 1.5 hours continuously. Butter is separated and washed with cold water and put in molds.
The Hungarian side of the village (in Hungarian Brateșul) keeps the butter in glass.

Ewe's milk cheese (Alexandru cel Bun) ★☆☆
Curd cheese is kneaded with salt. The pork bladder and stomach are prepared (washed, cleaned, rubbed with salt and corn), the cheese is placed in this wrapper and then it is sewn. Draining is allowed by placing it with the seam downwards. It is smoked with warm smoke.

At Agapia there is the custom that whey should not be given back to the animals that provided the milk of origin. It is given to other animals: pigs, dogs ...



2.1.3. The processing of cheese at home for storage

After the leavening period, curd is brought home to the owners of the sheep and cows. At most sheepfolds, a scheduling is performed over the summer, according to the number of ewes and the milk measurement. Curd cheese and "urda" cheese can be eaten fresh or can be preserved for the winter.



Beaten cheese ★★☆

Step 1. Preparation of cheese.Some part of the curd cheese is cut into slices and the other part is kneaded with salt. "Urda" cheese is sliced. At Pipirig, the slices of curd cheese and "urda" cheese are kept overnight in brine.

It is kneaded with salt to taste (up to 10-30 grams of salt per 1 kg of cheese). If one does not add salt, the cheese becomes very pungent (salt is used as a spice).

Step 2: Preparation of the tub. It is made only of white fir wood.

At Farcaşa, the tub must not be new. Were it new, the wood pores would absorb the fat from the cheese. The tub is used prior to storing cheese in the handling of milk and milk products. In this time, the pores are filled and sealed.

- At Pipirig, the new tub is greased with butter in advance to fill the pores.
- At Damuc the tub may be new. It absorbs the fat (considered to be in excess) and gives the cheese a higher value for consumption.
- At Hangu, the new tub, previously greased with fat is softened with whey.
- At Agapia, the tub is currently covered with polythene sheet. Traditionally, the new tub used to be scalded with whey. Then it was greased with lard or butter for sealing the pores.
- At Bicazu Ardelean the tub is scalded before use. The boiling water used for scalding includes nettle leaves too.

When washing the tub, one uses a tuft of horsetail plants.

- At Ceahlău, the tub is rubbed with ashes.
- At Grinţieş, it is greased with butter or fat.
- At Gârcina it is greased with tallow. The salt is removed through the staves (pore sealing).
- At Tarcău "bărbânţe" are used to (less than 10 kg tubs), intended for family consumption for one month. The new tub absorbs fat at a first use (a circular space of 1 cm emerges).

Step 3: Beating. One layer of kneaded cheese is beaten, then follows a layer of sliced curd cheese and "urda" cheese. (La Poiana Teiului only slices of cheese are put in the tub). The slices of "urda" cheese alternate with the slices of curd cheese, but the middle of the tub is filled with kneaded cheese (it must not have contact with the wood). The spaces between the slices are filled with kneaded curd cheese. The tub is filled altenatively with one layer of pieces of cheese and one layer of kneaded cheese. The aim of beating (stuffing) the cheese is to remove totally the air from the cheese, otherwise it might rot and deteriorate. The beating is performed with "brai" (a kind of wooden stick).

- At Agapia and Gârcina, if the tub is sufficiently large (over 15 kg), a whole curd cheese or "urda" cheese is placed in the middle. The cheese is cut in the middle (2-3 cuts in one direction and 2-3 cuts in the perpendicular direction, similar to that of the pickled cucumbers) to allow the diffusion of salt (at Gârcina there are no cuts).
- At Poiana Teiului, one kneads together a mixture of 1/3 curd cheese with 2/3 urda cheese. It is beaten only in mixed form.
- At Taşca, Ceahlău, Borleşti urda cheese is not stored in the tub, as it contains more water and the preservation process may be compromised.
- At Bicazu Ardelean curd cheese is minced. It is mixed with salt, beaten with slices of cheese. Urda cheese is rarely cautiously beaten any more as it can issue a bitter taste.
- At Grinţieş, alternating layers of curd cheese and "urda" cheese are laid until the tub fills. The free spaces are filled with kneaded curd cheese.

Step 4: Sealing. Once the tub is filled, it is topped with a layer of corn flour to absorb the last traces of moisture. Then the lid is put.

Step 5: Storing. The tub is kept in the cellar, in a cold temperature (below 10°C). Usually, the tub is kept with the lid up. At Damuc the tub sits upside down to prevent air from entering. The tub is opened after Advent and the cheese will be consumed until Lent. The cheese preserved in this way may be consumed after Easter too. In time, the cheese becomes pungent.





"Telemea" of curd cheese ★★☆

(in some places it is not considered traditional)

Curd cheese is cut into pieces and placed in the tub with larger spaces among them. The tub is sealed and then is filled through a hole with brine, prepared of water and salt, so concentrated that an egg can float on it. It is stored and opened at Christmas for consumption.

Cheese rolls (Piatra Şoimului) ★☆☆

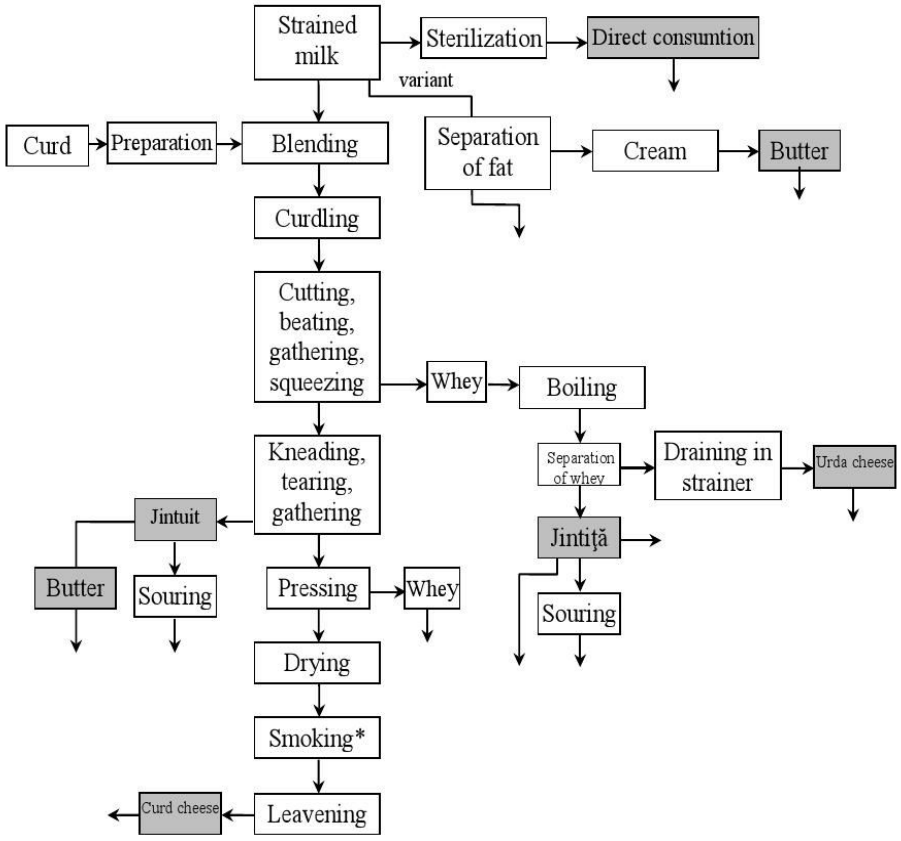
Curd cheese is kneaded together with "urda" cheese (ratio 70:30), it is wrapped in foil in the form of sticks and kept in the freezer. When thawing, it is as fresh as before being frozen. Sometimes tree bark or pig bladder is used instead of foil (Piatra Şoimului, Tarcău).

"Telemea" of "urda" cheese ★★☆

In some places "urda" cheese is considered a special food. At Borca, the brine is brought from a spring (from Stejaru) or it is prepared from water and salt. The concentration is checked with a raw egg which should be able to float on it. Before use, the brine is separated from the sediments on the bottom. The slices of "urda" cheese are placed in the vessel (a tub, pot, jar) in stacked layers, with about 1 cm between them to allow the brine to enter all areas. Eventually, a plastic sheet is put inside to insulate the walls of the vessel. The clear brine is poured over the stacked pieces and the vessel is closed. Before consumption, the cheese is desalted: it is kept in water for 10 hours, while the water is changed twice.

Also, in some villages "jintuit" is stored in the basement, in glass demijohns and is used during the autumn and winter for "dreseală" (added to soups).
The quality of the cheese depends directly on the quality of milk. It varies throughout the year according to several factors. Thus, the following periods have been identified:
- From 1st May to 21st May the pasture is occupied only by sheep. Therefore, only ewe's milk cheese is produced.
- From 21st May to 21st June, the pasture is occupied both by cows and sheep, grass has a complex floral structure, is in its growing stage therefore it has noticeable qualities. The cheese produced during this period is called "cheese from under the wool" (before sheep shearing) or "cheese of the flowers".
- After 21st June, but especially after 15th July, the grown grass has a high cellulose content, and it leads to a different milk quality (some say it is inferior).
- Milk produced by grazing on the slopes facing the south and east ("front grazing ") is different from that one produced by grazing on the slopes facing north and west ("rear grazing").
- The hay milk (resulting from animals fed inside) is thicker and more oily compared to the grass milk (resulting from grazing), which is more fluid and thinner, but rich in other nutritional components, useful for healthy eating.
- Cow's milk is available during the period when animals are fed inside, the period of rest for the udder is reduced to less than two months. It is used to produce homemade cheese and dairy products.
- In places where the sheepfold includes sheep and cows, the curd cheese is different. The cows are milked twice a day, and sheep three times a day. The result is: mixed curd cheese in the morning, only ewe's milk cheese at noon, mixed curd cheese in the evening.

The processing of milk in sheepfold – general chart



2.1.4. Tools and equipment used for the processing and storage of milk and milk products [1]

At the sheepfold:
Ciuveie = sheepfold tools used to prepare cheeses;
Bucket and bin = vessels used for milking;
Strainer, colander = vessel used to drain the milking result;
Strecătoare = cloth bag in which the curdled mixture is put to separate cheese from whey;
Străcătoare = cloth in which curd cheese is wrapped to dry;
Hârzob = support frame with straw and braided rope (meshes of 5-7 cm) that serves as support for the strainer for draining the remaining whey;
Budacă = wooden vessel used for the curdling of milk for curd cheese (up to 120 l);
Cast iron caldron used to boil the whey for urda cheese (80 l);
Wooden spoon = used to break the curdled milk;
Wooden knife =used to cut the hardened curd cheese (in four pieces);
Budăcuță = wooden vessel in which the pieces of curd cheese are laid in order to squeeze the whey;
Bărbânță = wooden vessel used to collect "jintuit" or butter;
Cheese bed = shelf on which curd cheese is kept for 2-3 days for leavening;
Budău = processing vessel for "jintuit";
Brighidei = tool used to beat "jintuit";
Putină = tub used to prepare sour milk.

In the household where sheep and cattle are raised:
Bărbânță = vessel used for processing and finishing butter;
Putină = used to prepare sour milk;
Putină = used to beat cheese for winter;
Căldare = vessel in which whey is kept until use (preparation of cooked meals)
These vessels are mainly made of wood because they preserve the warmth of the milk long enough to obtain curd cheese (Alexandru cel Bun). The "urda" cheese cauldron is made of "tuci" (cast iron). Lately, aluminum or stainless steel vessels have entered the folds.
It is considered that milk has a corrosive effect on aluminum vessels ("it eats them") and wood ("it carves through them").

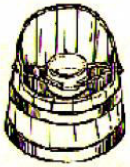




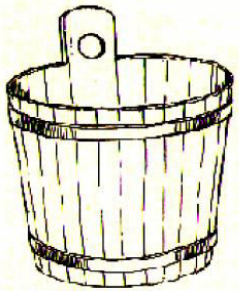
Trigornicer: vessel used for preparing and keeping the curd solution;



Trigornicer (another form): collection vessel for "jintuit";



Bucket with funnel: used for sheep milking;



Curdling bowl: used for curd cheese preparation. The curdling takes place here;



Spoon: used to mix the curdled milk and to prepare for squeezing;



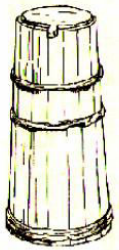
Leafă: used to gather the curdled milk in the middle of the pot for whey separation;



Hârzob: Support for "strecătoare" or for the cloth that covers the curdling vessel;



Budăcuţă: vessel used to transfer the curd cheese from the curdling vessel;



Bărbânţă: vessel used to transfer "jintuit" issued after kneading the curd cheese;



Budacă: collection vessel for "jintuit" after kneading the curd cheese;



Strecătoare: rare cloth (cheesecloth) allowing the passage of whey and retaining curdled cheese;



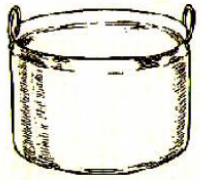
Brighidei: tool, used to uniform the curdled mass for curd cheese; it is also used to beat "jintuit" to separate the butter;



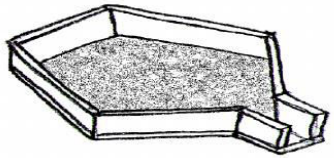
Budălău: collection vessel for "jintuit" to obtain butter;



Tăujer: tool used to mix in a pot to obtain "urda" cheese;



Căldare: pot for boiling "urda" cheese;



Crintă: collection vessel for "jintuit" after kneading the curd cheese;



Putină: vessel in which cheese is beaten for winter;



Fedeleş: vessel which keeps "jintuit" or whey.

2.2. Meat and meat products

In a consistent diet, meat occupies an important place, especially as energy support in activities that require physical effort. Therfore, one of the main concerns of the mountain householders is to provide the necessary annual quantity of meat, even if it is consumed in between fasting periods ("câşlegi"). Th most physically demanding activities are:

- in winter: cutting wood in the forest, carrying hay from the stacks, hay barn to the stable for animal consumption;
- in spring: the same concern for feeding the animals;
- in summer: agricultural crops, grass mowing, gathering and building hay stacks;
- in autumn: harvesting and storing the harvest for the winter.

Each household owns a variety of animals: cattle, sheep and goats, pigs, poultry, rabbits etc. Slaughtering after a period of intensive feeding is planned in accordance with a food timetable that has been improved over time, and which is part of the mountain rural culture.

2.2.1. Pork

Every mountain household raises 1-3 pigs every year. Also, around each sheepfold, shepherds raise pigs, which they feed with whey resulting after curd cheese and "urda" cheese production.
Usually, pigs are raised in wooden pens that include a paddock for moving around. They are fed with various foods, particularly potatoes, bran, fodder beets, other root vegetables, but also grass, weeds (mostly chickenweed), acorns, etc.

Pig slaughtering
Pig slaughtering is done around Christmas (20th to 24th December) and is accompanied by an appropriate ritual called "pig's alms".
After stunning (slaughtering), the pig is charred with straws until all body hair is burned up. In fact, the rind is roasted as well, which will give it a special taste. First, the pig is charred on the back and on the sides, then it is turned and the belly and all other parts are charred to make sure there is no hair left. Usually, a thick layer of straws is laid on the pig, then they are burnt, the skin is shaved with a knife and the operation is repeated. Again, it is cleaned from soot and flying ashes. Further, straw wisps are used for additional burning of the less exposed parts. After charring, the body is washed with warm water and shaved with a sharp knife.
There are times when the pig is not charred, as the skin will be used to make shoes or other leather items. In this case, the body is skinned carefully in order not to puncture or cut the skin. It will be treated for leather and leather applications (dressing etc.).
Then follows the cutting of the head, legs, the separation of the fat starting from the spine, the separation of ribs, guts and intestines. In the end, on the slaughter table, only the chest with the tender rind and a thin layer of bacon alternating with a muscle called "rabbit" remain.
Each of these parties is treated separately:
- bacon and feet are placed in the pan and are thoroughly salted. They are allowed to rest for 1-3 days, then are prepared for smoking: cut into pieces and tied with a rope to be hung in the smokehouse.
- the head is split, the brain and some parts with more meat are removed. The rest will be used for aspic and "toba" (ears, tongue, jowl - lower jaw).
- the ribs are cut into 2-3 pieces; they are prepared for smoking.
- the back muscles are also cut and prepared for smoking.
- The entrails are washed and prepared for processing.
- The intestines are separated (resulting "bariz" - a support structure of which lard is obtained) then washed and cleaned. From the small intestine sausages will be made. From the large intestine "chişcă" or "caltaboşi" will be prepared.
"Pig's alms" is the steak which is prepared immediately after cutting and it is a meal sprinkled with brandy and wishes of good luck in the following year.

For salting, coarse salt is used. At Tazlău, natural brine available in the village is used. It contains useful elements as magnesium, selenium etc. For crystallization, a traditional technology is used: "drying in the heat". The result is salt of "huscă". Brine springs are also found at Gârcina, Bălţăteşti, Crăcăoani, Negreşti etc.







Fresh products
The main ally of pork is the temperature. The fact that pork is cut in winter, when it is cold ensures the longer preservation of the fresh meat.
Fresh pork products are:

Sausages ★★☆
Are prepared either of pork only or of beef mixed with mutton. Appropriate amounts of lean meat, bacon and "rabbit" (muscles and fat from the belly) are prepared. The mixture is chopped (currently mincing machines are used, but in the past all components were chopped with a chopper or axe), salt, garlic, allspice, crushed bay leaves, pepper and paprika are added. The mixture is mixed. The intestines are cleaned and washed, cut to 25-40 cm and are rolled up on a "gorniţă" (a cone-shaped metal pipe). The chopped and mixed portions are pushed through the pipe so as to reach the intestines. As they fill the pipe, the intestines unfold from the pipe. When a piece of intestine is filled, another one is rolled up the pipe and so on. The sausages thus formed are placed on a stick hanging from the ceiling, among the hook used for yarn twisting and the stove. After it dries on the surface, one eats it fresh or smoked.

"Caltaboşi (chişcă)" ★★☆
Rice is boiled. The pork entrails (liver, spleen, kidneys, heart, lungs, along with pieces of lean meat) are chosen and cooked separately, then chopped finely, mixed with rice and other ingredients (salt, bay leaves, allspice, pepper). The large intestines are filled, cut, cleaned and washed, its ends are sewn with thin thread and boiled in a large pot with water, salt, and bay leaves. Boiling time - one hour. Every 5 minutes they are pricked with a needle to prevent the accumulation of air and the risk of cracking. They are removed from the boiling water and kept cool. They are not smoked.

"Tobă" ★★☆
The pork stomach is cleaned and washed. Pieces of meat (jaw), bacon from the belly ("rabbit"), ears, tongue, kidneys etc. are chosen and boiled. Where appropriate, they are detached from the bone. The bones were used as a source of gelatine. They are allowed to cool. Then they are placed in the stomach and sewn with thin thread. "Toba" is boiled in water with salt, pepper and bay leaves. During boiling it is pricked with a needle in order to remove the water vapours.









Preserved products

The preservation of pork and pork products is performed by smoking and by stewing.

Smoked products ★★☆

Smoking is performed for dry meat products. Cold, warm or hot smoke is used. The cold smoke temperature is equal to the ambient temperature (10 - 20°C) and the exposure time is 1-3 weeks; the warm smoke temperature is 30 - 50oC, the exposure time is 1-2 days and the hot smoke temperature is up to 100oC to, the exposure time is a few hours. Cold smoking is performed in the attic by diverting the waste gases from the stove. Instead of going out on the chimney, they enter the attic and reach the meat, which is cut into pieces and hanging from the roof timbers. The warm smoking is performed by special equipment in the courtyard, in a box of wooden planks or bricks, of around 1 cubic meter, which includes a covered channel at the bottom that brings the smoke from a hearth caved into the ground, less than a meter away. The hot smoke is the result of burning beech wood. The operation takes several tens of hours. The smoking process is enhanced by heating the pieces of meat and meat products and hunging them on racks. It requires constant supervision.

"Tochitură" ★★☆

Small pieces (4-6 cm) of lard, bacon, meat and sausages (5-8 cm long) are cut in a cast iron kettle. The kettle is heated over medium heat. The lard is melted and the other ingredients are immersed, while they are browned. In the same time all the water content is removed. The fat is drained in another pot and the solid pieces are transferred a to a storage vessel (jar, enameled pot, wooden vessel).

Everything is pressed so as to leave as little air as possible in the empty spaces. The liquid fat is poured over them until all pieces are covered. They are allowed to cool, during which solidification also occurs. The vessel is closed tight and kept cool. The remaining lard is put in separate pots. By melting the fat and lard, a solid part remains that is no longer stored. These pieces are drained of fat and are called pork scraps.

They are consumed with fries or mixed with other foods (peas, beans, cabbage rolls, etc.). The meat from "tochitură" is consumed during the summer agricultural works that require physical effort: weeding, sewing etc. (i.e. the building of houses and outbuildings for young families). It is put in a pan, where eggs and vegetables are added too, and one eats it with hot polenta.

Clean lard is used in the kitchen as a substitute for oil. It is also used to prepare calendula ointments or other unctions.

At Hangu only lean meat is used.

2.2.2. Beef

In general, calves are slaughtered for fresh consumption. For purely commercial purposes, calves are fattened and when they reach a certain weight, they are sold to specialized slaughterhouses. The same applies to cattle that have reached a certain age. Old beef requires higher cooking temperatures which are not affordable for the householders. The problem is partly solved by using pressure cookers, but it is not a solution for the mountain housewives who care about their image as good cooks and cannot afford to serve even their family dishes with hard meat. By comparison, slaughterhouses can obtain products which eliminate these deficiencies (through chopping, pressure boiling and then processing into sausages).





2.2.3. Mutton (and lamb meat)

Sheep is also a source of meat in the traditional mountain diet. It has a seasonal feature and is consumed both fresh and preserved.

The main period of consumption occurs at Easter when, traditionally, each householder should eat mutton. The scheduling of lambing for meat to be good at Easter time and the correlation with the beginning of milking are part of the shepherds calendar.

The problem is approached differently in the localities from Neamt county.

- at Piatra Şoimului, mating occurs in September, lambing takes place in December-January and at Easter lambs reach 10 to 15 kg. Here, the priority is the meat production;
- at Bicaz Chei, rams do not separate from ewes and there is no schedule of births;
- at Farcaşa, mating occurs on St. Demetrius, and lambings take place in late February, early March with lower risk of exposure to frost. Here, the priority is the milk production.

A paradox is noticed in Romania (and implicitly in the Neamț county): the number of sheep is among the highest in Europe and the mutton consumption is among the lowest in Europe. The explanation lies in the fact that mutton has an unpleasant odour resulting from the high sulphur content. There is no traditional concern to treat mutton to remove the odour and to make it more palatable.

Fresh or preserved, from mutton one prepares: "borş" (sour soup), soup, steak, "rasol" (boiled meat), "cighir", "drob".

Preserved products

"Sloi" ★★☆

Usually it is prepared at the end of summer. The fattest sheep from the flock are chosen (usually the barren ones). The whole sheep (cleaned and washed) is boiled in a cauldron with water.

A long boiling process, at moderate heat takes place by boiling the water and replacing it with the fat that comes out from the meat.

When the meat falls off the bones, boiling is interrupted, bones and pieces of inferior quality (those with sinews) are removed. Then boiling is continued until all the water is boiled away. It is allowed to cool.

The meat turns into a hard and compact mass. It is removed from the pot and clinged to the beam with hemp twine. It is consumed gradually by cutting slices of it. No further processing is required.







2.2.4. Poultry



Poultry are part of the mountain household environment. They can be gathered in a special pen with henhouses for the night or they can occupy the whole yard.

Types of poultry
Usually chicken are raised, but besides them one can also meet geese, ducks, turkeys.

Consumption
In the local tradition the meat is consumed fresh. Therefore, every weekend, during summer a chicken is slaughtered to prepare chicken soup, "ciulama"(chicken with cream) or roast. Turkeys, geese, ducks are usually slaughtered in the autumn after they have gained an acceptable weight. More rarely, geese are slaughtered during the Christmas period.

2.25. Venison



In the Neamț county mountain area hunting is performed quite frequently, both legally and illegally. Deer, bear, boar, hares etc. are hunted for food.

Game dishes
The main dishes are roasted and pastrami, initially marinated and then grilled or treated with hot smoke.
In general, game meat is consumed during hunting parties, in a festive ceremony.



Chamois (Rupicapra rupicapra): Its body is slender, proportionate, its horns do not change throughout its life. The hoof is adjusted to form a vent. Pairing season is October-November, it gives birth to two kids in April. It feeds on grass, clover, young bark, mushrooms, blueberries, cranberries, underbrush. It lives 20 to 22 years. It may be seen in groups, in the National Park Ceahlău area. It is protected by law.
Source: [6], 386.



Deer (Capreolus capreolus): slender body, adapted coloration in winter/summer. Males have antlers that fall each year and regrow. Pairing seasons are July and November-December, two fawns are born in May. It eats grass, mushrooms, berries, nuts, early underbrush. It lives up to 15 years. It is sociable. It lives in groups. Source: [6], 506.



Deer (Cerbus elaphus): It can be 1.5 m high, up to 2.5 m long, it weights 150-300 kg. Coloration is adapted to winter/summer. The male has branched horns which it loses each year (in the fall) and then they regrow (in spring). Pairing season is September-October (at Tarcău, the flocks and herds retreat early from the mountain). In May, June, two fawns are born. It lives up to 20 years. It feeds on grass, leaves, twigs, corn, oats, beets (harmful to agriculture). It lives in groups.
Source: [6], 345.



Hare (Lepus europaeus): rodent, color adjusted to summer/winter, long whiskers, soles covered with hair, large incisors. It lives 10 to 12 years. It feeds on plants (grass, clover, rape, cabbage), fresh bark (hazardous to orchards). It is not very sociable.
Source: [6], 220.



Wild boar (Sus scrofa): it is up to 2 m long, it weighs up to 350 kg. It has a strong body, short neck, the head is finished with a mobile disc (for rooting). The canines are prominent. Yellowish brown striped fur. Mating occurs in December to February, 4-10 gruntlings are born after 18 weeks. It lives up to 30 years. It feeds on corn, potatoes, oats, roots, bulbs, mushrooms, acorns, and small animals. It lives in a herd.
Source: [6], 344



Bear (Ursus arctos): it is up to 2,5 m long, it weighs up to 400 kg. It has a massive body, short legs, it walks on entire paw. Mating occurs in April-June. 2 bear cubs are born. It lives up to 40 years. Omnivorous, it feeds on beechnuts, acorns, berries, fruit orchards, corn, honey, sheep, cattle. In winter it hibernates. It can be met in the subalpine, mountain and submontane zones.
Source: [6], 343



2.3. Fish and fish products

2.3.1. The population of mountain streams with fish



Traditionally, fish used to be caught from waterways with fishing nets. Rarely one was using a hook. The traditional species which (yet) inhabit the mountain waters are bass, minnow, chub, grayling, huck, barbel, trout, gudgeon, sneep, bullhead etc. In time, due to overfishing, but especially due to pollution on Bistrita stream, the fish population has decreased greatly. As a result of the hydropower facilities on Bistrita river, the many reservoirs have changed the structure of the fish biodiversity. Thus the crucian carp, bream etc. apepeared. More recently, the intensive farming technology in fish wells has been used, for several adapted fish species. Especially varieties of farmed trout have been taken over.

2.3.2. Farmed fish

Fish farms are ways of increasing the fish production and to meet the needs of the market, which are growing. In the mountain households it is a more recent concern and it is a way to show hospitality.

The fish farm (in most cases, a trout farm) starts from identifying a clean water source, taking it and directing it to especially designed basins. 3-4 such basins, using cascade flow are built (they take the water sequentially from upstream and allow the raising of several fish stocks in various stages of development). At Farcaşa the natural cooling of the water was achieved by flowing from one basin to another.

For commercial purposes, the harvested fish must have certain sizes (corresponding to a weight of 250-300 g) correlated with the ability to consume it during one meal.

As a national premiere, at Potoci operates a trout farm using submerged fish wells in the waters of the reservoire Izvorul Muntelui. This form is unique in Romania (until 1995 there was an experimental fish well also in reservoir Vaduri). The role of the immersed fish well is to use the body of water from reservoirs for other purposes and to take advantage of the natural flow and aeration.

Shellfish

The crab is the only crustacean that is found in these areas. It is looked for due to its tasty meat.

Harvest

The fish is caught from streams and rivers. The hook (if it is recreational fishing) or weir are used. The latter is like a net, made of wattle. In other variants, the flow of water is temporarily diverted by building a dam of gravel or grass. The downstream water is drained and the fish can be harvested.

Types of fish



Bass (Perca fluviatilis); length 20-30 cm, weight 200-500 g. Spiky operculum, serrated scales, laterally compressed body. Maturity in 3 years. Breeding from March to April, predator since 2 years old, until then it eats plankton, worms and crustaceans.
Source: [6], 140.

Minnow (Phoxinus phoxinus); 9 cm long, weighs 120-200 g. Small scales, thick, cylindrical, body, breeding from April to June. It eats plankton, worms and crustaceans. It forms packs in whitewater.
Source: [6], 131.





Goldfish (Carassius auratus); differs from carp due to its tall back, dorsal fins are longer, mouth without moustaches. It grows up to 20-30 cm long, rarely reaches 50 cm and 5 kg.
Source: [4].

Chub (Leuciscus cephalus); length 25-30 cm, weight 200 g, spindly, it breeds in April-May. Omnivorous, it feeds on plants, crustaceans, insects, small fish.
Source: [6], 127.





Carp (Cyprinus carpio); length 40-50 cm, weight- around 2 kg. Colour in accordance with the environment. It has two pairs of moustaches. It reaches maturity in 2-4 years, breeds at 18 - 20oC. Omnivorous. It can be raised artificially in fish wells, ponds.
Source: [6], 130.

Grayling (Thymallus thymallus); length 30-35 cm, weight 250-350 g. It lives in stiller waters. Breeding from March to April. It feeds on worms, molluscs, crustaceans, and insects. It is less demanding on the need for oxygen.





Hucken (Danube salmon) (Hucho hucho); about 1 m long, weight -10-12 kg. It lives in deep waters. Reaches maturity in 4 years. Breeding in April. Predatory fish. It feeds on fish, insects, frogs.
Source: [6], 122.

Barbel (Barbus Barbus); length 20-28 cm, weight 150-200 g. Cylindrical body, small scales, covered with mucus. The dorsal fin does not have ossified radii. Breeding from March to May. It feeds on insect larvae, worms, crustaceans.
Source: [6], 135





Danube bleak (Chalcalburnus chalcoides). It is a fish specific for standing waters. It was found after the formation reservoirs. It is 10-15 cm long. The mouth is upwards because it feeds on beings from the surface.
Source: [4].

Trout (Salmotrutta fario); length 20-40 cm, weight 200 g - 4 kg. The dorsal fin is fat. Breeding from October to December. It feeds on insects, worms, amphipods, small fish. At present it is most commonly cultured fish (trout farming) in specially designed ponds. The most common trout is the brook trout (Salvelinus fontinalis) and the rainbow trout (Salmo gairdneri irideus).
Source: [6], 123.





Bream (Abramis brama); length 25-50 cm, weight 300 g - 4 kg. Its head is small and strongly flattened. It breeds in April - May. It feeds on aquatic vegetation, insects, fish eggs and crustaceans. It can be found in slower, standing waters.
Source: [6], 126.



Gudgeon (Gobio gobio); length 8-10 cm, weight 40-120 g. Its mouth is like a horseshoe and it has two moustaches. The body has 10 to 12 black spots on the midline. It breeds in the period from May to June. It feeds on insect larvae, crustaceans, worms, mollusks, algae. It lives in small banks. Suitable for recreational fishing.
Source: [6], 129.

Common nase (Chondrostoma Nasus); length 30-50 cm. Maximum weight 1 kg. Vertical mouth. It breeds in April-May, by migrating upstream. It feeds on algae, rarely on animals. It lives also in contaminated water.
Source: [6], 133.





Bullhead (Cottus gobio);
It is a carnivorous, greedy fish. It has a length of 11-12 cm. It lives in freshwater and fast mountain waters.
Source: [4].

Crustaceans

Crayfish (Astacus astacus); It is a crustacean that lives in the mountain waters and is looked for due to its tasty meat. It has a length of up to 150 cm and the weight does not exceed 150 g. It lives on the bottom of slow or standing waters. It breeds by eggs that the female wears in winter. In lives in holes made at the bottom. It feeds on insects, snails, fishes, plants, dead bodies.
Source: [6], 101.



2.4. Vegetables in the mountain household

2.4.1. The mountain vegetable gardening

The vegetable intake in the diet of the mountain inhabitants is ensured especially through the vegetable garden that complements the configuration of the household.
The garden provides both fresh food during the vegetation period but also outside this period by preserving them as such or in pickled, marinated, dried form etc..
- Bulbous plants: onion, garlic;
- Root vegetables: carrot, parsley root, beetroot, parsnips, celery;
- Leafy plants: parsley, lettuce, chervil, dill, orache, thyme;
- Heady plants: cabbage, red cabbage, cauliflower;
- Leguminous plants: beans, peas.

The forms of consumption are:
- Raw, baked, boiled, roasted, pasteurized;
- Whole, sliced, grated (coarse or fine grater grater), juice, crushed;
- Hot, warm, cold;
- In simple or combined forms.

Consumption

Fresh

As it is close to the kitchen, the vegetable garden is the source of fresh food. During the whole warm season, vegetables are available in various forms for a complete and balanced diet.

In a preserved condition

For the cold season, various forms of preservation are performed, in which processing is done before conservation or/and before consumption.
Thus, the following forms of preservation are identified:
- storage in the basement, boxes, bags or heaps: potatoes, beets, cabbage, carrots, parsnips;
- storage in jars or wooden vessels: pickled (cucumbers, green tomatoes, cabbage), marinated, vegetable spread (eggplant), salted;
- storage in bottles: tomato paste, juice;
- dry storage: on the thread (peppers, red peppers); in boxes (onions, garlic, beans, peas) in bunches (basil, thyme) or paper bags (parsley, dill, lovage) etc.
- storage in pasteurized condition: beans, peas;
- storage in ground state, in special boxes: spices.

According to the menu, they are removed and prepared.



Broad bean(Vicia faba) tall plant, up to 1 m long, leaves with 1-3 pairs of green-gray or bluish leaflets. White flowers with a large, black spot on wings. Large pods with edible seeds.
Source: [4].

Onion (Allium Cepa); Tall biennial plant, up to 75 cm long, with an underground bulb of various sizes, consisting of several sheets. It is both food and medicinal plant. It blooms in June-August, yellowish flowers, capsules fruit with black seeds.
Source: [6], 443.





Savory (Satureja hortensis); Very branched stem from the base, with purple branches. Linear or linear-lanceolate leaves.
Lilac, pink or white flowerrs, with purple spots on the inside, in groups of 3-6. Nutlike fruit. Spicy, honey producing capacity.
Source: [4].

Beans (Phaseolus vulgaris); Annual herbaceous plant, up to 4 m high, runner, trifoliate leaves, white, pink or purple flowers, solitary or in combination; Fruit - pod, spherical or oblong seeds.
Source: [6], 448.





Lovage (Levisticum officinale); Perennial plant, up to 2 m high, with a characteristic odour, root - rhizome, stem - erect, branched, pinnate, sections, triangular or diamond leaves, flowering from June to August, hermaphrodite, ovoid fruits.
Source: "The Guide ..." 457.

Orache (Atriplex hortensis); Orache is a tall plant, with simple or branched stems, leaves may be green, red, purple or pale yellow, large and triangular, velvety to the touch.
It has green or red flowers and the seeds are small, encapsulated, the fruits are called achenes. It is used in the kitchen in salads, sour soups, soups or pies and as a
natural remedy in the folk medicine.
Source: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lobod%C4%83.





Peas (Pisum sativum); Annual plant up to 2 m tall, herbaceous, runner, fathery leaves, with kinks, white, purple flowers; fruit – leguminous, seeds - globular. Basic vegetarian food. It holds nitrogen into the soil.
Source: [6], 447.

Dill (Anethum graveolens);
Annual plant, about 1.25 m high, with a characteristic odour, revolving root, cylindrical, branched stems, pedunculate, umbel-shaped inflorescence, ovoid fruits.
Source: [6], 455.





Carrot (Daucus carota); Biennial plant, up to 80 cm high, with revolving, orange root (the useful part), with multiple sections, pinnate leaves, umbel-shaped flowers, ovoid fruit.
Source: [6], 453.

Parsley (Petroselinum crispum); Biennial plant with a characteristic odour, revolving root (various thicknesses), pinnate leaves, cylindrical stem, umbel-shaped flowers, flowering from June to July. It is used as food, medicine, spice. Source: [6], 456.





Parsnips (Pastinaca sativa); Biennial plant with a characteristic odour, root systems (different thickness), pinnate leaves, cylindrical stem, umbel-shaped flowers, flowering from July to August. It is used as food.
Source: [6], 148.

Garlic (Allium sativum); Perennial with ovoid bulb, made of cloves wrapped in tunics. Its leaves are linear and can be drawn from the full stem. It is used as food, medicine, and spice.
Source: [6], 444.



Chard (Beta vulgaris); Biennial plant. In the first year a 60 cm long plant forms, with thick fleshy root and leaves a bunch of big, oval leaves. In the second year a branched stalk grows, with rhombic leaves and small, green flowers, grouped in clusters.
Source: [6], 446.



White cabbage (Brassica oleracea); Biennial plant with roots, branched, short and thick stem, green - blue leaves, with strong median vein, forming the head. In the second year it pro- duces flowers during the period M a y - July; Long husklike fruit. The following varieties are cultivated: red cabbage (B. sabauda), kale (B. vorbote), turnip (B. gongylodes), Brussels sprouts (B. gemmifera), cauliflower (B. botrytis).
Source: [6], 451.





Rhubarb (Rheum rhabarbarum or Rheum officinale); Herbaceous perennial plant, over 1 m high. Is has rhizome type root, with fleshy branches, large leaves, long fleshy stalk, flowers grouped in large compound inflorescences, fruit - pyramid-shaped achene. The petiole is used for pie, compote, jam ...
Source: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revent.

2.5. Field crops

Where the land allows, a few field crops are found. They are very shy, but people enjoy hard work. Especially in the transition area mountain - hill, where there are wide valleys, and meadows start to form, the available surfaces are larger and the field crops emerge frequently.
Especially maize and potato crops are noticed. Oats, alfalfa, clover etc. are planted for feed.
Of these, maize has a longer production cycle and is likely to be affected by early autumn hoarfrost. Other species of plants have a reasonable production cycle and the only limitations are the soil fertility and the smaller available surfaces. In our area, no arrangements for the extension of cultured land (especially referring to terracing) in the mountain area have been made.
These large crop plants (at mountain community scale) complete the requirements for human (corn, potatoes, hemp seeds) and animals (oats, alfalfa, clover) food. Crops require seeding operations, maintenance (removing weeds and soil loosening), harvesting, primary processing (splitting maize, threshing oats, drying clover and alfalfa, beating the hemp). Maize and hemp require milling as well - resulting corn or cereal, and by pressing the hemp – results oil.



Potato (Solanum tuberosum): The potato occupies the arable mountain land as a solution for supplementing the sources of food. The higher areas are at an advantage as the Colorado beetle is much less frequent. The tubers are not too large, but they keep a specific taste, accepted as pleasant. Also, the culture is not mechanized but on the large valleys. It is commonly consumed as a side dish to various forms of food. It is one of the basic foods.
Source: [6], 439.



Hemp (Cannabis sativa): Hemp was used until the 70s for fiber (clothes and furnishings) and seeds (oil, "julfa" cake). Then it was given up two reasons: the expansion of synthetic yarns and the textile industry of great productivity and the ethnobotanical features that put it on a blacklist.
Source: [6], 435.

Alfalfa (Medicago sativa): Alfalfa is a crop treated with great attention by the mountain householders due to its nutrient intake, high production (reaching up to 5 scything sessions), and the rebuilding of the soil fertility (the accumulation of nitrogen in the soil). It is intended for animal feed (dry) to increase milk quality.
Source: [6], 136.





Oats (Avena sativa): Oats are grown in mountain areas to supplement the animal feed base and as a solution for crop rotation, in the more or less conscious management of soil fertility. Very rarely it is threshed. It is often used in the pre-ripening phase.
Source: [6], 429.

Maize (Zea mays): Maize is brought to Europe from the Andes. It quickly entered the culture and current food. At the mountain, maize is grown on small plots of arable land. There is no productivity target and improving varieties is not a priority. Adapted varieties called "ciocantini" remained in the culture. Often, due to early autumn hoarfrost, the harvest is compromised. A solution to this is the forced baking of the grains in the oven until light roasting. Corn flour obtained by milling gets a pleasant aroma that happily combines with the taste of the mountain cuisine. The culture is manual, with possibilities and prospects of mechanization.
Source: [6], 431.





Red clover (Trifolium pratense): clover is a crop treated with attention by mountain householders for the same reasons: great nutritive intake, relatively high production rate (up to 3 scythes, but the nutritional content is more consistent than alfalfa) and the rebuilding of soil fertility (the accumulation of nitrogen in the soil). Tt is for animal feed (dry) to increase milk quality.
Source: [6], 366.

New maize flour (Borca) ★☆☆
At harvest time, corn cobs are stripped and the husk is removed. The grains are still soft, a sign that they have not finalized ripening.
They are kept in a brick oven for a day after the the right temperature has been set (the temperature should be lower than that of baking bread).
They are removed in the morning. They look ripe, slightly brown.
They are taken off the cob and ground to various degrees (corn flour type, for polenta).

Corn grits (Borca) ★☆☆
Grits result from very coarse grinding of corn grains. They have an irregular shape and still keep the grain appearance. In the mountains, grits have a variety of food uses: cabbage rolls stuffed with corn grits, grits with smoked hock, cereal with dried fruits (cherries, apples, pears, plums), cereal with cracklings.
Also growing chicken are fed with grits soaked in water or as such.
At Ceahlău grits are called "corn rupture" and are obtained by pounding and crushing the grains in a mill machine. It also includes cereals of wheat and broad beans.

Crushed hemp (preparation of hemp for consumption) (Borca) ★☆☆
Hemp seeds are harvested from female plants which, paradoxically, are called "haldani" (suggesting a male thief). The separation is done by pounding the plant with large "îmblăci" (a sort of hammer) on a carpet. The seeds are collected and conditioned, dried in a thin layer on direct sunlight.
For food uses, the seeds are crushed with a pestle, then placed in a vessel and washed with warm water while stirring, resulting a white solution which is collected. The operation is repeated three times. The collected water is put in a cast-iron kettle on the stove plate and boiled over medium heat until a solid mixture separates (it foams and rises to the surface). It is collected with a slotted spoon and let drain. It is then used in various recipes: potato-hemp pie, hemp "julfa" with cereals (corn), hemp "urda" cheese (vegetable cheese, for fast), urda cakes - "Jesus' swaddling clothes".

2.6. Fruits in the mountain household

2.6.1. Mountain horticulture

Fruit trees can be planted without major risks up to an altitude of 1,500 m. It is considered that the soil should be permeable, not too fallow, to have access to water, to be placed on a wide valley to be free from cold drafts. In order to be safe from wind, one can take into account the vicinity of a forest or a curtain of tall trees.
The use of more varieties of the same species is recommended because the total harvest will not be totally compromised in the event of climate events (frosts, heavy or deficient rainfalls). There is a science of the culture trees that should be monitored more carefully in the mountain areas, in connection with the formation and development of roots (taking into account that the soil thickness is reduced).
In general, the orchards are in the vicinity of the households and consist of a diverse collection of trees for the variety of fruit, the ripening period, the consumption in fresh or prepared form, or of preserving for the winter. Where valleys are wider, orchards are extensive and the potential of the land and climate is better exploited.
Fruit shrub crop are less demanding and can reach higher altitudes. The soil conditions and humidity are also less demanding. For some species which usually ripen earlier it is interesting to consider that the state of vegetation is delayed and so period of availability in fresh condition is shifted later in comparison with the same species and varieties available in the lowlands.

Consumption
The fruits are consumed fresh in most cases. For the cold season, they are stored in moderate temperature conditions.
The plums are dried to be eaten in winter. Drying is forced on "loznița", then occurs naturally in the air (attic) or in paper bags.
Apples are cut and dried in the open air.
From other fruits are prepared: compote, jam, "poverlă", jam, marmalade, juices, syrups, alcoholic beverages ("vișinate" is the generic term).



Cherry (Prunus avium); 20 m heigh. Rotational tree, oval-pyramid like form. The bark exfoliates in circular strips. Long, erect branches. Elongated oval leaves: white, pedunculated flowers - umbel-shaped inflorescence. Blooming from April to May. Fruit - globular, red or blackish, sweet or bitter. Smooth spherical seeds. Cultivated in the mountain area.
The fruits are picked in the period from May to July and are designed to fresh or preserved consumption as jam, compote, syrup, cherry brandy (macerated in refined alcohol).
Source: [6], 464.

Quince (Cydonia oblonga); Height up to 8 m. Branched crown. Hairy leaves. Big, solitary white-pink flowers. Blooming from May to June. Fruits: large, yellow - green. Numerous seeds in each lodge. Food and health attributes. Suitable for sub-mountane area.
The fruits are harvested in September-October and may be stored for 1-2 weeks more. They make jam, jelly.
Source: [6], 460.





Apple (Malus domestica); Height up to 10 m. Thornless, round crown. Hairy buds. Ovate, elliptical leaves with hairy back. The flower is a umbel-like inflorescence with up to 9 flowers. Blooming from April to May. Globular fruits. It has a very wide diversity (28 wild and cultivated species and over 10,000 cultivated varieties).
Harvesting begins in July, for the early species and continues until October, according to the variety. Kept in large crates (25 kg) or box pallets (300 kg). Consumed as such or processed: juice, jam, marmalade. Also, low-grade apples (the fallen and damaged by insects) are sliced and dried. In winter they are prepared in a tasty sauce.
Source: [6], 458.



Walnut (Juglans regia); Height up to 30 m. Broad crown, smooth, silver - gray bark. Large, elliptical leaves. Ament shaped male flowers. Female flowers are clustered in 1-4 sessiles. Blooming in May. The fruit is a spherical drupe with a vegetal shell and a wooden shell.
The seed is rich in oil. It is grown up to the montane zone.
Harvesting is done by "beating". Fruits are collected from the ground, the green husk is removed and and they are dried in a thin layer on shelves or in the attic. Walnuts are broken and removed the core, are consumed as such or grated for pastries. Fruits that begin to spoil are subjected to fermentation and distillation, resulting apple brandy.
Source: [6], 466.



Pear (Pyrus communis); Over 11 m height. Pyramidal crown. Ovate leaves with serrated edges. White-pink flowers, grouped by 4-9, corymbed. Blooming from May to June. Globular, often elongated, pear shaped, orange-yellow fruit. It is cultivated in the sub-mountane zone.
The fruits are harvested in July (the early ones) - October depending on varieties. It is kept in boxes of 25 kg. It is consumed as such or as juice, jam, compote, comfiture (rarely). Some varieties are dried on "loznița" (above the oven) in autumn. From them, compote is prepared in the winter.
Source: [6], 459.



Plum (Prunus domestica); Height up to 10 m. It has shallow roots, shoots easily. Elliptical leaves. Clustered, greenish-white flowers, it blooms from April to May. Stone fruit, elongated to spherical, dark-blue, violet, red-violet or yellow.
Central kernel, wooden coat. Bitter seed. It grows on any terrain up to the mountane zone, also on unstable land, unsuitable for agriculture.
The fruits are harvested during August-September. They are not consumed fresh very often. Compote, jam etc is made out of them. Much of theharvest is subjected to alcoholic fermentation and then distilled. Various forms of brandy result.
Source: [6], 463.



Sour cherry (Cerasus vulgaris); Height 10 m. Round crown with brown-red stalks. Elliptical, elongated leaves. White flowers in bunches. Sticky, scaled buds. Blooming from April to May. Globular, dark red or black, sour fruits. Spherical central kernel.
Source: [6], 465.

2.7. Spontaneous fruit and plants from spontaneous flora

These products are called "complementary resources of the forest". The spontaneous flora reminds us that in a historical period, nature, by its generosity, was the main provider of food resources. The population growth and the worsening of the food problem forced things to improve nutrition and to increase production beyond what nature can usually provide as. Wood and non-wood species that grow in nature (forests and meadows) can be used in the human diet by using different parts: roots, leaves, flowers, bark, fruits and seeds, stems (tender ends of branches). Some are used as a supplementary source of food through their nutritional contribution. Others regulate the metabolic processes and mechanisms and acquired pharmaceutical attributes.

The importance of the natural, spontaneous resources for human life drew the attention of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), which led to studies and providing solutions for their management. Conservation plans, strategies for maintaining the protection of environment biodiversity, exploiting and marketing strategies were developed.

Two major categories of resources that we consider further aew noted: berries and medicinal and aromatic plants.

2.7.1. Berries

FBerries are a gift of nature for the people of the mountains. The abundance and nutritional qualities make them attractive for fresh consumption or conservation.

Consumption

The fruits are consumed fresh in most cases. For the cold season they are stored in moderate temperature conditions. Some are dried. Others are prepared as: compote, jam, comfiture, juices, syrups, beverages (macerated), alcoholic beverages (cherry brandy is the generic term).



Bilberry (Vaccinium myrtillus): Shrub specific for high mountain areas. It is located in the villages Borca, Farcaşa, Poiana Teiului, Grinţieş, Ceahlău, Bicaz Chei, Dămuc, but also in Tarcău and Tazlău. Fruits are collected in July-August in 3-4 sessions, as they ripen. They are susceptible to decay. They are stored in the refrigerator for quick processing.

They are consumed fresh or processed: bilberry (macerated in alcohol), juice, jam, compote, marmalade etc. Bilberries are an important source of minerals and a fine dessert.

Source: [6], 308 [9].

Gooseberry (Ribes uva-crispa): It is a shrub which reaches a maximum height of 1.5 m. Is widespread in the inner mountain area (Ceahlău Grinţieş, Bicaz Chei), but also on the transition axis mountain - hilly (Agapia, Bălţăteşti, Gârcina). Fruits have globular form. They resemble the currant fruit but do not grow in clusters and are larger. They taste sour.

The fruits are consumed as such or in processed form: syrup, sugar, paste, jam, compote, marmalade etc.

Source: [6], 467.





Hazel (Corylus Avellana): shrub spread on the grasslands near deciduous forests, in all areas of Neamt county (up to 1,300 m altitude). The fruits (achenes) are harvested during August-September by shaking. They are dried in the sun for a few days. They are kept in ventilated places, away from sunlight, at temperatures below 21°C. They can be kept refrigerated up to 3 years. Consumed raw or roasted and crushed in confectionery recipes (chocolate, ice cream). Source: [6], 246 [9].

[15] Costache Rusu, Resurse complementare ale pădurii din zona Neamțului, Ed. Academiei Române, 2007

Guelder-rose (Viburnum apulus): Scrub with trilobite leaves, greenish white flowers (it blooms in May or June). It is found in the forests of the transition axis mountain - hill. The fruits ripen in the period from September to October. They are unpalatable. They become edible after hoarfrost period.

The fruits are used to prepare jam, marmalade. They have also pharmaceutical use.

Source: [4, 9].





Buckthorn (Hippophaë rhamnoides): It is met on watercourses on the transition axis mountain - hill (villages Tazlău, Borleşti, Alexandru cel Bun, Crăcăoani, Vânători-Neamț). It is a shrub that creates thickets, but can grow also in controlled density. It has branches with thorns. The orange fruits are picked from August until hoarfrost period. They contain a complex of vitamins, microelements, natural antibiotics and are among the most beneficial plants to human health. Harvesting is usually performed manually from detached branches. Contact with iron is not recommended. Scalding or freezing are recommended to detach fruits from the branches. Fruits are placed in crates, buckets and are processed immediately.

Source: [6], 62, [9].

Bitter cherry tree (Cerasus avium) can be found in deciduous tree forests, mainly in the transition axis mountain - hill. The stone fruits are hand-picked from June to July.

The fruits are used to prepare cherry brandy (macerated in alcohol), jam, compote etc.

Source: [6], 464 [9].





Red currant (Ribes rubrum); Black currant (Ribes nigrum). Thornless shrub, 1 - 1.5 m high. The fruits are red, black or greenish-yellow. Lobed leaves with fine hairs. Inactive inflorescences, with yellow petals, and green-brown sepals. Fruits group in bunches. Bloomimg from April to May. The fruits ripen in July-August.

Source: [6], 274, 276.

Dogwood (Cornus mas) is a tree that grows on the steep valleys, especially on the transition axis mountain - hill and mountain recesses (to Tarcău). First spring flowers (yellow flowers). The red fruits are harvested in August-September by shaking.

No fresh consumption. They are used to produce marmalade, jelly, jam, syrup, dogwood brandy (macerated in alcohol).

Source: [6], 144 [9].





Wild strawberry (Fragaria vesca): It is spread to all mountain areas of the county. It grows in clearings, young forests, meadows. False, conical, red fruit with yellow achenes. They are collected from June to August and are harvested by hand. They are kept in small containers. They are perishable, so are processed the same day. By the time of processing they are kept at low temperature (below 8°C).

Used to prepare syrup, jam, comfiture etc. For consumption as such, they are refrigerated (0 - 4°C) or frozen (-18°C). The products have a particular fragrance.

Source: [6], 281 [9].

Wild rose (Rosa canina): It is widespread in the county, especially in the transition basins mountain – hill: Alexandru cel Bun, Tarcău, Tazlău, Gârcina, Agapia, Bălțătești. It is considered a promoter of forests. The meadows owners are struggling to eradicate it. The red fruit is collected manually from September to hoarfrost period. They are kept in baskets or crates at low temperature.
Source: [6], 283 [9].





Wild apple (Malus sylvestris): It is the type of apple that grows wild in deciduous forests, up to an altitude of 1,000 m. The harvesting of fruit (berries) is performed manually or by shaking in September - October.
The fruits are used to prepare marmalade, compote, juice, brandy, vinegar, cider, etc.
Source: [6], 278 [9].

Lingonberry (Vaccinium vitis idaea): It is a bushy shrub that grows at high altitude (1,400 m). The height reaches 40 cm, pinnate compound leaves with black heads, grouped white-pink flowers. The fruits are red, pea sized. Both fruits and leaves are used. They have a diuretic effect.
Source: [6], 318 [9].





Blackberry (Rubus hirtus): It is a ground cover shrub, with thorns. It is spread to all mountain areas, in and deciduous and coniferous forests. The fruits are black, they have a sweet-sour taste. They are collected from July to August in small pots, with stem.
The fruits can be eaten fresh or processed: wine, liquor, juice, syrup, jam, jelly, marmalade etc.
Source: [6], 468 [9].

Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna) - shrub with thorns. It is widespread on the transition axis mountain-hill. It has white flowers and red fruits. It is harvested in autumn (September-October).
The fruits can be eaten fresh. They may be added to different mixtures of berry marmalade. The dried pulp is ground and used in baking.
Source: [6], 279 [9].





Wild pear (Pyrus pyrester): It grows in deciduous forests along with the wild apple. The fruits (berries) are harvested by hand or by shaking from August to October.
Fruits are used to prepare fruit purée, juice, wine and spirits (by fermentation). Unlike apples, pears can be consumed as such after they are kept in the hay for 15-20 days, when they become tasty.
Source: [6], 277 [9].

Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa) is a widespread shrub in on the transition axis mountain – hill, in forests or grasslands, up to an altitude of 1,000 meters. It is more specific to the hill area. It blooms in April-May. The fruits have blackish blue color and are collected manually from July to September.
The fruits are used to produced brandy, liquor, vinegar, marmalade, jam etc.
Source: [6], 133, [9].



Rowan (Sorbus aucuparia): Tall tree with white flowers in May-June. It is spread in deciduous and coniferous forests, on the slopes oriented toward the sun, up to an altitude of 1,600 m. It can be met at Vaduri. The fruits (berries) are red and clustered in umbels. They are collected manually in August - September. They are used to prepare fruit juice, tea, vinegar, wine, brandy, liqueur, marmalade, jam, compote, paste, etc.
Source: [4, 9].





Elderberry (Sambucus nigra): Shrub up to 8 m long. White flowers in May-June and fruits (berries) in umbels in August - September. It is widespread on the transition axis mountain - hill. Fruits are manually collected, in small pots. The fruits are not consumed as such (they taste bitter-sweet). They are used to produce juice, syrup, vinegar, comfiture etc.
Source: [6], 322 [9].

Raspberry (Rubus idaeus): It is a shrub, widespread in all areas of the county, in forest clearings. The most abundant pools are in Borca, Pipirig, Gârcina and Crăcăoani. The plant multiplies by root. A stalk lives up to two years. The red fruits are collected in July-August, sometimes in September.
The harvesting is performed manually in sessions, as they ripen. No contact with iron pots and objects is recommented. They are kept at low temperature (below 8°C) until processing.
Syrup, jam etc. is produced. They are consumed as such, refrigerated (0 - 4°C) or frozen (-18oC).
Source: [4, 9].



2.7.2. Medicinal and aromatic plants

Medicinal plants are one of the most important treasures of the mountain area in Neamț county. The medicinal qualities of various plant species and of the various parts of their body are known from immemorial times. Monks and other expert people dealt with them. More recently (for 200 years), apothecary shops and chemists' have appeared. Vorel is a famous pharmacy, founded in 1825 in Piatra Neamț, which was remarked due to the fact that it identified and capitalized the medicinal plants in the area and turned them into remedies to restore human health.
On the territory of the county there are several consecrated pools of medicinal plants. Among them the most remarkable is village Tazlău, where several areas converge and fertilizer treatments are absent.
This chapter will not be further developed as, on one hand, medicinal plants do not have a consecrated role in human diet, and on the other hand their diversity is so great that we may deviate from the purpose of this study.
A table including a list of mountain medicinal pants, used parts, times of harvest is presented below.

Forms of use:
- Dry: most plants are dried: flowers, leaves, buds, the aerial roots;
- Shredded: a part of the plants are chopped to occupy a smaller volume (but are still dry);
- Syrups: an agreeable form of consumption with oesophageal action;
- Alcoholic extracts for limited applications (the mixturen with alcohol does not always bring remedies).

Usage
We refer here only to theswallowed forms (to keep in touch with gastronomy). Common forms of use are:
- Tea: infusion or decoction;
- Syrups: taken by spoon;
- Chewable forms.



Scientific name	Common name	Use	Harvest month
Abies alba	European silver fir	Turio,	3,4
		Gemmae	
Achillea millefolium	yarrow	Flores, herba	5-8
Aconitum tauricum	aconite	Tubera	3,4, 9-11
Agrimonia eupatoria	common agrimony	Herba	5-8
Althaea officinalis	common marshmallow	Folium, flores	5-8
Angelica archangelica	garden angelica	Rhizoma	3, 4, 9, 10
Arctium lappa	greater burdock	Radix	3. 4. 9. 10
Arnica montana	mountain arnica	Flores	6. 7
Artemisia absinthium	wormwood	Herba	6-9
Asarum europaeum	asarabacca	Herba. Radix	3. 4. 9, 10
Atropa belladona	belladonna	Radix	3. 4. 9, 10
Betula pendula	silver birch	Folium	5-7
Capsella bursa pastoris	shepherd's-purse	Herba	3-8
Carum carvi	meridian fennel	Fructus	7.8
Cerasus avium	wild cherry	Stipites	5-7
Chelidonium majus	greater celandine	Herba	4-8
Cichorium intybus	common chicory	Herba.	5-7
Colchicum autumnale	autumn crocus	Radix	3-5.9
		Semen	7,8
Consolida regalis	Forking Larkspur	Flores	5-8
Convallaria majalis	Lily of the valley	Foliuri	4.5
Convolvulus arvensis	field bindweed	Herba	5-9
Corylus avellana	common hazel	Folium	5-7
Crataegus monogyna	common hawthorn	Folium	4-6
Datura stramonium	Jimson weed	Fructus	0.10
		Folium	6-9
Digitalis grandiflora	Big-flowered foxglove	Folium	6. 7
Dryopteris filix-mas	male fern	Rhizoma	3-5.9-11
Elymus repens	couch grass	Rhizoma	3. 4. 9. 10
Equisetum arvense	field horsetail	Herba	5-8
Filipendula ulmaria	meadowsweet	Herba	6,7
Fragaria vesca	wild strawberry	Folium	5-8
Frangula alnus	alder buckthorn	Cortex	3-5
Fraxinus excelsior	European ash	Folium	5-8
Galium odoratum	sweetscented bedstraw	Herba	5,6
Galium verum	lady's bedstraw	Herba	6. 7
Gentiana asclepiadea	willowgentian	Radix	3, 4, 9, 10
Gentiana lutea	great yellow gentian	Radix	3. 4, 9, 10
Geranium robertianum	Herb-Robert	Herba	3,4,9-11
Geranium sanguineum	bloody crane's-bill	Rhizoma	3,4,9-11
Geum urbanum	wood avens	Rhizoma	3. 4, 9, 10
Helleborus pupurascens	hellebore	Rhizoma	3, 4, 9. 10
Hippophae rhamnoides	common sea-buckthorn	Fructus	8-10
Humulus lupulus	common hop	Strobii	
Hyoscyamus niger	henbane	Folium	
Hypericum perforatum	Common Saint John's wort	Flores,	7,8
		Herba,	7-9
Inula helenium	horse-heal	Rhizoma	3. 4. 9, 10
Juniperus communis	common juniper	Fructus	1. 2 9. 10
Lamium album	white nettle	Flores, Herba	4-6
Leonorus cardiaca	motherwort	Herba	6-9

Scientific name	Common name	Use	Harvest month
Linaria vulgaris	common toadflax	Herba	6-9
Lycopodium clavatum	wolf's-foot clubmoss	Herba,	6-9
Lythrum salicaria	purple loosestrife	Herba	6-9
Malva sylvestris	common mallow	Folium. flores	5-8
Marrubium vulgare	white horehound	Herba	5. 7
Matricaria chamomilla	chamomile	Flores	4-6
Melilotus officinalis	yellow sweet clover	Flores	5. 7
Melissa officinalis	lemon balm	Folium	5-8
Nepeta cataria	catnip	Herba	5-7
Ononis spinosa	spiny restharrow	Radix	3. 9. 10
Origanum vulgare	oregano	Herba	3-8
Papaver rhoeas	common poppy	Flores	4-6
Petasites hybridus	butterbur	Rhizoma	9-11
Pinus sylvestris	Scots pine	Herba	1. 2
		Gemmae. coni strobi	
Plantago major	broadleaf plantain	Folium	5-8
Polygala amara	milkworts	Radix, Herba.	5.6
Polygonum aviculare	common knotgrass	Herba	6-8
Polygonum hydropiper	Water-pepper	Herba	5. 7
Potentilla anserina	common silverweed	Herba	5-8
Primula veris	common cowslip	Rhizoma	3 - 5.9,10
		Flores	4.5
Prunus spinosa	blackthorn	Fructus	3. 10
Pulmonaria officinalis	lungwort	Folium	4.6
Quercus robur	English oak	Cortex	4.5
Quercus petraea	sessile oak	Cortex	4.5
Rosa canina	dog-rose	Fructus	9. 10
Rubus idaeus	red raspberry	Folium	5-8
Rumex alpinus	monk's-rhubarb	Rhizoma	3 - 5.9. 10
Salix alba	white willow	Cortex	3. 4
Salix fragilis	crack willow	Cortex	/ 4
Salix purpurea	purple willow	Cortex	3.4
Salix caprea	goat willow	Cortex	3.4
Sambucus nigra	elderberry	Flores.	5-7
		Fructus	9 - 10
Scopolia carniolica	henbane bell	Rhizoma	3. 10
Sorbus aucuparia	rowan	Fructus	8 - 10
Symphytum officinale	common comfrey	Raadx	3.4. a10
Tanacetum vulgare	common tansy	Flores	6-9
Taraxacum officinale	common dandelion	Folium	4-7
Thymus pulegioides	broad-leaved thyme	Herba	5-7
Thymus glabrescens	Tawny Wave	Herba	5-7
Thymus pannonicus	Hungarian thyme	Herba	6 - 7
Tilia cordata	Small-leaved Lime	Flores	3
Tilia tomentosa	silver lime	Flores	3. 7
Tussilago farfara	coltsfoot	Flores, folium	3-6
Urtica dioica	common nettle	Folium	3-8
		Radix	4. 5. 9. 10
Vaccinium myrtillus	European blueberry	Folium	4-8
		Fructus	7.8
Vaccinium vitis idaea	lingonberry	Folium	6-9
Valeriana officinalis	Valerian	Rhizoma	3.4. a 10
Veratrum album	false helleborine	Rhizoma	3. 4, 9. 10
Verbascum phlomoides	Clay Groundling	Flores	6.7
Veronica officinalis	heath speedwell	Herba	5-8
Viburnum opulus	guelder-rose	Cortex	1 10
Viola tricolor	heartsease	Herba	5 8
Viscum album	European mistletoe	Folium	1.2 11.12



2.8. Other traditional mountain products

2.8.1. Mountain honey

Beekeeping is a rare concern in the mountain area and is differentiated. On the inner mountain area (areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 partially) there are less beekeepers than on the transition axis mountain - hill (areas 5 partially, 6, 7). It can be said that honey results from the generosity of nature, but the human imprint is obvious in the management of bee families.

Melliferous plants

The floral availability is diversified. Some of the melliferous plants in the mountain area of the Neamt county available throughout the hot season are: bilberry (Vaccinium myrtillus), wild angelica (Angelica sylvestris), catsear (Hypochoeris Radica), wild basil (Clinopodium vulgare), autumn hawkbit (Leontodon autumnalis), guelder rose (Viburnum opulus), catnip (Nepeta cataria), chicory (Cichorium intybus), cherry (Cerasus avium), thistle (Carduus acanthoides), carline thistle (Carlina acaulis), yarrow (Achillea millefolium), coriander (Carum carvi), dogwood (Cornus mas), wild strawberry (Fragaria vesca), lock mint (Mentha aquatica), sage (Salvia nemorosa), mullein (Verbascum phlomoides), wild rose (Rosa canina), apple tree (Malus sylvestris), lungwort (Pulmonaria officinalis), forest mallow (Malva sylvestris), lawndaisy (Bellis perennis), hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna), creeping thistles (Cirsium arvense), dandelion (Taraxacum officinale), wild pear (Pyrus piraster), coltsfoot (Tussilago farfara), St John's wort (Hypericum perforatum), blackthorn (Prunus spinosa), black locust (Robinia pseudoacacia), tree mallow (Lavatera thuringiaca), spear thistle (Cirsium vulgare), rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), cuckooflower (Cardamine pratensis), elderberry (Sambucus nigra) oregano (Origanum vulgare), melilot (Melilotus officinalis), meadow fleabane (Inula britanica), motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca), linden (Tilia tomentosa), small-leaved lime (Tilia cordata), agrimony (Agrimonia Eupatoria), white dead nettle (Lamium album), fireweed (Chamerion augustifolium), raspberry (Rubus idaeus) etc.

The average annual temperature is lower and life of free bees is shorter. Instead, their honey is more valuable in the absence of polluting components and the nature of the exploited nectar and pollen sources. The rest of the year, the life within the hive is closely noticed in order to preserve the vitality of the families.

On the transition axis mountain – hill, some tipes of honey with uniform features are identified: spring honey (from all species that bloom in April - early June, acacia honey, linden honey, meadow polyfloral honey. At Tazlău, in good years, dandelion honey may be produced as well. In general several honey harvests can be obtained.

In the inner part of the mountain area there is a single variety of honey: forest polyfloral that includes the collection from trees, shrubs, grassland. Only one harvest is performed: the amount of honey is small and cannot be obtained in large quantities (the number of warm days is reduced).

Bee Products

From the hive the following product categories are used: honey (mostly), pollen, propolis, wax etc. Honey is consumed as such in the household at breakfast. It also comes in different mixtures with berries for preservation purposes: sea buckthorn pulp mixed with honey, blueberries with honey. Honey is added to various products or or tins: for the peppers in vinegar recipe, 1 tablespoon of honey is added to 1 l of liquid (Borca). The main beneficiary remains the patisserie, where various products are prepared: cakes, biscuits etc. The other ingredients are used rough (pollen) or processed (propolis) in various applications: food consumption (food supplement), cosmetics and health.



[16] Costache Rusu, Idem, 2007

Types of honey

Spring polyfloral honey ★☆☆
It results from plants blooming in spring, from April to late May.

Acacia honey ★☆☆
It is collected especially on the transitional axis mountain – hill, during the related blooming period.

Lime honey ★☆☆
(Tazlău, Borleşti, Crăcăoani)
It is collected especially on the transitional axis mountain – hill, during the related blooming period.

Birch honey ★★☆
(Borleşti)

Mountain lime honey ★★☆
(Ceahlău)
It is collected due to the fact that at that period of time (short) other trees are not blooming.

Spring cherry honey ★★☆
(Ceahlău)
Likewise, it is collected due to the fact that at that period of time (short) other trees are not blooming.

Mountain polyfloral honey ★★☆
It is collected throughout the whole summer from trees, shrubs, herbs.





Honeydew honey ★★☆
It is collected in the latter part of of the summer, from meadows.

Polyfloral meadow honey ★★☆
(Tazlău)
It is collected from the floristic mixture in early summer.

Sunflower honey ★☆☆
(Borleşti)

A specific element of the mountain honey is that it combines with pollen softwood (pine, spruce, pine) which provides it unique qualities compared to the honey produced in the plain and hilly area.



2.8.2. Tree sap

The collection of sap has been a traditional activity but is now partially abandoned. In certain stages of vegetation sap becomes abundant in the stems of trees. By drilling some holes, it comes to the surface and can be collected. The trees "weep" in spring, like vine.

In this area there are some trees that produce sap: the sycamore maple (Acer pseudoplatanoides), ash (Fraxinus excelsior), birch (Betula pendula), Norway maple (Acer platanoides) etc. Also, the vines produce sap in the spring.

The collected sap is consumed immediately raw or is processed into other edible forms that can be consumed for a longer period. It can also be kept frozen.

All types of sap have valuable therapeutic properties, due to the content of vitamin C, mineral salts (calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, manganese, zinc, sodium, and iron), amino acids, flavonoids, saponins, enzymes, plant hormones, etc. They have a cleaning and regeneration effect on the body (antioxidant, anti-anemic, anti-inflammatory). There are also hypotensive, antiseptic, tonic.

They are used as mineralizing food, as a sweetener or as flavouring added to alcoholic beverages.

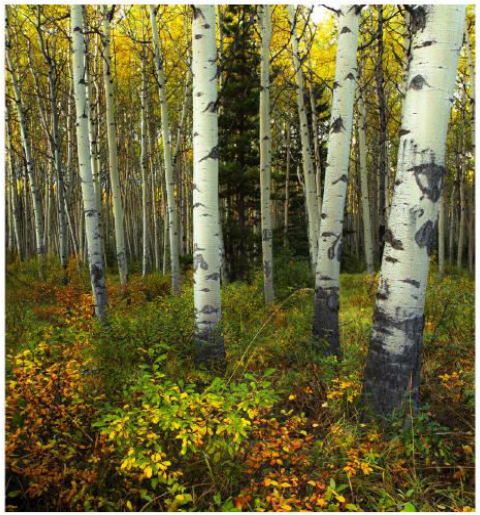
In the authentic mountain villages collected sap is called "mușțireață". Here, a recess is made in the stem with the ax and the collected liquid is collected with a straw.

At Poiana Teiului people also know about maple sap generators. They drill a hole and apply a nozzle through which the sap flows. A collecting vessel is attached. Up to 25 l/day birch sap and 10-15 l/day maple sap are collected.

At Damuc fir resin is collected as well. In addition to uses for incense, it is used to clean teeth by chewing.







2.8.3. Mushrooms

In wetter years there is a significant production of mushrooms. They grow on the trunks of trees (cherry, beech, oak, poplar), on the ground, on stubs throughout the entire warm season (May to early October, if hoarfrost does not occur).

Usually, mushrooms are picked from the spontaneous flora in different seasons, mainly in summer. The distribution area is given by wetlands, stubs or fallen trees, a forest glade. Lately recommendationshave been issued to stimulate the growth of forest mushrooms of all kinds by planting spores (mycelium) on fallen, rotting trunks.

The residents of the mountain villages organize true expeditions to collect mushrooms in the neighbouring forests. Connoisseurs have identified areas of more frequent occurrence.

In Tazlău, Pipirig areas the presence of truffles was reported, a species of mushrooms that grow in underground cavities and can be detected using dogs with specialized sense of smell. Truffles are real gourmet mushrooms in the mushrooms consumer world.

Scotch bonnet (Marasmius oreades) is found in late spring and early autumn on pastures. The morning dew trickles on the ground and favours the development of this type of fungus with short life cycle. It grows especially in sheep footsteps in crowded populations. When the dew disapears, it dries. It is prepared only in fresh form (at breakfast: in scrambled eggs, stew, chicken with cream).
Source: [4].





Field mushroom (Agaricus campestris): Its hat is globe-like at the beginning, then is stretched and white. The gills go from white to purple brown, narrow at the base. The stem is thin at the bottom, with a ring at the joint area with the hat. It grows on the meadows, near sheepfolds. It appears in the summer.
Source: [6], 109 [9].

Chanterelle (Cantarellus cibarius) The hat is curved to the top, then it becomes cone-shaped, with wrinkled edges (maximum diameter 10 cm). Colour similar to egg yolk. Full stem without separation from the hat. It grows in clusters in humid places, in deciduous and coniferous forests. It can be found from May to September.
Source: [6], 191 [9].





Honey fungus (Armillaria Mella): Thin hat, curved to the top, then spread with julienne radial edges and twisted downwards. Gills are white to brown. Long, thick, conical, full, stem. It grows on stubs or wood scraps, in the bushes, but also on the ground, in deciduous forests. It appears in September, especially after rain, followed by heat.
Source: [6], 195 [9].

Boletus (Boletus edulis) Large, brown hat (up to 20 cm in diameter, curved at the beginning, then spread. The spongious gills are white at first, then yellow and greenish yellow. Thick, long, brown stem. It grows in deciduous and coniferous forests, alone or in groups, in bright areas. It can be found from spring to fall.
Source: [6], 202 [9].





Peppery milk-cap (Lactarius piperatus): It is a medium-sized white mushroom (hat 12 cm, height 10 cm. It tastes spicy. It is found in deciduous forests (mainly beech) all summer.
Source: [6], 205 [9].

St George's mushroom (Tricholoma Georgii): thick hat, convex at first, then spread, with a diameter of 12 cm, white or cream, with wavy edges. White gills. Short thin, full, white stem. It grows in meadows and clearings. It smells of fresh flour.
Source: [6], 201 [9].





Quilted green russula (Russula virescens). Concave, fleshy, green-gray hat of 14 cm. White gills. Thick, white, full stem. It is found in dry forests in summer and autumn.
Source: [6], 208 [9].

Oyster mushroom (Pleurotus ostreatus). It is a species that is well suited to culture. The hat is asymmetric (ear-shaped or shell-shaped), with a maximum diameter of 15 cm, fleshy, brown – gray, with edges folded downwards. The large gills continue on the short stem. It form groups on trunks of dead trees, in deciduous forests. It can be found from July to September.
Source: [6], 193 [9].





Saffron milk cap (Lactarius deliciosus): funnel-shaped hat, orange with darker concentric circles. Orange gills. Thick and short stem. It can be found in deciduous and mixed forests in the second part of the summer.
Source: [6], 204.

Common morel (Morchella esculenta): Oval, light-brown hat, with ridges. Nearly cylindrical, white, hollow stem. It grows in April-June in deciduous and coniferous trees.
Source: [6], 209 [9].



Preparation for consumption
After collection, the mushrooms are cleaned and scalded to stop decomposition. The preservation is performed in several ways: put the jar with salt, dried on strings, kept in the pantry: marinated or pickled.

Mushrooms with salt ★☆☆
The mushrooms are boiled to destroy the biological activity (to stop the development processes of micro-organisms decomposition) and micro-organisms activity. They are mixed with salt, put in jars or wooden vessels ("putină", "budacă"). The procedure applies to honey fungus.

Dried mushrooms (Crăcăoani) ★☆☆
The mushrooms are cut in slices and strung on a string. They are hung on a nail in the open air. From 1 kg of fresh mushrooms result100 g dry matter. They may also be dried in the oven, but they turn black.

Pickled mushrooms (Crăcăoani) ★☆☆
The mushrooms are cleaned, then sprinkled with salt or brine. They are boiled over medium heat and then kept cool. Before using, they are desalted (water is changed 3 times). The procedure applies to honey fungus and saffron milk cap.

Marinated mushrooms ★☆☆
A mixture of vinegar (1 part) with water (3 parts) to which bay leaves and pepper are added is prepared. Sponges are added and boiled for 20 minutes. They are put in jars and sterilized. The procedure applies to honey fungus and boletus.

The gathering of mushrooms from the spontaneous flora is risky because, in the same areas poisonous mushrooms grow as well. Sometimes they are mistaken by the people who do not know them very well, sometimes they are contaminated with spores from the wind. Therefore, the issue of forest mushrooms should be treated very carefully.



2.8.4. Spices

The dishes from various recipes require a series of ingredients that provide flavour. These are the spices. They are added in small amounts and give personality to each dish.

The traditional mountain cuisine uses spices, starting with the well-known salt and finishing with those brought from "overseas countries". Among them, there are indigenous spices which are prepared at home. Most of the vegetables grown around the house are used to build a refined taste in some dishes. The form of use is diverse, but most are used dried and ground (powder).

Types of spices
Anise: Both leaves and seeds are used as flavouring in drinks, cakes etc.
Chervil: Leaves are used as flavouring in soups, salads, sauces, etc.
Paprika (powder): It is obtained from bell pepper (paprika) and hot pepper (chili powder) by drying and then grinding. It contributes both to flavour and colour the soups, meat etc.
Basil: It is used fresh for sauces, steaks, etc.
Onions (green or dry): It is used whole, cut or chopped, as appropriate for soups, side dishes, salads, snacks, cabbage rolls etc.
Fennel (cultivated) The seeds are used (half-moon shaped) in soups, sauces, salads, cheeses, bread, drinks etc.
Caraway (spontaneous): The seeds are used (elongated shape) in soups, sauces, salads, cheeses, bread, drinks etc.
Thyme (whole dried form): It is added to cooked vegetables, soup, steak etc. It brings a pleasant taste effect.
Coriander: Leaves are used for dishes, vegetables, sauces, salads etc.
Fennel: The dried and ground seeds are used in pickles (cucumbers, green tomatoes) etc.
Ginger: The rhizome is used in soups, main dishes, desserts and drinks.
Horseradish (dry or vinegar) shaped and steamed grated or shaved and sprinkled with vinegar is used in boiled, salad beetroot, lamb etc. Bring palatable astringent. Also, the pickle is used.
Lemon: The juice is used as alternative acid source for soups, salads etc. The peel is grated finely and macerated in sugar. It gives a pleasant flavour to desserts.
Lovage (green or dried leaves): It is added to soups, some kinds of fish; It gives them a pleasant aroma.
Poppy: Seeds are used in baking (breads, cakes, bagels, etc.).
Sorrel: Used in salads, soups etc.
Marjoram: The powder is used in soups, stews, sauces, sausages etc.
Dill: As mature stems with flowers are used as flavouring for pickles. The small green form is used for minced meat (cabbage rolls, meatball), sauces, salads etc.
Mint: Is used to flavour dishes, salads, alcoholic and soft drinks.
Mustard: The yellow or brown seeds are used as mustard paste. It is also used as a flavouring for pickles.
Oregano: The fresh or dried and ground leaves are used as flavouring for salads, meat, scrambled eggs etc.
Parsley: It is one of the most used flavourings for soups, salads, sauces, steaks, etc.
Absinth: Flavouring for wine, vermouth, bitter, etc.
Orange: The peel is finely grated and macerated in sugar. It gives a pleasant flavour to desserts.
Lemon balm: Its flavour is similar to that of lemon. It is used as a flavouring in salads, liqueurs, vinegar etc.
Rosemary: It is use fresh or dried for meat (steaks, grill) vegetables.
Fenugreek: The fresh or dried leaves are used in salads and meat dishes. The dried and ground seeds taste like caramel. They are used in baking. Also, it is inserted into plum brandy bottles (Durău).
Tarragon: The green or dried leaves are used for sauces and salads, pickles (cucumbers, green tomatoes), soups etc.
Celery: It is used as flavouring for pickles, soups, sauces, salads etc.
Garlic (fresh or dry form): It is used in whole or crushed form (garlic sauce) for steaks, fish, side dishes including beans, green beans, for aspics, sausages etc.

A number of fragrant mixtures lose the identity of the plants of origin:
"Borș" (clear, slightly yellow liquid): It is obtained from wheat bran and corn placed in "budăi" (wooden vessel used only for "borș"). The bran is added (fermentation broth from a previous portion). Also cherry, raspberry or blackberry branches are added for additional flavour (Hangu). Over the mixture, a pot of boiling water is added. It is mixed and laid by the stove, kept warm for two days. The clear part from the upper side is separated. It is added to soups to give them a sour but lighter taste than vinegar. It contains vitamins B.

Vinegar (clear or coloured liquid by the colour of the wine): It is obtained from grape wine growing in the courtyard or from apples. It gives sourly taste to soups, salads, sauces or sophisticated preparations.

Forms of use
- plant or fresh leaves are collected from the bed or put in a pot and small amounts are collected when food is prepared;
- plant or dry leaves are collected during the growing season and dried away from direct sunlight; It is used throughout the winter;
- plant and dry, ground leaves: are harvested in the right season, are dried and ground to powder; It is used throughout the whole year;
- dried seeds in full form: are harvested when ripen and used whenever needed;

- fruit and vegetables, dried and ground (powdered); It is the most used application;
- ground seeds turned to paste; applies in particular to mustard, but also in other cases;
- root, sliced or preserved in vinegar, brine, alcohol;
- peel of fruit, grated and macerated in sugar; used as delicacies for cakes and homemade pastries; currently applied with caution due to preservatives.

The seasoning is the finest support for the culinary arts. It can build a gustatory symphony for the most complex taste request.

Significant applications
Dill. Used for: "urda" cheese with salt, "urda" cheese pancakes, "urda" cheese pie, cabbage rolls stuffed with "urda" cheese. "Spring weeds" = beet leaves, orach, nettles, sorrel, beans.

Paprika and chilly are used especially in the villages neighboring Harghita county (as spice and pigment). It is applied on bacon or in the sausage mixture for colour and taste. It is added to soup for colour and taste.

Garlic is used in many forms. At Damuc it is crushed, then put in warm water and squeezed. Usually, it is crushed in the mortar and garlic sauce is prepared. In some cases whole cloves are used.







2.8.5. Food colouring agents

The use of food colouring agents aims at providing a pleasing aspect for a variety of dishes and drinks.
There are various available and accessible resources that enable the induction of these effects, most of them of vegetal origin.
In general, the culture of the mountain housewives applies the principle of natural colours. It is difficult to accept surrogates or "coatings".
However, it is noted that sometimes they perform change of colours either for aesthetic purposes or to increase the attractiveness. A visually pleasing aspect of the different dishes has the effect of increased appetite, although not always the added colorant has an improving effect on the taste. Coloured vegetables and fruit allowed such culinary arrangements. They are not based on science but on experience and imagination for additional visual "outcomes".

Colour-generating plants
Bilberry - blue. Applied in confectionery and pastry, but also for some steaks.
Squash – At Borca it is mixed with potatoes for the preparation of pies.
Blackcurrant - blue. Applied in confectionery and pastry.
Caramel colour - is obtained by controlled sugar heating. Several shades are obtained, from brown to dark brown. It is used to colour alcoholic beverages (liqueurs, rum, cognac, appetizers) sauces, pastry.
Pumpkin - yellow (Poiana Teiului).
Orach - red. Spring soups and stuffed cabbage are coloured from Pentecost to St. Peter and Paul.
Carrot - orange. It is used to provide additional colour to soups and cakes, to garnish salads, appetizers, second courses or entrees with sliced carrots.
At Borca, the carrot is used to provide additional colour for "cozonac" during fast.
Blackberries - dark purple. Applied in confectionery and pastry, but also for some steaks.
Orange - yellow, red: Provides attractive colour to various cakes and juices.
Saffron - yellow: Brandy is coloured to make it more attractive. Also, "cozonac" is coloured during fast to replace the yellow colour usually given by the eggs.
Beetroot - red, pink. It is used in culinary practice to give colour to different dishes: borsht, beet sauce for mashed potatoes, salad accompanying the steak, minced meat etc.
Spinach. - green. It is the main local green source of juices, side dishes, salads etc.
Black grapes - black, dark red. Juices and confectionery applications.
Raspberries - red. It is used in confectionery and pastry for different colour effects.

Colour applications
Soups turn red with with orach (whole or chopped leaves) or grated beets.
At Pentecost cabbage rolls stuffed with dill and orach leaves are prepared.
The result is an interesting color configuration in section and a special taste.

"Cozonac" for fast (Borca) ★☆☆
It is added yellow colour with squash (Cucurbita maxima) as the cake may not include eggs. Also saffron is used, but it does not grow too often in the mountain area.

"Poprică" (Bicazu Ardelean) ★★☆
It is paprika and chili. Pork products (bacon, sausage), stuffed cabbage, sometimes soups etc. are coloured (influences from Transylvania).

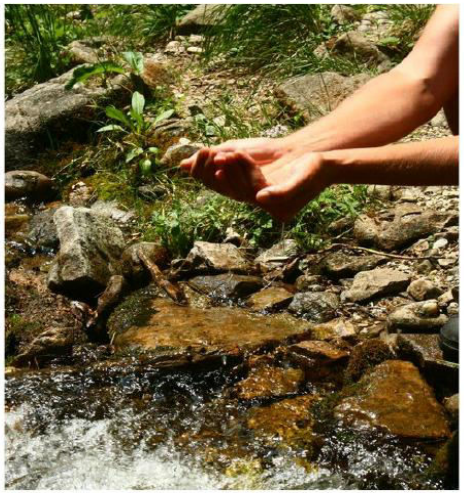


2.9. Water as food

In the mountains there is the belief that spring water is clean and healthy. The belief is confirmed to a large extent as the rock structure and the pollutants do not produce excessive pollutant loading, and the higher frequency of rainfalls and the fact that there are numerous springs provide permanent fresh water. The fresh character is determined by the permanent renewal of the water reserve system.

2.9.1. Drinking water

The water sources are available both as groundwater and surface water in the mountain area. The deep sources are accessed through wells. The surface sources can be set up with a chute (pipe from a source to access and draw off) or "ştiubei" (hollow tree trunk forming the lip of a small well – it often has an outlet for excessive water).
Water serves to quench thirst, to prepare the daily meals and the canned ones, to wash dishes and to clean the kitchen, towels and table cloths. In general, the risks of contamining drinking water in the mountain areas are reduced. However, care must be taken in connection with the placement of human facilities which may generate pathogen microorganisms: stables, pens, toilets, sheepfolds etc.
Due to its natural attributes and lack of pollutants, the mountain water is bottled and sold in urban areas or hilly and valley areas, where the salst load is high (brackish). In old times, the marketing of drinking water was dealt with by water carriers. Currently, the activity is modernized and is an important trade pillar, not for the householders but for professional traders. Filling stations are mentioned at Toşorog ("Carpatina") Şugău ("Munticelu").



2.9.2. Mineral water

The geological underground diversity makes inevitable the interaction of groundwater in some areas and its mineralization. In the mountains of the Neamt county there are numerous saltwater springs or brine, ferruginous waters and hard waters. In general, the water hardness is higher than the national average due to the limestones from Bicaz basin and from the middle stream of Bistrita.

The toponyms of Slatina (translated brine) are common and confirm the presence of these sources.

Some mineral waters have been used as drinking water without being assigned a trademark (some types of water "Carpatina" have low mineral attributes).

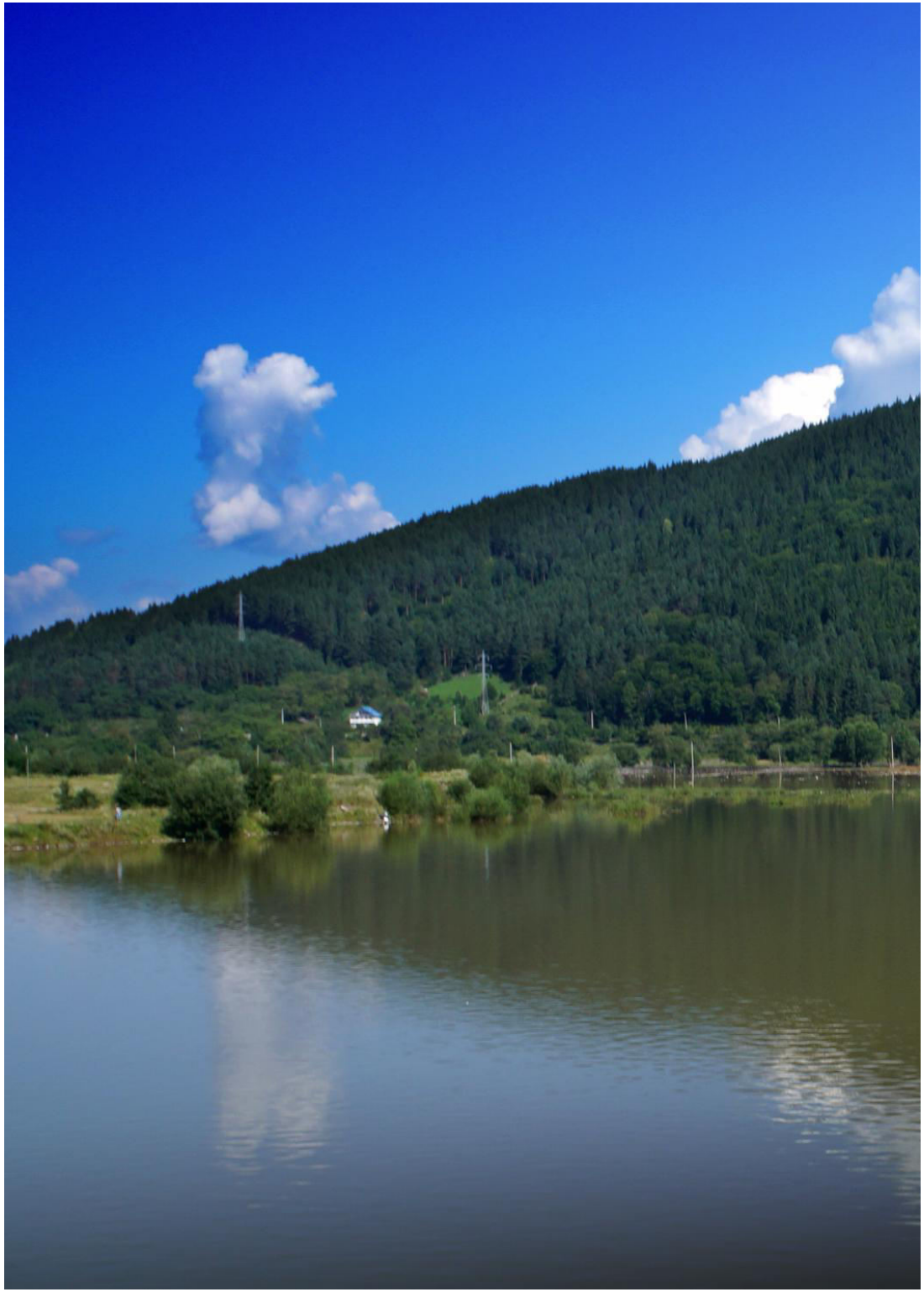
Other brine sources allowed the development of spa treatments and have dedicated spas: Bălțăteşti, Neguleşti, Oglinzi. Others still wait to be recovered (Piatra Neamț).

Mountain households use brine traditionally for preserving food (pickles, vegetables) or cheese ("telemea").










3. Mountain cuisine

3.1. Snacks (Breakfast, appetizers, entrees)

Cold snacks (Pângărați) ★☆☆
On a plate cubes of fresh chrd cheese, "urda" cheese, pastrami, ham are put and garnished with tomatoes, onions, radishes, lettuce.



Pig ears appetizer (Poiana Teiului) ★★☆
Usually pig ears are added to the mixture of "toba". By their sandwich-like structure, with some cartilage in the middle, they are a surprise dish. The ears are cut, salted and then smoked with hot smoke. As a result, they become tender, and are kept in the freezer.



Platter with cheese and meat products ★★☆
On a platter, slices of curd cheese, telemea, urda cheese, pastrami, sausages, caltaboși etc. are added and garnished with sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, onions, radishes, etc.



Bread croutons for sandwiches ★☆☆
For sandwiches special bread without yeast or less yeast is prepared. If there is no opportunity to prepare a special bread, one can use ordinary white bread or buns. The sandwich consists of two thin slices of bread, buttered, including the desired filling. The buns are cut in half.

Creamy chicken liver ★☆☆
The liver is cleaned, washed and boiled with finely chopped onion, 40 g of well-heated butter. When cool, it is minced twice through the machine. It is mixed well with the remaining butter, which had been previously creamed, the grated boiled egg yolks, cream, brandy, salt and pepper.



Pork chop à la rousse in aspic ★☆☆
The chop is cleaned and washed (whole piece), it is given a pinch of salt and pepper, then is browned in a pan with hot lard. Then it is put in the oven (30 minutes) over medium heat, removed, left to cool. Each chop is cut to portions and placed on the salad à la rousse. The semi-liquid aspic is poured over the chops. A part of aspic, after cooling down well, is diced and used to decorate the product.



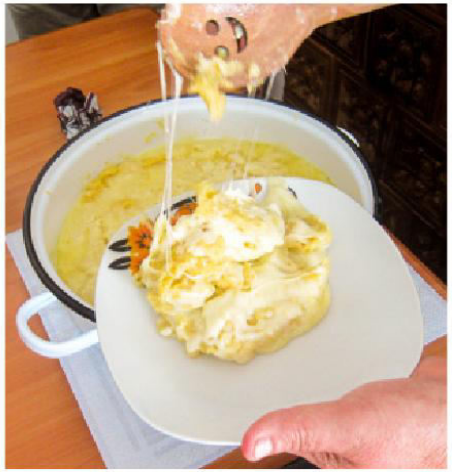
Canapés with ham/smoked fillet ★☆☆
The slice of bread is spread with butter and covered with a slice of ham/smoked fillet. It is decorated on top with a thin slice of sour gherkin and red bell pepper, cut into small, thin circles and and garnished around with butter.

Cheese balls with dill ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
The cottage cheese is mixed with butter and chopped onion. The mixture is shaped into balls that are coated with finely chopped green dill. Served as appetizer.



Cheese balls with nuts ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
The cottage cheese is mixed with butter and chopped onion. The mixture is shaped into balls that are coated with ground nuts. Served as appetizer.

Cheese roulade with grapes and nuts ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
500 g cottage cheese, 100 g curd cheese, 200 g ground nuts, 150 g grapes, 1 sachet gelatine, salt. The grated curd cheese is mixed with cottage cheese, salt and gelatin (prepared according to the instructions on the package). The resulting mixture is spread on a piece of plastic foil. The ground nuts and halved grape berries are added. It is rolled using foil and refrigerated for 2 hours.



Zucchini rolls with "urda" cheese ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
1 large zucchini, 3 eggs, 2 tbsp semolina, 300 g urda "cheese", 1 pinch of salt. The zucchini is grated, mixed with a little salt and allowed to drain for 10 min, then squeezed. Eggs and semolina are mixed, spread on the baking sheet and baked for 15 minutes at 180oC. The mixture is removed from oven and spread with "urda" cheese, rolled using the baking sheet and refrigerated for 1 hour.

Mayonnaise ☆☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
A hard-boiled egg is crushed and mixed with a raw egg yolk, one teaspoon of mustard and a pinch of salt. Gradually, half a liter of oil is added, mixing continuously in a single direction with a wooden spoon.

Salad with patties and mayonnaise ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
Chicken, beef or minced lean pork, a finely grated small potato, garlic, herbs, salt, pepper, a slice of bread soaked in water and well squeezed, an egg, a small, finely chopped onion. Small balls are formed, fried in oil and removed on paper towels. When cool, they are mixed with mayonnaise and julienne onion, previously boiled in a vinegar solution (one part vinegar and two parts water, salt. A teaspoon of sugar may be added to it).

Boletus salad with chicken breast and mayonnaise (Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
The mushrooms are washed, cut into small cubes and mixed with cooked, diced chicken, mayonnaise, salt and pepper.

Chicken liver and beetroot salad ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
1 kg chicken liver is boiled, then fried with a little butter (oil) and cut into small cubes. pinch of salt and pepper is added. 3-4 medium beets are baked and cut into small cubes. On a platter sucessive layers of diced beet, mayonnaise, liver, are placed.

Celery and chicken breast salad ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
A chicken breast is grilled or boiled. Then it is diced and mixed with grated celery, mayonnaise, pepper and salt.





Fish patties ★☆☆
(Vovidenia Monastery Vânători Neamț)
Fish fillet, grated potatoes, grated carrots, finely chopped raw onion, garlic, greens, 2 tablespoons white wine (for 1 kg fish). This mixture is used to form balls, which are rolled in sesame seeds and fried.

Fish "zacusca" ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
3 kg onions, 3 kg baked red peppers, 1.5 kg carrots, 1 liter oil, 3 kg fresh fish, 500 ml vinegar, 2 liters of water, 5 bay leaves, salt and pepper. The fish is boiled in water with vinegar until the bones break. The onions and carrots are cooked, bell peppers and fish, which had been previously minced are added to it. Bay leaves, salt and pepper to taste are added last. **Everything is simmered f**or 2-3 hours. It is put in jars and cooled in blankets.

"Urda" cheese and dill spread ★★☆
(Borlești)
"Urda" cheese is put in a bowl, a bunch of finely chopped dill a pinch of salt and a dash of oil, a few tablespoons of sour cream and a small cube of butter are added. Then, everything is mixed with mixer until it becomes a smooth paste. It is very delicious and easy to prepare.

Mushrooms-based appetiz★★☆
(Piatra Şoimului)
The mixture includes on mushrooms (any of the above mentioned) with a lot of onions and it is fried in oil. It is served chilled, with bread, as an appetizer.

3.2. Soups

"Borș de putină" (Bran) (Grințieș) ☆☆☆
Bran, corn, wheat bran, a slice of brown bread, a chopped lemon are put together in a vessel and covered with warm water. It is supplemented with a hot decoction of a branch of cherry, dried lovage, thyme, basil. The vessel is covered and kept warm until it sours. It is put in bottles that are kept cool. Some bran is kept for the next "borș".

Chicken soup with homemade noodles ☆☆☆
(Borca)
Preparation of the noodles: A quick dough is made out of 3 egg yolks, flour and salt. It is spread in a sheet with a rolling pin. It is rubbed with flour on both sides until it gets a dry touch. It is kept on the board for 1-2 hours, then rolled and cut into strips. These are mixed with a bit of flour if necessary, and dried a longer time. They are stored in a gauze bag and from there one takes the needed quantities. The chicken is boiled in water with a mix ture of vegetables (in winter) or fresh, chopped vegetables (in summer). When the meat is boiled, a small amount of bran (to add sourness) and homemade noodles are added.
It is eaten fresh and hot.

Chicken sour soup ☆☆☆
(Poiana Teiului, Pângărați)
The chicken is cleaned, washed and cut up. The pieces are boiled in 1.5 liters of cold water with salt. When the meat is well done, is removed and the noodles are added and in the remaining broth. When the noodles are cooked, boiled "borș" salt, pepper, orach, dill and chopped lovage are added. The soup is boiled for 10 more minutes, then the pieces of meat are added back.

Poultry sour soup ☆☆☆
(Borlești, Pipirig)
Clean the chicken and boil in cold water without vegetables. After boiling, remove the on a plate and add homemade noodles. When ready, add boiled "borș", the diced meat, the greens and chopped orach. Allow to boil a little more. This sour soup is not seasoned with cream.

Rooster sour soup (Agapia) ★☆☆
Boil the rooster meat, add vegetables, homemade noodles and "borș". The surface will be covered with fat from the meat.



Chicken breast soup as in Grințieș (Grințieș) ☆☆☆

Grated vegetables (celery, parsley, carrots) are fried in hot oil, then boiled with a little water and garlic. The chicken is boiled and finely cut (julienne). In a pot, the vegetables, chicken and bone broth is mixed and boiled. The soup is seasoned with a sauce made of cream and flour. It is soured with vinegar.

Lamb sour soup ★★☆

The meat is washed and cut to pieces, leaving the entire head. It is boiled in 1 liter of water, the foam on the surface is strained carefully. The vegetables are cleaned, washed and added whole. After boiling, they are removed with a strainer. Separately cooked rice, green onions and boiled "borș" are added. One egg is mixed with lovage and parsley in a bowl and added to the soup. It is served hot only.

Mutton sour soup (Borca) ★★☆

Mutton is cut fresh and boiled. When necessary, the foam on the surface is strained. After the meat has boiled, vegetables, 2-3 cloves of garlic (which give a specific aroma) are added.
It is soured with "borș de putină" or "jintuit" (previously cooked separately). A pinch of salt, parsley, thyme, tarragon are added. The parsley is separated into leaves and branches and chopped finely. The branches are added to boil and the leaves are added after the boil.

Fish sour soup (carp, trout, etc.) ★☆☆

The water is borught to boil and when boiling chopped onions and finely cut vegetables are added.
After boiling the vegetables, rice is added. When it is cooked, the fish pieces are added. After a short while, boiled "borș" is added to taste.
Finally, salt and a few leaves of lovage are added. When served, one should add fresh chopped herbs.

Mutton and mushrooms sour soup (Hangu) ★★☆

1 lamb head, lamb intestines and offal (heart, liver, spleen, lungs), a few pieces of meat, carrots, 1 bunch green onions, 1 onion, 1 bunch of green garlic ,2 handful of sorrel, tomato paste, salt, lovage, 1 egg, 1 bell pepper. The head and offal are boiled together with onions and carrots. When cooked, the offal is removed (intestines, heart, liver, lungs and spleen) and diced and the intestines are cut in stripes of about 1 cm. (hence the name "soup with mushrooms"). Thei are brought to a boil again, tomato paste, bell pepper and meat are added. When almost done, chopped garlic, sorrel and salt to taste are added. Sorrel will provide a very good sour taste, without it, the soup will not be good. In the end, finely chopped lovage is added and the soup is seasoned with beaten eggs.

Tripe soup (Grințieș) ☆☆☆

The tripe is cleaned and whiten with a mixture of sodium bicarbonate and vinegar. It is boiled, then julienned. The grated vegetables (celery, parsley, carrots) are cooked in hot oil, then boiled with a little water and garlic. In a pot, the vegetables and tripe are mixed, bone soup is added and everything is boiled. The soup is seasoned with a sauce made of cream and flour. It is soured with vinegar.



Fish soup (Borca) ★☆☆

The fish is caught by fishing rods or nets. In old times, it was caught with a bent pin. Usually, gudgeon, minnow, Danube bleak are caught.
The fish is cleaned. Separately, leafy vegetables are finely cut: parsley, dill, lovage.
Everything is put in a pot, water and a handful of rice are added. Then they are boiled over medium heat. In the end, the soup is soured with "borș" the fish and chilli are added and it will continue to boil for another 10 minutes.
The liquid (sour soup) is separated from of the solid (vegetables, rice, fish). The soup is served hot in bowls. The solid parts are put on plates and served with warm polenta.



Beans sour soup (Borca, Pipirig) ☆☆☆

The beans are selected, washed and put in warm water the evening before cooking. They are drained and then boiled in a different water. After 10 minutes of boiling, water is changed again. It is preferable to add boiling water.
Meanwhile, the vegetables are cleaned, grated or cut into cubes and boiled with the beans for 30 minutes. "Borș", thyme and oil are added. In the end, greens are added. At Pipirig, black beans are used in order to colour the soup. A part of the beans is crushed.

Black or black-eyed beans soup (Pipirig) ★☆☆

The beans are soaked in cold water overnight, put to boil, also in cold water. Vegetables and onion are grated, fried for 2 minutes in 50 ml oil in the pot, then the boiled beans are added. The soup is soured with "borș".

Bean soup with "burechiță" (Bicaz Chei) ★★☆

"Burechița" is a homemade noodle, which is prepared as follows: dough is made of flour and water and eventually 1-2 eggs. Out of this dough, a thin cake is made and allowed to dry in the air for one day. Strips of 1cm wide and 3-4 cm long are cut out of it. One end is turned to 180°. It keeps on drying in the air or on the hob. The beans are boiled after having been soaked for a day in water. The soup is prepared out of water, beans, vegetables, "borș", salt and instead of spaghetti, "burechița" is added.

Mushroom sour soup with herbs and "jintuit" (Agapia) ★★☆

The cabbage (sauerkraut) is finely cut, sprinkled with flour and fried. The mushrooms are boiled, removed from broth, cut into small pieces, poured over the fried cabbage. Then the broth is poured too.
Boiling continues and when it is ready, "jintuit", salt and greens are added. After a few minutes the soup is ready.

Pleurotus sour soup (Agapia, Tazlău) ★★☆

A vegetable soup is prepared. Fresh or dried on a string pleurotus are added and boiled shortly. "Borș de putină" and plenty of finely chopped greens are added. It is boiled for a few minutes more.



Monk's sour soup with pleurotus ★★☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
A vegetable soup is prepared, to which cut pleutotus and rice are added. It can be seasoned with sour cream. A separate sauce including eggs, cream, flour is prepared. The sauce is mixed with a ladle of hot soup, then poured into the pot, stirring further. A handful of greens is added in the end. The soup can be soured with sour milk, whey or sour berries.



Scotch bonnet soup (Dămuc) ★★☆
A vegetable soup is prepared, with buttermilk instead of water. The mushrooms are added in the middle of the boiling interval. Finally, cream is added.

Potato and beet sour soup (Farcașa) ★☆☆
Beets are peeled and grated, then squeezed through gauze to collect the juice. The potatoes are cleaned and washed the are put whole in the beet juice together with the peeled, cut and washed beef (brisket), "borș" (cooked separately), salt, pepper and a bunch of celery leaves, which is removed at the end. It is served seasoned with a sauce made of cream and eggs.



Potato soup ★★☆
(Bicaz Chei)
The potatoes are boiled in water with vegetables. Sour milk or "jintuit" and urda cheese are added in a row. Onion and paprika are fired in oil and in the end lemon is added. It is served hot.





Sorrel and carrots sour soup ★★☆
(Farcașa)
The sorrel leaves are washed, cut into large slices, and then boiled for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, chopped onion, carrot, celery, parsnip grated or diced are fried in hot oil over low heat until they soften (10 minutes). Potatoes cut into small cubes, chicken broth, water, salt and pepper to taste are added. It is boiled for 20 minutes. Then the heat is lowered, while a sauce made of cream, flour and some hot broth is poured. Sorrel is added too,while leaving to simmer for 5 minutes. In the end, finely chopped dill is added.



"Dresealã" ★★☆
(Borleşti, Bicazu Ardelean, Pipirig)
A potato soup with vegetables and eggs is prepared. "Jintuit" is added. It is boiled well. It has a white appearance. If orach (in early summer) is added to, the colour changes to blue - indigo. Sometimes cabbage is added instead of potatoes. When serving, "urda" cheese and cream are added. At Bicazu Ardelean sorrel is added.



Sour soup with "turnăței" (Agapia) ★★☆
Meat or vegetable sour soup is prepared according to a known recipe. One or two beaten eggs as scrambled eggs are added, while stirring continuously. The result will be dispersed and hardened bodies called "rags" in the soup.

Nettle sour soup ☆☆☆
The rice, onions and beets are cut into small cubes, put in salted boiling water and cooked until soft. Then the, boiled and shredded nettles, "borș", pepper, lovage are added. The soup is boiled over a high heat. The egg yolks mixed with cream and butter are added. It is boiled for a few more minutes then removed from heat. Served sprinkled with chopped herbs.





3.3. Main courses

3.3.1. Dairy products

"Balmoş" ★★☆
(Farcaşa)
"Jintuit" of sheep or cow's milk is put in a cast-iron kettle, over medium heat. After starting to boil, corn flour (milled on grinding stone) is added. It is actually a kind of softer polenta. It is allowed to warm, stirring with the paddle or a whisk. Meanwhile the mixture is baking.
Towards the end, the pieces of curd cheese are cut and put into the pot. The curd cheese is melted and dispersed in the mixture by stirring. The pot is taken off the fire and, while still hot, more pieces of curd cheese are inserted into the mixture without spreading them.
Served warm, with a glass of sour milk. The latter has astringent taste and contains enzymes that ease the digestion with this massive intake of complex components.

Balmoş ★★☆
(Hangu)
"Jintuit" is brought to the boil, corn flour is added add gradually while stirring continuously. A finely chopped onion is added. When the mixture is baked, kneaded curd cheese is added in small portions, constantly stirring until the butter comes to the surface.It is removed from the heat, put on the plates and served warm. Sprinkled with a good brandy with honey.

"Balmuş " ★★☆
(Pângărați)
A fresh polenta is made. In a pan, successive layers of warm polenta and cheese (curd cheese mixed with salt) are laid. The first and last layer must be polenta. it is baked in the oven at medium temperature (100 - 110°C) to melt the cheese. Served warm.
In another variant (Bicaz Chei) the cheese is added after polenta has cooked. When it is almost ready, one makes a dip in the middle and fills it with cheese, then covers with polenta from the edges.
Polenta is not mixed any more. After partly cooling, the edges are cut with a thread on a wooden board. The middle of polenta remains and it is served hot or cold.





"Balmuş" ★★☆
(Agapia)
Prepare a polenta out of water and corn flour. Add a finely chopped onion and a ball of butter.

"Balmuş" ★★☆
(Hangu)
Prepare a quick polenta of "jintuit", salt and cornmeal. After boiling, add kneaded sheep cheese (curd cheese). The amount is adjusted at the time butter comes out (saturation). Remove from heat and serve warm. A good brandy sweetened with honey goes well with it.



"Balmuş" ★★☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
Replace the water with sweet "jintuit". Sprinkle cornmeal and mix well. Add cubes of curd cheese and butter. Serve hot.

Melt (Farcaşa, Pipirig) ★★☆
Prepare a mixture of "urda" cheese and butter with chopped onion stalks and place in a pan. Heat over medium heat until the mass becomes smooth and acquires a slightly brownish crust. Serve hot with polenta.

"Tochit" ★★☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
It is prepared in the spring. In a pot with butter or oil, cheese, green onions, salt and pepper are added and fried. Served with polenta.



"Toapşă" (Bicaz Chei) ★★☆
A polenta with whey, water or "jintuit" is prepared. Place successive layers of polenta and a mixture of cheese, cracklings and scrambled eggs in an enamelled saucepan. The first and last layer are of polenta. Bake in the oven. The cheese melts and immerses the other ingredients. Serve warm with yogurt or sour milk.



Polenta ball ("Bulz") ★★☆
(Bicaz Chei, Dămuc, Agapia, Pângărați, Pipirig)
The polenta (hot or warm) is spread and kneaded cheese is put over it in a heap. Then, the cheese is covered with the edges of polenta. A ball of polenta with cheese inside is formed. The ball is small enough to be held in one hand. Bake on the stove or on the grill. Serve hot or cold.



Shepherd's ball (Alexandru cel Bun) ★★☆
A simple polenta is prepared. A layer of hot polenta is laid in stainless steel bowls (for soup), a dip is made, a cube of butter, kneaded curd cheese, a few pieces of bacon roasted on the grill are added and everything is covered with polenta. It may be grilled or baked on the hearth.

Polenta with cheese (Joiana's cake) ★★☆
(Pângărați)
Prepare polenta over medium heat. At the end, before taking it out of the pot, add cheese (curd cheese mixed with salt). Stir to mix, the cheese melts. A uniform mixture of polenta with cheese results. Serve hot.

"Cir" with pungent cheese ★★☆
(Grințieș)
Water and salt is put to boil in a pot. While boiling, add cornmeal little by little, but only 70% less than the quantity used to make polenta. Put it in a bowl, add cheese, cream and mix well. Serve hot. This dish is also a natural remedy against colds and coughs.

Melted cheese ★★☆
(Soimului)
Slices of cheese, fresh or from "putina" are cut and placed in a pan in hot oil. The cheese melts and is eaten with hot polenta.

Melted cheese ★★☆
(Vovidenia Monastery Vânători Neamț)
100 g homemade butter, 250 g "urda" cheese, 1 kg curd cheese, 1 pinch salt. Melt the butter in a cast-iron kettle, knead "urda"cheese and curd cheese and add butter. Mix over medium fire until a paste as thick as cream is formed. Towards the end, add salt. Serve in a clay dish with hot polenta.

Homemade "cașcaval" (Hangu) ★☆☆
Prepare a mixture of cottage cheese (homemade) and sheep milk cheese (sheepfold), butter, add margarine or cream and an egg (it gives a yellow color). Mix over low heat. After cooling, it hardens. Serve immediately (it is not suitable for keeping on medium and long term).



Cheese and cream ☆☆☆
It is probably the most common family dish. It is prepared from all types of cheese produced in the house: soft cheese, sour milk cheese. Add cream and mix without allowing to uniform. Sprinkle salt on top. It is served with warm polenta, particularly in the evening.

"Brânză de burduf" ("burduf" cheese) ★☆☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
The curd cheese is kneaded with salt and introduced in the pig stomach or rumen (cleaned well). They are sewn, drained with the seam downwards and smoked.







3.3.2. Pork



Pork "roladă" ★★☆
(Damuc)
The belly bacon is taken as resulted after slaughtering the pig. It is rubbed with paprika, ground pepper, salt put slices of loin on it. Rolled and tied with hemp thread to preserve the shape. Placed in water with salt and bay leaves. Boiled, semi-dried and exposed to hot smoke.

Pork roulade ★★☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
The breast is cut off the ribs without rind and fat. It is pounded. A smoked sausage is put inside, and rolled backwards. Boiled in the soup where also offal or "toba" are boiled. Smoked immediately after boiling.

Pork roulade with peritoneum (Hangu) ★★☆
Peritoneum is the structure that holds in an ordered form the animal intestines. In pigs, sheep, cattle, slaughter, the peritomeum is separated and kept. It is dried in the wind and kept hanging on a nail. Thus, it keeps its flexibility.
After preparing the roulade (according to the above mentioned procedure) it is wrapped with the peritoneum. It makes the roulade tender and contributes to its colour and taste.

Pork loin (Damuc) ★★☆
The loin is cut in 4-6 pieces and sprinkled with paprika, salt, pepper, garlic. A row of loin and a layer of fat are laid in an enamel pot. They macerate overnight. In the morning, they are removed and exposed to warm smoke, even to embers. They are held until bacon becomes crispy.

"Tochitură moldovenească" ★☆☆
(Pângărați, Pipirig)
In a pan, the diced pork is browned in oil. Add curd cheese mixed with salt (kept in fir wood pots). Serve with hot polenta.



"Tochitura cu jumeri" (cracklings) (Pângărați, Borlești, Agapia) ★★☆

After slaughtering the pig and preparing it, some of the products are prepared for storage until summer. The fat is melted in a pot over medium heat bacon, fillet and sausages (smoked in advance) are added to it. The meat is separated from lard. The latter is partly poured in the storage vessel, which can be a glass jar, an enameled pot, a conical pot with lid ("garniță") or even a wooden vessel (which was previously used at the sheepfold at least one year before and its pores are closed). Then the solid part is laid and is supplemented with lard. Through cooling, the mixture is solidified. It is kept cool (in the cellar) in order not to become rancid.

During the summer, especially during scythe period, portions are taken from the jar, put in a preheated pan, kneaded cheese and beaten eggs mixed with salt as for scrambled eggs are added and served with polenta and pickles (cucumbers, cabbage).

At Agapia homemade sausages and "brânză de putină" are added. The taste and flavours are enhanced.



Meat preservation in brine ☆☆☆
(Bicaz Chei)

Pork, mutton and veal are kept in brine until they are prepared. The brine is prepared of concentrated salt water until the egg floats on it. The meat is cut in suitable pieces for use, then it is put in a bowl of glass, wood or clay and brine is poured over it. It is kept in the cellar. At the moment of consumption pieces meat are removed and desalted by immersion in fresh water for several hours.

Grits with smoked ham or braised meat ★★☆
(Borca)

It uses ham exposed to hot smoke and kept in the attic or braised meat (meat stored in a jar). The meat is put in a saucepan over medium heat, along with 2-3 tablespoons of grits and fried. It is served warm.

"Chişcă" and "caltaboşi" (Poiana Teiului) ★★☆

At Poiana Teiului a difference is made between the two types. "Caltaboşi" are made of pig offal with rice and are inserted into the thin intestine. While boiling, they are pricked with a needle, in order not to crack. "Chişca" is made with finely chopped bacon, fillet, onions, rice, savory; it is inserted into the large intestine. This time too, it is pricked with the knitting needle while boiling, to avoid swelling and cracking.

Pig's head aspic (Borca, Pipirig) ★★☆

The pig's head is cut and smoked with hot smoke. It is put in a large pot, filled with water to the top. Bay leaves, cloves and other spices are added and cooked until the meat falls off the bones, and the water level decreases by half. The meat is separated from the broth and the bones and sinews are removed. The meat is portioned into suitable plates or bowls, which are filled with hot soup. They are kept cold. The broth coagulates. Serve chilled with hot polenta.





"Drob" in peritoneum (Poiana Teiului) ★★☆

The lamb offal is washed under running cold water. In a pot, a finely chopped onion is fried in 5/6 tablespoons of oil, then lungs cut into small pieces, kidneys cut in halves, a teaspoon of salt, spices (pepper, allspice) are added. They are all simmered, covered, until the level of water decreases. Once cooled, they are minced, together with the raw liver and a slice of bread, dipped in cold water and well wrung. To this is mixture, 3-4 raw eggs, cream, a few thinly sliced leaves of green onions, dill, parsley, chopped tarragon leaves are added, then everything is well mixed together.

The lamb peritoneum is laid in a pan and the mixture is laid on it in a layer of 3-4 cm thick, then the edges are brought together to cover the mixture. It the end, it is baked in a well-heated oven for 30 minutes. Serve cool, with green onions, radishes.



The penance of Tazlău dweller ★★☆
(Tazlău)

A mixture of sausages (pork in mutton intestines), fresh meat and "tochitură" is put on a pan over medium heat. It is served hot with polenta. This course is very heavy. The digestion is slow and one should not make effort after consuming it.





3.3.3. Beef

Spit roasted beef ★☆☆
(Agapia)
It is prepared on various events. The carcass, marinated, spiced with various ingredients is put on a spit and placed over a pot with hot coals.
The body is rolled to expose all parts to high temperature. The meat is roasted gradually. One can cut strips of the cooked meat for or let it roast complete (there is the risk to burn at the surface).
It is served with various side dishes, sauces and spice blends.

Beef "sloi" ★★☆
(Poiana Teiului)
It is a kind of beef stew. The meat is put in a pot and simmered until it falls off the bones. Then the separation is made. The meat is mixed with lard, spices, bay, salt and half of the broth is added. It is heated up again (for 10 kg meat 1 kg of lard is added). It is allowed to cool and is stored in a pot (or in plastic bags).

Beef pastrami ★★☆
(Poiana Teiului)
The beef is marinated for two days in a mixture of: garlic, pepper, parsley, thyme, carrots, wine, bay. It is rolled occasionally. Then it is exposed to hot smoke from barkless hardwood. In the end, to provide a beautiful color, plum or cherry wood is added.

Roast beef in jar ★★☆
(Damuc)
Veal is used. The meat is roasted in lard and oil and put it a jar. It is kept cold and consumed on a short and medium term.





Beef goulash (Grințieș) ★☆☆
(Transylvanian influence through intermarriage)
The round or sirloin is cut in cubes of 2-3 cm. The meat is given a boil, the foam is strained and the water is removed. The meat cubes are washed. The onions are sautéd (5 finely chopped onions per 1 kg of meat), then the cubes of meat, salt, pepper, paprika are added as well as very little water from time to time. The diced celery, parsley, carrots are boiled with with 2 tablespoons of crushed cumin and and diced potatoes. When the vegetables are cooked, add the meat. A batter of eggs, flour and salt is made. Dumplings of it are added in the boiling goulash, as well as goulash paste (made of capsicum or pepper paste). One may use also lean pork. If more water is added to the boiling goulash, soup is obtained.



3.3.4. Mutton

Mutton stew ★★☆
(Farcașa, Crăcăoani)
Mutton is boiled until it falls off the bones, then is boned and fried. It is coil-shaped and kept cool (in the cellar) in an enamelled saucepan. In time, a crust is formed on the surface. Slices are cut for consumption. It is consumed over several days. In another variant it is kept in a "bărbânță" and covered with tallow to delay decay.



Stew ("sloi") (Alexandru cel Bun) ★★☆
The sheep is cut to pieces. One does not use the ax, in order not to form splinters. It is boiled 2 to 3 hours with salt and peppercorns. The meat is boned, the broth is drained, salt and pepper to taste are added, as well as 1 kg chopped onions (per 20 kg of meat). It is boiled until all the water evaporates.

Traditional "sloi" ★★☆
(Vânători)
Mutton is boiled with salt and pepper until meat falls off the bones. The meat (25-30 kg) is mixed with 3-4 kg of minced onion. It is boiled until the tallow comes to the surface. It can be served cold or heated. It's a great dressing for stomach. "Sloi" can be prepared with beef too. The difference is that the beef does not become greased.



Mutton stew ★★☆
(Pângărați)
In a pot, mutton and beef are boiled in a mixture 1:1. In another pot, chopped onion, soaked in mutton fat is prepared. The cooked meat is boned and onion, fat, garlic, kapia pepper, red pepper, diced pork bacon are added. The mixture boils for another 15 minutes and is allowed to cool. The result is similar to aspic. It is kept cool. Served cold with hot polenta.

Mutton stew (Piatra Şoimului) ★★☆
The meat is separated and cut to pieces of 150-200 g/piece, boiled and the foam is strained. 1/2 l brandy and 1 l Nohan wine are added. Boil, add garlic and spices (pepper, thyme, bay leaf, salt). Boil until boning. Add a jar of tomato sauce to a whole mutton.
Boiled mutton: boil the meat with salt and pepper and serve with garlic.
Mutton stew with potatoes and tomato paste (the recipe of the house).



Mutton stew ★★☆
(Tazlău)
Mutton is boiled in water with salt and spices until it detaches from the bones. The clean meat is mixed with fat (1.5 kg of fat per 4 kg of mutton).
It is boiled until it coagulates. Is is placed in a cloth and kept cold.
The product has the aspect of canned meat. Cut in slices and consume gradually over time.

Mutton stew (Pipirig) ★★☆
The cut meat is marinated for 24 hours in a mixture of vinegar, spices and thyme. The meat is covered with water and simmered until the meat falls off the bones. The meat is separated and cleaned from skin and tendons. In the resulting broth peppers, onions, kapia peppers are added. It is boiled until all the water evaporates. It is allowed to cool and solidify. The product has the aspect of canned meat. Consumed cold or reheated (in this case, accompanied by pickles).

Mutton stew ("rasol") ★★☆
(Piatra Soimului)
Mutton is boiled until it separates from the bones. In the boiling water, salt and pepper are added. It may be eaten as it is, with garlic, or with tomato paste and boiled potatoes.

Lamb "jintuit" ★★☆
(Pângărați)
The lamb is cut and fried in butter until a thin crust forms at the surface. Then it boils in "jintuit" until it separates from the bones. Serve warm with polenta and garlic sauce.

Lamb in "jintuit" ★★☆
(Poiana Teiului)
The lamb is boiled until the meat falls off the bones. In the middle of the boiling process, onions, tomatoes (chopped), laurel, pepper, salt, hot pepper, kapia peppers are added. The result is a meat mixture with thick sauce. Remove the bones. Add "jintuit". Simmer for another half an hour. A thick, gelatinous sauce containing meat results. Serve finely sliced. The light version: before boiling, the meat is defatted. The result is a less cohesive mixture and easier to digest.

Lamb stew ★★☆
(Poiana Teiului)
It consists of pieces of lamb and herbs that grow in the spring. It is simmered with green garlic, green onions and spices. The final product has a "weedy" look.



Stored mutton ★★☆
(Bicaz Chei)
Cut the meat including the bones and marinate it from evening to morning. Then, immerse in water with a layer of oil. Boil until the tallow comes to the surface and the water evaporates. The resulting shape should be kept.

Mutton on the tile ★★☆
(Bicaz Chei)
Small pieces of meat are cut and threaded on a wooden spit. Fry over medium heat.

Mutton pastrami ★★☆
(Vânători Neamț)
Mutton is marinated for two days in a mixture of: garlic, pepper, parsley, lovage, carrots, wine. It is rolled occasionally. It is exposed to hot smoke with barkless hardwood. In the end plum or cherry wood are added, to give it a beautiful color.

Mutton pastrami (Alexandru cel Bun) ★★☆
Choose the boned loins and rounds. Marinate for 2 to 3 days in a mixture of: wine, beer, salt, carrot, celery, onion, thyme. Keep cool and stir occasionally. Expose to hot beech smoke and add plum or cherry wood for colour.

Sausages (Vânători Neamț) ★★☆
Minced mutton, pork and beef, garlic, salt and pepper. The leaned sheep guts are filled and then exposed to smoke.





Mutton sausages ★★☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
Only mutton (or goat) and sheep guts are used. The minced meat is seasoned with garlic and spices and fills the guts. Expose to smoke.

Lamb pastrami ★★☆
(Agapia)
Wash and cut the lamb (1kg) to pieces. Clean the garlic, grind and mix it with white wine (100 ml) then put it in the pot with 3-4 bay leaves, 1 tablespoon peppercorns, 200 g of tomato paste, basil, marjoram, salt and pepper to taste. Marinate the lamb with this mixture and allow it to cool for three days. Remove the meat and put it on the grill. It will be tender and flavourful.



Roast lamb in the oven ★★☆
(Agapia)
Clean the lamb, dry, put in a tray, sprinkle with pepper and salt, then grease with lard. Around the meat place the potatoes, peeled, cut into four, peppered and greased with lard. Pour tomato juice, blended with warm water. Put the roast in the oven, when ready, lay it on a platter and serve with potatoes from the tray.



Spit mutton (Grințieș) ★☆☆
The mutton is marinated for 7-8 days in: wine, salt, pepper, green pepper, paprika, bay leaves. It is stuffed with garlic and bacon. Insert the mutton in the spit and grease with the marinated mixture, using a brush. Start with a smaller fire in order to cook the meat, then increase the temperature.

Lamb in iron-cast kettle ★★☆
(Agapia)
Take 7-8 pieces of raw lamb meat, wash well, then scald in hot water so as the sheep smell should disappear. Wash again and leave for 2-3 hours in a bowl of water and two glasses of vinegar, then rinse well. Heat the fat in the kettle. Sprinkle the meat with salt and add to the kettle. After browning, add 1 cup of white wine, bay leaves and pepper. Serve warm.

Lamb stew ★★☆
(Agapia)
Wash the lamb meat, cut into cubes of 3-4 cm. Fry in fat, then add chopped onion and julienned garlic. After browning the onions, gradually add 1\2 liters of hot water, tomato paste, pepper paste, salt and pepper.
Towards the end, bake in the oven for 15 minutes. Preferably serve hot with polenta.

Lamb stew ★★☆
(Agapia)
Finely cut vegetables (carrots, leeks, celery, parsley roots) and boil in cold water with a little salt. Add 5-6 cloves for flavouring the vegetables.
When the vegetables are almost cooked, add the diced lamb meat. Leave the pot on fire (over low heat) until ready. Serve hot, seasoned with boiled potatoes.



Mutton preservation ★★☆
(Agapia)
After September, the sheep are slaughtered for consumption and preservation. The carcass is boiled until the meat falls off the bones. It is preserved cool. At Christmas it is combined with pork and sausages.
They are softer and tastier. In general, the mixture includes 70/30 pork/lamb.

Lamb in cast-iron kettle ★★☆
(Tazlău)
Take a lamb, cut it to pieces and rinse thoroughly. In a cast-iron kettle, cut 1 kg of carrots, 1 kg of onions cut into quarters, bell pepers, hot peppers, pepper, salt, paprika to taste, thyme, add water to cover meat, then add garlic and potatoes in the last half an hour. Boil about 4 to 5 hours, serve hot with polenta.



Lamb "drob" ★★☆
(Damuc)
The lamb offal must be washed under running cold water. In a pot, fry a chopped onion in 5-6 tablespoons of oil, then add the lungs, cut into small pieces, kidneys, cut in half, a teaspoon of salt, spices (pepper, allspice). Simmer until water evaporates. Once cooled, mince everything with the raw liver, the slice of bread dipped in cold water and wrung well.
To this mixture, add 3-4 raw eggs, cream, a few leaves of thinly sliced green onions, dill, parsley, chopped tarragon leaves, then mix well (the same mixture as for lamb "drob" with peritoneum).
In a narrow tray, lined with butter and flour, lay the above mixture and insert boiled eggs from place to place, spread with egg whites, then put in the well-heated oven for 30-40 minutes. Allow to cool in the tray and serve with green onions, radishes, etc.

Lamb "drob" ★★☆
(Grințieș)
Chop the cooked offal (lungs are not used) and mix with plenty of chopped green onions, eggs, salt, pepper, parsley.
Place the mixture in a greased tray or wrap before in peritoneum. Bake over medium heat until brown.

Roast lamb (Dămuc) ★★☆
Macerate the meat (overnight) with spices: crushed garlic, placed in warm water and squeezed. The next day, put a mixture of oil and hot lard (1 l oil and 1/2 kg lard) in a pot. When it boils, add the meat. Continue boiling over medium heat until the liquid is cleared. Add red pepper paste. (Lamb à la Dămuc).

Lamb submerged in oil (Dămuc) ★★☆
Put the oil in a saucepan and add 2 to 3 tablespoons of lard. When heated thoroughly, add the meat with vegetables and greens (parsley, tarragon, green onions). Boil at low heat and gently turn the mixture so as not to adhere to the pan. It forms a sauce. When the oily part becomes clear, remove from the heat. Put the meat and sauce on a platter. Serve with salad or garnish with pickles and mashed or boiled potatoes.

Meat rolls from Tazlău ★★☆
(Tazlău)
Their specific feature is that the meat rolls paste coagulates with bones soup. The latter results by boiling thoroughly the bones in water, until it evaporates to a third of the original amount.



3.3.5. Poultry



Chicken with cream ★★☆
(Borca)
Boil the sliced chicken in a pot. From the resulting broth, chicken soup is cooked. The flesh will be used for this dish.
Prepare a sauce from oil, flour, lots of cream (1 kg cream per 1 chicken) and dill. Separately, fry a chopped onion with butter and salt.
Add water and the chicken cut to pieces. In the end, add the sauce mixture.
Serve with warm polenta.

Poultry with cream (Pângărați) ★★☆
Boil the slaughtered chicken until the water evaporates to half the original amount.
Add finely cut onions, peppers, herbs and celery. Boil another 15 minutes, then allow to cool. It will be similar to aspic.
Serve cold.

Butter chicken ★★☆
(Hangu, Poiana Teiului)
This dish is prepared at Saint Mary's (15th August). Choose a one year old chicken of about 1 kg. Boil the chicken in the cast-iron kettle, with water and a whole onion.
Then add butter (an equal volume to the weight of the chicken). Cook until brown. Serve warm with polenta and garlic (cloves).

Young chicken in a cast-iron kettle ★★☆
(Agapia)
The young chicken are hatched in the spring and have grown wings in the autumn. They may be slaughtered after Saint Mary's (15th August).
Cut a 1 kg chicken to pieces, put in a cast-iron kettle, boil in water and oil until slightly browned.
Add 1 kg sour cream and continue to boil.
Serve warm with polenta and garlic sauce.

Butter chicken ★★☆
(Hangu)
Take a chicken carcass from that year, after it has reached 1 kg, and simmer in a cast-iron kettle in which a whole onion was added (this comes out after boiling). Add butter and continue cooking until golden brown. Serve warm with polenta and garlic.

Chicken breast pastrami (Poiana Teiului) ★★☆
Cut the chicken breast in half, remove the skin and put marinate it for 24 hours in a mixture of water, salt, pepper, allspice and bay leaves. After being marinated for 24 hours, remove, rinse and dry with a tissue. Insert in another mixture of sugar, pepper and paprika for 12 hours. After cooling for 12 hours, remove, bind tightly with kitchen string and place in a tray on baking paper. Put in the oven over low heat for about an hour and a half. In the first half hour the tray is covered. Sprinkle occasionally with the sauce left in the tray. When ready, remove and allow to cool. Serve as an appetizer or it can be used in various dishes.

Chicken stuffed with vegetables ★★☆
(Poiana Teiului)
Boil the chicken carcass (without giblets and feet). Boil separately a mixture of onions, carrots, peppers, tomatoes, olives.
Fill the chicken with this mixture. Sew or attach with toothpicks. Bake for roast. As side dish, prepare a mixture of vegetables.

Stuffed chicken ★★☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
One chicken, 250 g pork loin, 150 g cheese, 5 eggs, 1 red bell pepper, 1 yellow bell pepper, a bunch of green onions, a bunch of dill, salt, pepper, 3 bay leaves, 1 teaspoon peppercorns, 3 leaves of cabbage or sauerkraut, 2 tablespoons flour, 2 cooked carrots. Carefully remove the skin from the chicken. The meat is minced and mixed with the diced loin, grated cheese, eggs, diced peppers and carrots, chopped onions and dill. Mix well, add the flour, salt, pepper and sew the chicken skin at the edges. The stuffed chicken is put it in a greased tray and covered with cabbage leaves. Add 1 liter of water, pepper and bay leaves. Bake for 40-45 minutes at 150°C. Towards the end, remove the cabbage leaves to allow browning. Serve with pickles.







Chicken breast with roast bell peppers ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
1 chicken breast, 500 g roast bell peppers, 300 ml cream, salt and pepper. Put the chicken in the grill pan, then cut into cubes. Mix with chopped roast bell peppers, put everything in the pan then add the cream, salt and pepper, and cook for about 30 minutes. Serve with hot polenta.

Rooster aspic ★★☆
(Poiana Teiului)
Boil the rooster in advance, braise chopped green onion, red pepper, butter. A cold stew results. It is also called hay food (because it is usually consumed during scythe time).

Poultry aspic ★☆☆
(Poiana Teiului)
Cut the chicken into pieces, wash and boil in chicken broth and 1.5 liters of cold water. Boil and strain the foam from the surface quite often. The quality and clarity of the aspic depends on this part of the process. Peel the carrot, onion and pepper, add them to the pot and simmer until the meat begins to fall off the bones. Check the consistency of the aspic by taking a drop of broth from the pot. If it sticks to the finger it means that it is ready.
Add the garlic, give it one more short boil and take it off the fire, strain the broth through a fine sieve to stop peppercorns and garlic, defat (fat is removed with a spoon from the surface). Allow to cool. Prepare bowls which have been previously brushed with a little oil, then decorate the bottom of the bowls with slivers of carrot.
Add the pieces of meat, evenly distributed in each bowl. Cuts may be left with all the bone or they may be boned to be easier to serve. Pour the meat broth, equally, in bowls.
Allow to cool for at least 6 hours before consumption. Aspics are consumed cold placed on a platter, whole or sliced.
The claws and wingtips are unsightly and unsuitable for use in aspic. However, due to the large amount of skin and bones, they generate a large amount of good quality gelatin.
They can be added to a boil and removed at the end. If the broth is not sufficiently bound, one can add 1 to 2 teaspoons of gelatin, but only 10 minutes after taking the bowl from heat and no later than 20 minutes after.



Poultry stew ★★☆
(Bicazu Ardelean)
Wash the chicken and dry with absorbent towel, then brown until it becomes slightly golden. Peel onions, wash, chop and cook. When it becomes glassy and transparent add the browned meat, tomato juice and peeled and chopped tomatoes. Allow to simmer until the sauce reduces in volume. While simmering, add a few peppercorns and bay leaves. Add salt to taste. Add greenery.

Roast in a tray (Grințieș) ★☆☆
Marinate the meat (beef, lamb, pork or chicken) for several days in a mixture of wine, salt, pepper, bell peppers, paprika, bay leaves. Take pieces of meat and place them in a tray with oil and water. Bake in the hot oven until nicely browned.



3.3.6. Venison

Generally, game is not suitable to consume, because its flesh is hard to digest. Most of the times venison is mixed with other meat and thus its qualities become noticeable: steak, stew, etc.

Rabbit in cast-iron kettle (Tazlău) ★★☆
Wash the rabbit meat and cut into small/medium pieces. Heat the oil well in a kettle and add the meat. Cover half of the kettle with a lid and leave for 15 minutes over high heat. (It is important to leave a semi-opened area because rabbits release plenty of water.) After some of the water has evaporated, lower the heat, add the tomatoes and leave again for 5-7 min, until the broth turns red. Add the onions and season with salt, pepper, paprika, thyme, bay leaves to taste. Cover the entire surface of the kettle with a lid, until all ingredients are ready. It may be served with cream.

Deer pastrami ★★☆
(Pipirig, Pângărați)
The boned hind legs are used, after removing the cartilage and tendons. The same applies to the dorsal muscles. Cut meat into oblong slices approx. 6 cm wide and 40 cm thick.
Sprinkle the meat thus prepared with salt and sugar then place in a pan and keep 3-4 days in refrigerator at 4 - 6°C.
After this period, check the cuts to see if the salt is soaked in salt, and the meat is pink on a section, without gray areas. Prepare a marinade from sugar, garlic, paprika, take the pieces of venison and stuff the meat with smoked and cured bacon, which was previously cut into strips.
Rub the stuffed meat with the sauce, put it back in the tray and pour the remaining marinade over the meat. Place the meat tray in the freezer for two more days then hot smoke it.



Smoked wild boar ★★☆
(Pipirig, Pângărați)
Preparation of components: wash the meat, cut the bacon strips, wash and crush the garlic with salt. Sprinkle the meat with sugar, garlic, salt and leave to soak about 8 days. 2 days before the end of the maceration, sprinkle with pepper and paprika.
Remove from soak, drain, stuff with smoked bacon and hot smoke for about 4 hours. Keep in a cool room for 24 hours.

Deer pastrami ★★☆
(Pângărați)
Marinate the deer meat, cut into portions, for 6-8 days in a mixture of garlic crushed with salt, ground pepper, chopped parsley, thyme, carrot slices, wine, bay leaves.
Roll occasionally. Remove from soak, drain and hot smoke with hardwood (beech) for 4-8 hours. Keep cold for one day for maturation.

Rabbit pastrami (Pângărați) ★★☆
Use the legs and chops. Thighs can be slotted on the bone line. Mix the following spices: garlic, sea salt, paprika, ground pepper, sugar, coriander, thyme or ground thyme, basil, 1/2 cup of white wine, a bay leaf. The uncooked meat is rubbed with a part of the seasoning. Place in a bowl and put the rest of the seasoning over the meat. Place a lid over the meat (it can be a plate) and a weight to press it.
Keep the meat cold for 4-5 days. After 2-3 days turn the meat, put the pieces from the bottom to the top and viceversa. After this period, cold smoke the meat using wood or beech sawdust. After smoking, it can hang in a cool place, where the maturation process may continue. In order to be consumed, it is boiled with a little water or fried. For those who like it this way, they may try to eat small raw pieces, after the meat is well aired. In order not to adversely affect the taste of the meat, chipped enamel vessels should not be used. Stainless steel, wood, plastic tanks are preferred.

3.3.7. Fish



Fish in "hârzob" ★★☆
(Pângărați)
One can use any species of fish from running waters, but the best is the trout. Clean the fish and marinate it from evening to morning in a mixture of wine, peppercorn, chopped garlic, rosemary, etc.).
Smoke on "lozniță" (grill placed above the oven) with hot smoke from beech wood. Keep it like this for about 10 hours; the fire should be small.
The water inside the fish comes to the surface and forms a dark crust.
Separately, "hârzob" is built: two circular or oval frames of thick birch branches, tied with strings, to which compact layers of fir branches are attached. Put a layer of smoked, still hot fish on one frame, then cover the fish with the other frame, like a sandwich.
Keep it from evening to morning. Serve cold.

"Hârzob" fish ★★★
(Grințieș, Tazlău)
Clean the fish and smoke it with hardwood (beech, plum). Cool, wrapped in fir-tree branches.
"Hârzob" is also made of fir-tree branches: fir is braided around a hazelnut frame. Put the fish inside and tie it to the frame. Keep cold for a few days. (Certificate of Iosub A. F. Constantine, Tazlău)

Minnow stew ★★☆
(Pângărați)
Fry onions and other herbs (lovage, orach, onions, parsley, dill) in a pan with oil. Over this layer put a layer of small fish. Then put the second layer of vegetables (without frying them) and so on, up to 4-5 layers of fish. Fill with water. Bake in the oven until water decreases by half. Serve hot with polenta.





Fish brine ★☆☆
(Pângărați)
Prepare a brine with chilli, pepper, lovage, parsley, grated tomatoes. Place over high heat and when it boils add the fish, which has been previously grilled. Simmer for 10 minutes. Serve cold.

Canned fish (marinated) ★★☆
(Pângărați, Poiana Teiului)
Allow the cleaned fish to drain in a tray or pan on the stove (3-4 hours). Prepare a mixture of oil, vinegar, chopped onion, peppercorns and bay leaves. Put the fish and mixture in a pot, in successive layers until full. Close the lid and sterilize. Allow to macerate (soak) 2-3 days, then serve cold.

Fish with greens (Hangu) ★★☆
Clean the caught fish of entrails and place in a saucepan with vegetables or chopped spring greens. Place in successive layers (3-4 layers of fish - weeds). Add the oil, vinegar, salt and pepper. Cook in the oven just like cabbage rolls. Meanwhile, the bones melt. It is served with polenta and sour cream.

Fried fish ☆☆☆
(Pipirig)
Cut the fish to pieces and and salt. Dip each piece into cornmeal and fry in hot oil. Serve with polenta and garlic or with vegetable garnish.



Fried fish dipped in eggs and flour ★☆☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
Cut the fish to pieces and and salt. Dip each piece into a sauce made of eggs, salt, flour and fry in hot oil. Serve with polenta and garlic, with vegetable garnish.

Cabbage fish rolls in baked pumpkin ★★☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători)
Chop the fish fillets, onion, rice, greens, salt, pepper. Shape cabbage fish rolls and boil. Cut the lid of a punpkin and seed it. Wrap in paper foil or cabbage leaves and bake for an hour and a half in the hot oven. Place the cabbage rolls in the pumpkin and cover with the lid. Serve on a platter, decorated with fir branches.



3.3.8. Vegetables

Roast peppers with cheese ★☆☆
(Pipirig)
Cut the roast peppers in half. Mix cheese with olives, pepper and chopped onion until smooth. Add a tablespoon of mixture in each half, spread and roll. Pin with a toothpick if necessary.
Serve with salad.

Stuffed peppers ★☆☆
(Pipirig)
Wash and clean the peppers. In a saucepan, put 2 tablespoons of oil, add chopped onions and fry. Wash the rice and add onions, chopped tomatoes, a teaspoon of sugar, salt, pepper and a glass of water. Boil for another 10 minutes. When the water decreased in volume, add the minced meat and mix well with other ingredients. Stuff the peppers and put them into the pot upright, so as not to topple. Add water, cover with a lid and cook in a hot oven. Serve with polenta and sour cream.



Shredded cabbage with "jintuit" ★★☆
(Pipirig)
In a saucepan, add oil with water and cook chopped onions and peppers over low heat. After their browning, add the diced tomatoes, paprika, tomato paste. Boil the mixture for another 5 minutes (with the lid on). Chop the cabbage into small pieces and add to the mixture.
Simmer with lid on and stir every 10 minutes for half an hour. When ready, add spices (salt, pepper, dill, thyme). To sour, add "jintuit".
Allow to rest for 10 more minutes to mix the ingredients well.



Cabbage with meat ★☆☆
(Pipirig)
On the bottom of a saucepan put a leaf of cabbage and cover with sliced bacon. Over it put successive layers of chopped cabbage, tomatoes, cleaned, washed and meat cut into suitable pieces. Add salt, peppercorns, paprika, thyme. The last layer includes sliced potatoes. Pour tomato sauce dilluted with warm water. Cook in the oven for 2 to 2.5 hours.

Monk's vegetable stew ★★☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
Sauté onion, add grated carrot, peas, zucchini, potatoes, eggplant, peppers, finely chopped green peppers, tomatoes, salt, red peppers, bay leaves, greens.

Mixed nettles ★☆☆
Bring a pot of water to boil. Separate the dead nettle leaves and other impurities and boil for 20 minutes. While the nettles boil, finely chop onion and garlic cloves and fry in the pan, sprinkle two tablespoons of flour and add warm water, paying attention not to form lumps. Remove the boiled nettles and chop finely, then mix them until a puree is obtained. In another bowl, put a little oil, add the onion flour and nettle sauce. If too thick, dilute with broth from the nettles until the mixture becomes creamy. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with polenta and garlic sauce.

Pilau with nettles ☆☆☆
Wash thoroughly and drain the nettles. Scald in water with salt and vinegar. Allow to cook until almost ready. In a saucepan, fry onion in butter. Add well washed rice without water in it. Cook the rice until it becomes transparent. Add the chicken or vegetable broth and allow to cook for 10 to 12 minutes until the rice swells (according to the type of grain). Add the almost cooked nettles (whole leaf), stir well and transfer to the vessel which will be put in the oven. Add soup, water or even fresh milk, as much as necessary and leave in the oven until ready, without stirring anymore. Serve hot, as a side dish to meat or with sauce.



3.3.9. Mushroom based dishes

Mushrooms "zacusca" ★★☆
(boletus, honey fungus)
5 kg of mushrooms, 2 kg red peppers, 1 kg onions, 1 liter of oil, salt and pepper. Boil the mushrooms for 3 hours with 2 tablespoons of salt, always adding hot water, allow to cool and mince. Roast and mince the peppers. Soften the onions with a little oil, mince, mix everything and simmer for 1.5 - 2 hours, stirring continuously. Finally, pour into jars, cover with lids and sterilize for 30 minutes.



Mushroom based "zacusca" ★★☆
(Piatra Soimului)
Grill 10 kg of eggplant, 10 kg red peppers and 15 kg kapia peppers.
When ready, add salt to clean easier. Peel the vegetables and allow to drain for a few hours. Separately boil the mushrooms (5 kg) and chop coarsely.
Chop the onion and fry with a little oil until it softens. Mince all vegetables alternatively (it'll be easier to homogenize the composition).
Add mushrooms, tomato sauce, 2 liters of oil and spices (pepper, bay leaves). Mix well, boil the mixture over low heat, stirring constantly to avoid sticking to the bottom of the pot.
"Zacusca" is ready when it becomes lighter in colour and oil bubbles rise to the surface. 49 jars of "zacusca" will result from the given quantities, which will be steamed in the oven.





Boletus stew ★★☆
(Pângărați)
Fresh mushrooms are boiled, and the preserved ones are desalted. Place chopped boletus, onion, chicken broth, etc in a pot. Boil on the stove plate until the liquid reduces by half. While still hot, add chopped parsley, garlic and other herbs. Serve with polenta or bread.



Cabbage rolls with mushrooms ★☆☆
(Pângărați)
Honey fungi or boletus are scalded, and the preserved ones are desalted. Chop the mushrooms and add them instead of meat in the cabbage mixture (fresh vegetables or washed and chopped vegetables with boiled rice).
Wrapp small quantities in blanched vine, cabbage, horseradish, coltsfoot leaves (fresh or preserved). Place orderly in an enameled or clay pot. Boil (the enamelled pot goes to the stove plate, the clay pot goes to the oven). Serve warm with polenta (also hot), topped with a layer of cream.

Mushrooms with garlic cream or cream sauce (Borca) ★★☆
Wash the mushrooms, break the stems, and cut into suitable slices. If they are small, they can be left whole. Sprinkle with salt to taste. Heat some oil in a large saucepan and add the mushrooms. You can put as many as possible, as the volume decreases as they sauté. Cover the pan with a lid and leave over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Take the pan off the heat when the mushrooms are browned. To prepare the sauce, crush the garlic with a little coarse salt until it forms a paste. Then add a teaspoon of vegetable oil and mix the garlic until the oil is incorporated. Add cream and mix well. Place the mushrooms on a plate and add some tablespoons of garlic sauce. The garlic sauce may include 2 tablespoons of cream.

Saffron milk cap boiled in "jintuit" ★★☆
(Borca)
The saffron milk caps are chopped and boiled. Drain and place in a cast iron kettle with "jintuit". Boil and serve with hot polenta.

Mushrooms stew ★★☆
(Dămuc, Crăcăoani)
This stew may include honey fungi, scotch bonnets, saffron milk caps, russula. Prepare a stew of chopped mushrooms, onion and parsley. Simmer.

Honey fungi pilau ★☆☆
(Pipirig)
Clean the onions and carrots. Chop the onion and cook with half a cup of water, finelly grate the carrot and add over the onion with pepper paste. Chop the boiled mushrooms and add onion. Add washed rice and water. When the rice is cooked, add parsley, thyme, oil.

Saffron milk cap salad with onions ★★☆
(Crăcăoani)
Clean saffron milk caps and boil. Peel and julienne the onions. Choose the quantities to taste. Prepare the vinegar sauce as for the pepper recipe: 1 part vinegar and 2 parts water. Boil. Add one tablespoon of salt and one of sugar per 1 liter. Add bay leaves, peppercorns, allspice, mustard, to taste. Add the onions and allow to boil for 5 minutes, then add the mushrooms. Boil for another 5 minutes. Put in jars and sterilize.



Boletus stew (Alexandru cel Bun, Tazlău) ★★☆
1.5 kg peeled and chopped boletus, 700 g chopped onions, pepper, salt, tomatoes, bell peppers, greens, thyme. Sauté the onions with oil, water, pepper, salt. Add mushrooms, peppers, tomatoes, tomato juice or paste, thyme and greens. Serve with polenta and garlic sauce. The boletus can be replaced by another type of fungi.





3.3.10. Others

Stuffed cabbage rolls ★☆☆
(Borca, Bicazu Ardelean)
Make a mixture of freshly picked herbs from the crop and chop finely. Sauté in mutton butter and oil. In the same oil also fry the cabbage (pickled or fresh). Add grits and keep the mixture for the next day. This mixture is used for the fast period.
Otherwise "urda" cheese is added as well. Wrap small portions in leaves according to the local custom. Place in a clay pot. Boil on trivets or in the oven.
Serve warm with polenta.
At Borca, beet leaves are used.
At Bicazu Ardelean, cabbage leaves are used.
At Borleşti, coltsfoot leaves are used as well.
At Agapia, horseradish leaves are used.

"Leveş" (potato dish) (Bicaz Chei) ★☆☆
Peel the potatoes, wash, cut into pieces. Chop the onion, carrot, peppers. Boil the potatoes in a saucepan with water, oil, salt and pepper. Cook the onion with the carrot and pepper and add to the dish. Allow to boil over medium heat and add tomato paste, starch and allow to boil for a few more minutes. Add the greens.

Stuffed cabbage rolls with "urda" cheese (Pipirig) ★★☆
Wash 300g of rice and simmer by half, then add 3 chopped onions fried with 500 ml oil and finely grated carrot, add 500 g of "urda" cheese, pepper, salt to taste and finely chopped dill. Wrap small portions in leaves according to the local custom. Boil with water and tomato juice. Serve warm with sour cream and polenta.

Green plums dish (Borca) ★★☆
In the mountain area plums ripen later. Unripe fruit are collected and boiled over medium heat. While they boil, change the water. Boil until they detach from the kernel. Optionally, add sugar. It is served hot or cold with polenta.



Dried plums dish (Grințieș) ★★☆
Wash the dried plums thoroughly and allow to soak in warm water, then simmer in oil with chopped onions. One may add a sauce made of a tablespoon of flour with water. Boil with a little water. It is served in the fast period, hot or cold.

Potato slices ★★☆
(Grințieș)
Wash the whole potatoes, peel and cut to slices of 6-7 mm. Sprinkle with salt and bake on both sides on the hot plate. It is served hot as such or with cheese, generally in winter.

Polenta ☆☆☆
Although it is known and appreciated, polenta is prepeared differently, especially in the sheepfold. The kettle is clinged in "cujbă" (high stand made of thicker branches).A medium bonfire burns below. Water and salt are added. When the water starts boiling, all the flour is added at once. It will gradually heat from the boiling water around. Then it is stirred 300 times with the paddle, with periods of rest. The number of stirs is mentioned to estimate the cooking time needed for polenta to be ready. The flour is made of corn grown in the mountains, which has dried and was lightly roasted before grinding (Bicaz Chei, Poiana Teiului). This roasting compensates the unripe corn (which is frequent) and gives it an aromatic taste. Grinding is performed at a stone mill, which gives corn a taste that mountaineers have been used to throughout the centuries.
After baking in the kettle, polenta is turned on a wooden board, where it is allowed to cool naturally and is cut into cubes with a thread. It is served with various dishes: either it replaces the bread, or it is the right combination for consumption.
In another variant, polenta is made by adding flour and continously mixing until it reaches the desired consistency. Then it is stirred with the paddle until thoroughly cooked. This is polenta made in haste.
At the sheepfold polenta can be made also with "jintuit".



Potato bread ☆☆☆
(Grințieș)
Boil, peel and crush 2 large potatoes. Add 1 kg flour, warm water and salt and knead a dough using yeast kept from previously prepared bread.
Take a piece from the fermenting dough and keep in a jar for the next turn. Brush with a mixture of water, sugar or egg whites and a teaspoon of sugar.
Bake for 50 minutes over low fire.

Bread with bran ☆☆☆
(Vovidenia monastry, Vânători Neamț)
Knead a dough of one kg flour, 150 g bran, a cube of yeast dissolved in warm water with a little sugar, a pinch of salt. Braid three, two loaves. Brush with a mixture of water and sugar or egg whites and a teaspoon of sugar. Bake for 45-50 minutes.

Polenta (Vovidenia monastery Vânători) ★☆☆
Half of the amount of water is replaced with milk. After polenta is ready, a few tablespoons of sour cream are added and mixed well. Several portions are taken from the kettle and shaped into several polentas.



3.3.11. Pickles

Pickled cranberries (Bicazu Ardelean) ★★☆
Put the cranberries in jars with slices of carrot, celery, garlic, dried dill, mustard, pepper, salt. Fill the jars with water. Pour from one vessel to another several times.

Pickled zucchini ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastry, Vânători Neamț)
Slice small zucchini. Place in jars with slices of carrot, celery, garlic, dried dill, mustard, pepper, salt. Fill the jars with water. Pour from one vessel to another several times.

Zucchini in vinegar ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
Prepare a solution of one part vinegar and two parts water, salt to taste. Scald zucchini slices and place in jars with slices of carrot, celery, peppercorn, mustard seeds. Add the hot vinegar solution and seal.

Honey fungus for winter ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
Choose small honey fungi, scald in boiling oil. Place in jars, cover with oil and seal. Cool in blankets.

Green tomatoes salad ☆☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
Finely chopped peppers, onions, grated carrot and celery, finely sliced green tomatoes are scalded with a solution of one part vinegar and two parts water. Mix with a mustard sauce, salt and pepper. Keep in tightly sealed jars.







Tomato juice with red peppers ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
Scald 5 kg of tomatoes, mince 2-3 times, separate the seeds and skin. Add 3 kg of minced peppers, salt and pepper. The mixture is boiled and put in bottles, which are cooled in blankets.

Beetroot salad with horseradish ☆☆☆
(Grințieș)
The horseradish roots are washed and cleaned. Bake the in the oven or boil whole. Peel, grate and mix the bbetroot with horseradish, salt, vinegar and sugar. Keep cool in tightly sealed jars.

Red peppers with cauliflower or honey fungus in vinegar ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
Cut the red peppers in halves, the big ones in fours. Place inside the slices tiny bunches of cauliflower. Place carefully in jars with slices of carrots, chopped horseradish, celery leaves. Pour over a solution of one liter of vinegar, 2l of water, 3 tablespoons sugar, 1 tablespoon of salt, pepper, mustard and 200-300 g of honey when cooled. Keep cold in tightly sealed jars.



Horseradish for steaks ★☆☆
(Grințieș)
Horseradish roots are washed and cleaned, grated and mixed with vinegar and salt. Keep cold in tightly sealed jars.

3.4. Desserts, sweets

"Cozonac" from Borca ★★☆
(Borca)
Mix 1 kg of flour with 5 egg yolks, 2 whole eggs. Add 200 g sugar and 200 g fat. This fat consists of 50 g fat butter, 1 cup oil and 1 teaspoon of lard. The butter is added to the molten hot. Make a dip in the dough, pour the butter and fold the dough by bringing the edges to the center. Spice with rum, vanilla, lemon. Add 500 g milk and 3 tablespoons cream. Use 30 g yeast. The mixture is prepared warm, in the vicinity of the stove. Knead the dough in 3 sessions with breaks, to allow the dough to rise.



"Cozonac" with hazelnut ★★☆
(Vânători Neamț)
Prepare the usual dough, only that this time the flour should be sifted by 3-4 times through a very thick sieve for the dough to be fluffy. Walnuts are replaced with hazelnut filling. Eventually, add biscuits and cocoa to the filling.

Easter cake ★☆☆
(Bicazu Ardelean)
Sift 1kg flour of which leaven is prepared first. Scald a part of flour with 3/4 cup hot milk, stir until well cooled, add 50 g yeast dissolved in 1/4 cup warm milk. Mix well and allow to grow. While leaven grows, whip 8 egg yolks with salt (1 teaspoon) and sugar (300 g) until they melt. Add 2 tablespoons of oil, rum, 2 tablespoons sour cream, chopped vanilla, raisins and the peel of a lemon. After mixing well, add whipped egg whites and pour over the leaven. Stir gently with the remaining flour and start kneading for about ½ hour until the dough no longer sticks to hands.
Add oil (250 g) mixed with warm butter (50 g). Flatten the dough, cover the vessel and allow to grow. The esulting dough is used to form rolls the size of the tray, which can be braided in two or three. Make thin rolls, fill them with nuts, Turkish delight, cocoa, etc. The dough grown in trays is greased with beaten egg, sprinkled with granulated sugar, pieces of nuts. Start by baking over low fire for ¼ hour, then bake over medium heat.

Pancakes with hemp seed ★★☆
(Lord's swaddling clothes)
(Farcaşa)
"Julfă" ★★☆
(Crăcăoani)
From a simple dough (flour, water) thin cakes are baked on the stove. Separately, a mixture based on urda cheese and dill is made, to which hemp seeds are added. It is placed in alternate layers: cake and mixture in 15 to 30 layers. The last layer is a cake. It is baked. The cheese will melt and will soak the cakes. Served warm (room temperature) with sour cream or milk.



"Alivenci" ★★☆
(Farcaşa, Borca, Hangu)
Mix cheese with corn, eggs, milk. Place in trays and bake. After baking, brush the top with sour cream and add lovage leaves. Serve warm. At Borca, the mixture may also include "urda" cheese and onions.



"Alivenci ★★☆
(Bicaz Chei)
Prepare a mixture of fried cornmeal, sour milk, chopped bacon, chopped and fried onion leaves and cheese from wooden tub (slightly pungent). Place in a tray in a layer of 2-3 cm and bake in the oven. Sprinkle sugar on top and serve warm.

"Alivenci" ★★☆
(Pipirig)
Prepare a mixture of sour milk, egg, corn flour, wheat flour, sugar. Place in a tray in a layer of 2-3 cm and bake in the oven. While still hot, spread cream and sugar on top.



Cornmeal ★☆☆
(Grințieş)
Sift a part of the wheat flour and corn flour through a sieve, knead with warm water, sugar, salt and yeast cube dissolved in warm water and a teaspoon of sugar. Mix with boiled, diced pumpkin. Place the mixture in a tray and cover with a spoonful of flour mixed with water. Bake over slow fire. Serve both hot and cold. The water may be replaced with warm milk.

Cornmeal ★☆☆
(Pipirig)
Prepare a mixture of cornmeal scalded with chopped green onion, green dill and "jintuit". Place in trays in a layer of 2-3 cm and put vine leaves and / or cabbage leaves on top. Bake. Serve warm.

Cornmeal with grits ★☆☆
(Vânători)
Replace a part of cornflour with rye (to bind the dough). Scald the mixture of cornmeal, grits, flour with boiling milk (or hot water). Add salt, sugar, eventually pumpkin cubes. Cover with a tablespoon of flour mixed with water. Bake over slow fire, about 45-50 minutes.

Potato pies ★☆☆
(Grințieş, Pipirig)
Knead the dough made of flour, water, yeast, salt. For the filling, prepare mashed potatoes, add cheese, sugar, pepper, vanilla. Shape the pies and brush with a mixture of water and sugar or egg whites with a teaspoon of sugar. Bake until browned over slow fire.

"Urda" cheese pies (Grințieş) ★★☆
Knead the dough made of flour, water, yeast, salt. Shape the pies filled with "urda" cheese, dill, salt, sugar and vanilla. Brush with a mixture of water and sugar or egg whites with a teaspoon of sugar. Bake until browned over slow fire.

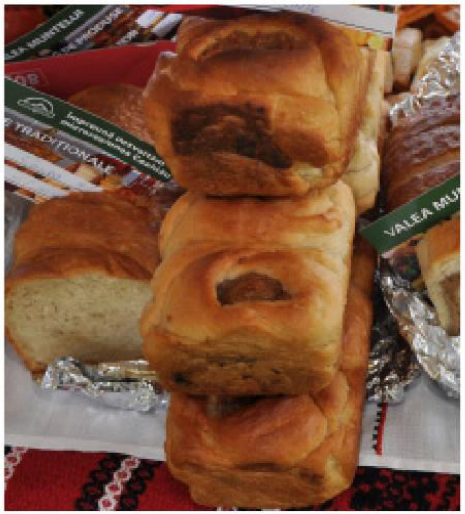


Cheesecake ★★☆
(Bicaz Chei)
Prepare a usual dough. Make a mixture of mildly pungent cheese, sour milk, "urda" cheese and dill. Add sugar and eggs. Place a thin layer of dough in the tray. Add a 1 to 2 cm layer of mixture. Place another thin layer of dough and press gently. Bake in the preheated oven. Serve hot or cold.



"Poale-n brâu" ★☆☆
(Bicaz Chei, Pipirig)
Prepare the dough and mixture similar to the cheesecake. Make a thin layer of dough and add 0.5 to 1 cm layer of mixture. Bring the edges of the cake in the middle. Press vigorously in the middle to seal the dough. Bake in the oven. Add water with sugar on top. Serve warm with curdled milk.

"Poale-n brâu" with "urda" chee★☆☆
(Borleşti)
Prepare the dough out of 1 kg of flour, 4 eggs, 100 g sugar, 2 teaspoons of dry yeast, 350 ml milk, 150 g butter and a little salt, then allow to grow. Meanwhile, prepare the filling of 750 g "urda" cheese, three eggs, 100 g raisins, 5-6 tablespoons sugar, vanilla, salt and semolina. After the dough has grown, cut it into two pieces of 2 cm each, which are spread in thin slices. Put two tablespoons of filling on each piece and fold into sachets. Place the pies on a tray with paper foil, and spread with beaten egg and put the tray in the preheated oven. Bake until well browned.







Plum balls ★★☆
(Borca)
Make a polenta of new corn flour from toasted grain. Place it on a wooden board. After cooling, cut it into cubes of 3-5 cm with a thread. Make a dip in each cube and put halves of plums (they can be fresh or smoked, ripe and dried). Press in the hand to make a ball. Optionally, they may be grilled. Serve warm as a dessert.

Baked cakes ★★☆
(Farcaşa)
Make a polenta. When almost ready, add corn flour to the mixture. After cooling add wheat flour. Prepare a slow fire and place a board above. Make cakes of the mixture and place on the board. Turn them to avoid burning. Serve with bean broth (instead of bread).

Cheesecake ★★☆
(Piatra Şoimului)
It is similar to "poale-n brâu" only the cheese mixture is different:
- mix "urda" cheese with parsley or dill and salt, cream until it forms a paste;
- mix curd cheese with dill, egg and milk until it forms a paste;
The pie is similar to the yeast dough cake and spices are added to the cheese mixture (rum, vanilla, cinnamon, raisins).

Pie with peritoneum ★★☆
(Hangu)
After preparing "poale-n brâu" they are wrapped in peritoneum and placed in the oven. Thus, they will become more tender and tastier.



Easter cheesecake ☆☆☆
(as described at Piatra Şoimului)
This type of cake is prepared in the period from Easter and to Ascension, in Christian families.
Make a dough similar to "poale-n brâu". The dough is used to make a cake and a roll which will be placed around the tray.
Prepare a mixture of cheese, eggs, spices like rum, vanilla, cinnamon, raisins. This mixture is put in a tray previously arraged with the dough. Spread sweetened water on the dough and beaten egg on the cheese. Bake. Once baked, spread again with oil to become glossy.
There are many variations to the cheese mixture: cottage cheese, kneaded curd cheese, a mixture between them, cream, fresh curd cheese.

Apple pie (Bicazu Ardelean) ★☆☆
Beat 10 eggs with salt, 10 tablespoons of sugar, then add the yolks and turn the mixture from top to bottom with a wooden spoon, until it blends, then add 10 tablespoons of flour and 1 baking powder, stirring continuously. In a tray powdered with flour, put half of the mixture and bake it the oven until a crust forms at the surface. Meanwhile, peel and grate 10 apples. Add sugar to taste, cinnamon and a teaspoon of semolina. Put this mixture in the tray, then pour the rest of the dough. Put the tray back in the oven and leave until brown. Remove, allow to cool, sprinkle the vanilla sugar and cut into various forms.

Pancakes with "urda" cheese and dill (Bicazu Ardelean, Pipirig) ★★☆
Mix 500 g of flour, 500 ml of milk, 2 eggs, a pinch of salt until a homogeneous mixture is obtained. Heat a frying pan greased with a little oil and pour about 50 g of dough, gently spreading it on the entire surface of the pan, and fry on both sides. Repeat until finishing the mixture. Separately, mix 250 g "urda" cheese with butter and dill, then fill the pancakes with this mixture and roll them. Serve with cream or simple.

Cheese dumplings (Bicazu Ardelean, Pipirig) ★☆☆
Sift the flour into a bowl, add a teaspoon of salt, 6 tablespoons of oil, 50 g of cream, one egg, then knead the dough stiff. This dough is stretched thin and cut into squares. Mix the cheese (500 g cows or sheep) with 2 eggs. Put a teaspoon of the mixture on each small square, then stick the edges of the dough together. Meanwhile, boil water in a bigger pot, add a little salt and when the water boils add the dumplings and cook then until they rise to the surface. Remove with a slotted spoon and grease with oil, so as not to stick to each other. Serve with sour cream.



Cottage cheese dumplings ★★☆
Prepare a dough out of flour, 2 eggs, milk and salt. Knead well, cool for 10 minutes, stretch with the rolling pin and cut into square pieces of 4-5 cm. Separately, mix cottage cheese with 2 eggs, salt to taste, and - who likes it - sugar.
Mix well. Put a little mixture on each square of dough. Form a triangle and stick the edges by hand. Boil the dumplings in boiling water with salt/sugar for 15 minutes.
Remove, drain and serve sprinkled with melted butter on top.



Grated apple rolls (Agapia) ★☆☆
Prepare a dough out of flour, water, sugar, oil, yeast. Separately, make a mixture of grated apples, sugar, cocoa and other spices. Out of the dough, make a cake on which spread a layer of apple mixture. Roll the cake and stick the edges (fold them underneath). Bake in the oven. When removed, brush on top with a sugar water solution.



Cranberry compote (Grințieș) ★★☆
Fill ¾ of the jars with 800 g washed cranberries. Dissolve one tablespoon of sugar in warm water for each jar and fill the jars. Place the lids and boil the jars in the water tray in the oven for 20 minutes from the time water starts to boil in the jars. The jars are cooled in blankets.

Compote ☆☆☆
It starts from the whole fruit (with or without kernels) or cut, boiled in a sugar syrup. Then they are put in jars, sealed and sterilized. The fruit should be ripe and healthy, with a particular taste and aroma. The syrup should be made of 17 to 20% sugar, but the amount depends on the content of the fruit. It applies to whole fruit: blueberries, gooseberries apricots, strawberries, cherries, peaches, plums, cherries, and chopped fruit: quinces, honeydew melon, apples, pears.

Comfiture ☆☆☆
Comfiture is a fruit mixture, dispersed in a syrupy mass.
The fruit to be used for comfiture should be ripe, whole and healthy. Wash, possibly scald the fruit. Whether starting with whole fruit or acting upon: remove the kernels (cherries), peel (green walnuts) or cut the fruit (quince). Next, one may proceed in two ways:
- add sugar over the prepared fruit and leave for a while to form syrup from sugar and the extracted juice;
- make a syrup out of sugar and water, and add fruit after boiling for sterilization.
Cook over medium heat to remove excess of water. Add the fruit (as in the case of fragile fruit like wild strawberries, raspberries).
Cooking is performed under intermittent stirring in order not to stick to the bottom of the pan. The operation is considered completed if the syrup does not disperse when poured into a glass of cold water. There are a number of features related to production process, depending on the nature of the fruit, the boiling behavior and the requirements for maintaining the integrity of the fruit.
Cool, put in jars and sterilize. The content of the fruit must be 45-55% of the whole amount.
The procedure applies for flavoured fruit: blueberries, apricots, strawberries, bitter cherries, wild strawberries, quince, blackberries, green walnuts, peaches, green plums, raspberries, but also rose petals, dandelion flowers ...

Acacia comfiture (Tazlău) ★★★
Blooming acacia flowers are collected in sunny day. Some of the flowers are washed with running water, drained well and then boiled for 30 minutes. They are allowed to cool for 2 days for maceration, then are filtered. The drained liquid is mixed with sugar (1 liter/1 kg) and simmered to form the syrup (enamelled pot, beech firewood).
Of the remaining flowers, only the petals are and added to the syrup, together with lemon juice. It is boiled for 5 more minutes then removed from the heat. The foam is removed and the pot is covered with a damp towel. After cooling, it is put in jars. (Certificate of Angelica A. F. Florean, Tazlău).

Elderberry comfiture (Tazlău) ★★★
The ripe elderberries are picked, the stalks are separated and they are macerated for one day to another, with sugar in a saucepan enamelled. Cook on the stove on fire with beech. When connected syrup is added lemon juice, mint leaves and cloves. Let it boil 5 minutes then remove from heat, remove the foam and cover with a damp towel. After cooling, put in jars.
(Certificate of Angelica A. F. Florean, Tazlău).



Dandelion comfiture ★★★
(Tazlău)
Blooming dandelion flowers are picked on a sunny day. A part of them are washed with running water, drained well, and then boiled for 30 minutes. They are allowed to cool for 2 days for maceration, then are filtered. The drained liquid is mixed with sugar (1 liter/1 kg) and simmered to form the syrup (enamelled pot, beech firewood).
Of the remaining flowers, only the petals are and added to the syrup, together with lemon juice.
It is boiled for 5 more minutes then removed from the heat. The foam is removed and the pot is covered with a damp towel.
After cooling, it is put in jars. (Certificate of Angelica A. F. Florean, Tazlău).

Rosehip jam ★★★
(Tazlău)
Rosehips are harvested ripe, they are cut the ends and separated carefully from the the seeds and fluff. The fruit pulp is separated and placed in a deep bowl.
Add water to cover and simmer for 2 hours over low heat (fire beechwood).
The mixture is mashed while hot. Mix the sugar and continue to boil until the jam forms. Put a sprig of basil and let it boil for 5 minutes then set aside. During cooking, stir continuously, to prevent from sticking. After cooling, put in jars.
(Certificate of Angelica A. F. Florean, Tazlău).

Green nut comfiture (Pipirig) ★☆☆
The peeled nuts (100 pieces) are put in cold water, to which some alum stone was added. Boil in 5-6 rows with alum stone, 1/4 hour each row, by passing them from one pan to another, full of boiling water.
The nuts are cooked when pricked with a thick needle, they fall from it immediately. Once the nuts have been cooked in 5-6 rows, rinse in 3-4 cold waters, changing the water each time after 1/4 hour. Heat sugar (1 kg) with water, but not until it turns to syrup, pull the pan aside and add the walnuts that have been well drained, after 10 minutes put the comfiture to a boil again.
When the nuts are almost cooked, add the vanilla and lemon. When the comfiture is sufficiently bound, take away from the fire, gather the foam an put in a bowl.
The next day, put in jars.

Jam ☆☆☆
Jam is a fruit mixture in a jellified mass. The jelly structure is obtained using a substance called pectin, released by some fruits.
Prepare the fruit for jam: they should be ripe, whole and healthy.
Wash, eventually scald. It may be started from whole fruit or cut to pieces. Next, one may proceed in two ways:
- add sugar ver the prepared fruit and leave for a while, to obtain syrup from the sugar and the extracted juice;
- make a syrup of sugar and water and after boiling for sterilization, add the fruit.
Boil over medium heat for concentration of pectin release.
The operation is considered completed when, after taking a spoonful of mixture and putting it in a cup to cool, the consistency is that of the jam.
The procedure is applied for flavourful fruits, with beautiful colour: blueberries, gooseberries, apricots, strawberries, cherries, currants, quinces, blackberries, pears, peaches, raspberries, etc.

Watermelon rind comfiture ★☆☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
Remove the green part and cut the rind into small cubes which are cooked in a solution of one liter vinegar and 2 l water. Rinse well. Add 1 kg cubes to 1.3 liters of syrup and boil.



Marmalade ☆☆☆
Marmalade is a fruit mixture which does not differentiate any syrup or gelly. It appears as a homogeneous mass. The method consists of preparing a fruit paste (one or several types of fruit) which is boiled for softening the texture and for fluidization. Next, it is passed through a sieve. Add sugar. Pack hot in jars or wooden crates. It must be pasteurized. The procedure is applied for: apricots, strawberries, quinces, apples, pears, plums, sour cherries.



Jelly, sorbet ★☆☆

Jelly is a product obtained from fruit juice with added sugar. Boil the fruit until soft, without breaking. Drain the juice. Make a mixture of 1/1 sugar/juice. Boil for concentration. The concentration process continues until it leads to syrup or jelly. A teaspoon of mixture is left in cold water. If it does not disperse, then the process is completed. Put in jars and pasteurize. The jelly should contain 67-69% dry matter.

The sorbet recipe is about the same, but one should proceed more carefully. The ratio of components is: 1 kg sugar, 1/2 kg fruit juice and a little water. The pressed fruit juice is mixed with sugar and simmered to thicken. During boiling, the solid droplets from the sides of the bowl are removed with a wet cloth. The final moment should be very carefully noticed, as there is the risk of missing it. Successive samples of droplets are taken and put in a glass of cold water. Apart from the fact that it should not disperse, the drop should be soft to the touch and moulding. During sampling, the saucepan is removed from the heat, so that the process should to not move forward. When the requirements are met, the fire is stopped. Allow to cool slightly, then mix in one direction. The color should become matte. Pour hot in sterilized jars. Here, solidification continues until the desired consistency. If sorbet is not obtained, the mixture is dilluted again and boiled to obtain syrup. For jelly, the following fruits are used: apples, cherries, red currants, quinces, elderberries, and rose petals. For sorbet the following fruits are used: strawberries, bitter cherries, quinces, cherries, raspberries, acacia blossom, rose petals.

"Poverlă" ★★☆
(Crăcăoani)

It is a weaker type of jam. Apply especially for plums. Remove the kernels. Add sugar. Boil in water (until the water evaporates to a half). A paste is formed. Add walnuts. Put in jars and close tightly. It is consumed during Advent, on bread or bread baked on the stove.

Raspberry sorbet ★★☆
(Poiana Teiului)

Crush 1 kg of raspberries and strain through cheesecloth. After the juice has clarified, drain carefully to keep it clear. Boil 1 kg of sugar in 1 cup of water. When the syrup is formed, add 1 cup clear raspberry juice. Then boil again over high heat. When cool, stir the sorbet until ready.

"Povirlă" ★★☆
(Grințieș)

1 kg plums, 3 tablespoons sugar. Wash the plums, remove the stones and boil with sugar and a little water in a cast iron kettle covered with a lid. Stir constantly, not to stick to the kettle. During cooking, toasted, cut walnuts may be added. Place hot into clean jars and cool in blankets.

Fruit jelly ★☆☆
(Farcașa)

Boil together Jonathan apples, raspberries and mint. The result is a flavourful mixture. Strain very finely the liquid. Mix with sugar in a ratio 1: 1 to give it consistency.

Boil until it acquires the consistency of a jelly. Spoon and roll in powdered sugar to form "bombs". At Tazlău, rose petals, strawberries, mint, red currants, black currants are used.

Apple and nut jam ★☆☆
(Grințieș)

250 g sugar and 1 kg of apples, peeled and seeded, cut into small cubes are boiled with toasted, cut walnuts. Place hot in clean jars and cool in blankets.





Dried and smoked plums (Crăcăoani) ★★☆

Certain varieties of pears and plums are dried on a frame made of branches, called "lozniță", placed on the oven. The oven is prepared with a warm smoke from sawdust beech, without flame. The smoke fills the fruit layer from "lozniță". After one day, they are taken away from "lozniță" and continue drying on a paper or wood stand.

Dried fruits ★★☆

Various fruits are dried in thin layers (5 cm) on a net or a plank, away from the sun, at 30 - 40°C, for several days. The apples are dried in chopped form: "cârmoji". In a similar way also other fruits dried: rosehip, dogwood cherries, sea buckthorns, guelder roses; also, peanuts, nuts. In winter, during Advent, and during Lent, compotes are prepared out of chopped apples, smoked plums and water. Dogwood cherries, sea buckthorns and rosehips are used to prepare infusions and teas. Peanuts and nuts are consumed as such or in cake recipes.

Dried plums ★★☆
(Grințieș)

A "hârzob", "lozniță" is built out of a of hazel twig net and is placed on four tall stones over a very soft fire. The whole, washed plums are placed on it and kept nearly a day. They are store in sealed jars, cool. Consumed as such or as food. The same procedure applies for apple slices or pears.

Rhubarb comfiture ★★☆
(Farcașa)

Clean the stalks from 1 kg of rhubarb and cut in little pieces of 1.5 – 2 cm, then macerate in 1 kg of sugar, from evening to morning, when the syrup is removed and boiled over medium heat with vanilla essence. When the syrup is binding, add the macerated rhubarb pieces. Add the juice of a lemon. Place hot in sealed jars.

Tomato stem comfiture ★☆☆
(Farcașa)

Non-cellulosic tomato stems are cut into pieces shorter than 1 cm, macerated in sugar (1:1) and left for half a day, during which a syrup is formed.

Separate the plant from syrup, boil the syrup and finally put them back together. Add lemon slices. Put in jars.



Ice cream ★☆☆
(Farcașa)

In old times, ice cream was produced without freezer. Every winter, ice was cut from the rivers. The ice blocks were stacked into a deep pit, separated from each other with straw or sawdust. Under controlled environment, they could be preserved all summer. To obtain ice cream, ice blocks in the required amount were removed from the cellar, they were ground and placed in a larger container. The vessel containing the mixture for ice cream was submerged in the ice blocks and would freeze.



Chilled/frozen state ☆☆☆

This is not a traditional method. At present, it is often used to preserve juicy fruit, in a fresh- like state. Keep refrigerated (+ 3°C) or frozen (-18°C).

It applies to strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries.

"Coliva" ★☆☆

Working materials: 500 g wheat, 300 g sugar (can be replaced with honey), 300 g walnuts, salt, flavours: vanilla sugar or vanilla essence, lemon peel. For garnish, bread crumbs, powdered sugar, coconut, candy (small), coconut, cocoa, raisins (eventually) are needed. Wheat is picked and washed in several waters. It is placed in water (cold), three and a half times more water than wheat, and left for several hours to soften. Simmer over low heat (as low as possible). Checking is performed as follows: after 1.0 to 1.5 hours, the grain must be "blooming" and be able to break between fingers. If the water evaporated and the wheat is not boiled, add more hot water. If there is an excess of water in the end, it is drained. Stir occasionally with a wooden spoon, to prevent from sticking to the pot. Use a cast-iron stainless steel pot (it should not stick to the pot). The grain volume increases 2-3 times. After boiling, remove from fire. Even if the mixture is not too strong, after cooling it will bind better. Allow to cool slowly, preferably in a warmer room. The next morning, the boiled wheat is mixed with ground walnuts, sugar, lemon peel, vanilla sugar. The crust that may appear on the surface is removed. One can add a few cut walnuts. If the mixture is too liquid, some bread crumbs or crushed biscuits are added. Biscuits absorb well the liquid. Also, some raisins or coconut may be added. Not too many spices are required. It is enough to include an additional flavour except for the wallnut. The mixture is put on a plate or in a bowl. It is levelled on top and on the sides. A knife dipped in water may be used. Sprinkle well with a layer of bread crumbs, ground biscuits then with a layer of powdered sugar. Ordinary sugar may be added, but only after bread crumbs (so as the sugar should not melt). Level the top by placing a sheet of paper and pressing softly. The top is recommended to be white. Garnish with small candies arranged in the shape of a cross. Instead of candies, wallnuts and peanuts may be added. A drawing of cocoa which include a cross may be done by using a template. Coliva is a symbol of people's faith in the resurrection. Wheat symbolizes the faithful, sugar or honey are the holy virtues and nut is the victory of life over death. Coliva is made at the funeral of a person of for memorial services.



3.5. Drinks

Juice ☆☆☆

The fruits are prepared before squeezing: some are finely cut, others are macerated to increase the amount of juice.

The fruits are pressed and crushed. The result is a solid part (cake) and a liquid part (juice) which collected.

At present, the fruits are spinned through a machine. The collected juice is thick because it contains portions of pulp. The sedimentation occurs naturally or forced (centrifugal filtration with tannin, gelatin or clay). The fruits are preserved by pasteurisation (heating at 65 - 75°C for a few minutes or at 80 - 100°C for a few seconds).

The procedure applies to apples, pears.



Elderberry juice (Grințieș) ☆☆☆

Put 10 elderberry flowers, 500 g sugar, 1 diced lemon, 10 g yeast, 20 grains rice, water in a 5 l jar. A part of the sugar may caramelize. Transfer the content from one jar to another after 24 hours. After 2 days strain and keep cool.

Nectar ☆☆☆

It is prepared by grinding, preheating at 90°C (to inactivate and soak the enzymes), followed by separation (by sieving, pressing, disintegration). The grinding degree affects the stability of the suspension.

The pulp should be grinded to less than 0.1 mm. If the separation is made only by breaking, the resulting puree will have greater fluidity. The separation by pressing, also leads to a lower content of pulp. The disintegration is more demanding, but it provides both high pulp content and suspension stability.

However, the nectar consumption is recommended by stirring to mix. Place in bottles that can be sealed and pasteurize.

The procedure applies for: fruit (apricots, currants, apples, pears, peaches, grapes, cherries), vegetables (peppers, carrots, tomatoes, beetroot, celery, cabbage), berries (blueberries, blackberries, raspberries).

Syrup ☆☆☆

It is obtained from fruit juice containing added sugar and lemon. The fruit juice is obtained by pressing the washed fruit after cutting or after removing kernels (if applicable).

Put sugar in a rate 1/1 and concentrate by boiling in a saucepan. Occasionally mix, to avoid sticking to the bottom. Boil until it reaches a suitable viscosity. This is determined by pouring syrup in a cup of cold water.

The poured syrup thread must not disperse in water. Cool the syrup and pour into clean bottles.

Eventually pasteurize. The stability is ensured by the high content of sugar (65%).

In some cases it is recommended to invert sugar. The inversion is a sugar syrup with water, to which lemon salt or citrus slices are added. Keep overnight. The sugar turns into the enantiomers (racemic mixture of optical isomers).

The procedure applies for: fruit (apricots, currants, apples, pears, peaches, cherries), berries (blueberries, blackberries, raspberries), medicinal plants (fir buds, ribwort leaves, dandelion flower, rose hips).

In the case of medicinal plants, start with an infusion. The syrup may be extracted from a single species or from a mixture.

Green mint syrup ★★☆
(Farcaşa)
Prepare a concentrated yarrow tea and leave overnight. The next day, reheat, add mint leaves in a bunch. Leave for 15 minutes to infuse, then remove. Sugar may be added 1:1 continue to boil until the desired consistency is obtained.

Fir buds or green fir cones syrup ★★☆
(Grinţieş)
The fir buds or green fir cones are cooked well. Strain. Boil syrup from one liter of juice and 1 kg of sugar.

Cold soaked fir syrup ★★☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
In a bowl, macerate alternative layers of fir buds/ green fir cones and sugar, etc. Squeeze the buds after the syrup has formed. Keep cool. The sugar can be replaced with honey.

Fir syrup ★★★
(Tazlău)
Fir buds are harvested 2-3 cm long. Wash, drain well and chop (through the meat grinder). A paste results. In a glass jar put alternate layers of fir buds and sugar.
Bury the jar in the ground and keep it for 30 days. Then squeeze the syrup through a moist gauze and boil until a suitable consistency is reached. Place hot in glass jars. (Certificate of A. F. Angelica Florean, Tazlău).

Sea buckthorn ★★☆
Buckthorn berries are prepared and preserved in several ways. They are put in a jar with honey or sugar and consumed 2-3 spoons a day. In some variants, the pulp is separated from seeds and shell by centrifugation. The mixture is blended with sugar or honey and kept cool. Serve 2 to 3 teaspoons a day. In other variants the mixture is kept cool for a day and the liquid part is separated from the solid part. The two parts are mixed separately with sugar or honey and consumed in small quantities for dietetic purposes. One should not exceed the recommended daily consumption. There is risk of metabolic disorders due to too much ingestion. The shell is separated from the seeds, dried and consumed as such (powder).





Buckthorn syrup ★★☆
(Alexandru cel Bun)
Buckthorn fruits are cleaned, washed, blended and mixed with honey. They are macerated. The syrup is drained and kept cool.

"Covarşă" (Vânători) ★★☆
It is prepared out of corn and flour for the feast of Vovidenia (21st November) or Sântandrei (30th November). Mix equal amounts of flour and cornmeal and scald with boiling water. After two hours put the mush in a wooden vessel and add warm water until a viscous liquid is formed. Allow to ferment until the next day. Boil gently until it thickens. It tastes sweet sour.

Cider ★☆☆
It's a very refreshing drink with low alcohol content. One starts from a very ripe fruit (maximum content of sugar). The applesauce is extracted by crushing, pressing or centrifugation. Then it is cleared with sulfur and by pouring from one vessel to another. The mixture is corrected with sugar and citric acid. A fermentation process follows at 16 - 28°C for 25-50 days in the presence of yeast.
The low temperatures favour the maintaining of flavours and the incorporation of carbon dioxide. Transfer the clear part to other vessels and pasteurize. Keep cool. The procedure applies to berries, blueberries, gooseberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries and culture fruit: apricots, strawberries, cherries, watermelon, peaches, plums.



Liqueur ★☆☆
This drink uses fruit juices, sugar, ethyl alcohol, herbal extracts, fruits (including berries).
The juice with alcohol content and the sugar syrup are prepared separately, combined together and with other ingredients, add flavours, essences, macerated. It is allowed to mature for a week and then filtered and placed in bottles.
There are two types of liqueurs: aperitif type, with 35% alcohol and 10% sugar and dessert type, with 30 % alcohol and 25% sugar.

Cherry brandy ★☆☆
This is a generic term to define a category of alcoholic drinks from the juice of some fruit with sugar, mixed with double refined alcohol. Finally, an alcohol content of 30-35% results. In general, some fruit are added 1/2 part sugar and 1/2 part alcohol of 70%. Place fruit and sugar in a large demijohn in successive layers, the last layer on top is sugar. Keep warm (eventually in the sun) for a few days until the sugar dissolves and the juice is formed. Add alcohol and macerate it for 2-3 months. Then strain and bottle. The procedure applies to culture fruit: apricots, strawberries, cherries, bitter cherries, sour cherries, raspberries and berries: blueberries, cherries, cranberries, raspberries. Sometimes crushed apricot kernels are added. A special cherry brandy is the mixed one in which several types of fruits are added over the summer as they ripen: wild strawberries, cherries, cherries, including quince and pear. At Pipirig, the liqueur is made from: wild strawberrie, blueberries, raspberries. Double distilled alcohol is used. At Crăcăoani, the liqueur is made from: cherry without kernels, with honey instead of sugar and homemade brandy distilled twice. At Tazlău, the liqueur is made from dogwood cherries (it is good for the stomach).



Blueberries liqueur ★★☆
(Vovidenia monastery, Vânători Neamț)
In a large bottle put 1 kg cranberries and 1 kg sugar and allow to stay for 2-3 days, then drain the syrup and mix with 1l alcohol, 300 ml fir syrup, 200g honey and one part blueberries. Blueberries can be replaced by wild strawberries, strawberries, elderberries, blackberries, dogwood cherries etc.

Alcoholic specialties (Crăcăoani) ★★☆
Another special drink of the same category is obtained as follows: immediately after blooming, the whole branch with fruit is inserted (in particular, the quince and pear) so that the fruit which is formed to grow inside the bottle. After ripening the branch is removed, but the fruit remains in the glass and cannot be removed. Add alcohol of 40% in the bottle and close. In time, the alcohol extracts the soluble components from the fruit and it acquires a special aroma and taste. On the same principle, but not growing inside the bottle, other alcoholic drinks are prepared with roots. The best known of the kind is the 40% alcohol with fenugreek, which is particularly sought. Similarly, add mint leaves.

Liqueur (Alexandru cel Bun) ★★☆
Insert in a bottle halfway fruit (blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, dogwood cherries etc.), 200 g sugar and a bit of brandy. Allow to macerate for 2 days then complete the bottle with brandy. Transfer to clean bottles and keep cool.

Walnut liqueur ★★☆
(Crăcăoani)
Take 1 kg of green walnuts and mix with 1 kg of honey or sugar and 1 liter double refined alcohol and place in a large demijohn of 5 l. Keep for 3 years. An oily brown/black liqueur (like Valvoline) results. Serve as an appetizer.





Brandy ☆☆☆
This kind of drink requires fruit of inferior quality (but ripe), which cannot be used in other forms of preservation. They are crushed and subjected to fermentation – the result is draff. Other recipes include the extraction of the juice and then fermentation. The operation is performed with a breaker or a mill machine. The juice is obtained by using a press. The fermentation occurs in wood casks or barrels placed in a shed. The juice ferments in glass demijohns. During the fermentation proces, the sugars are rapidly converted into alcohol. The draff is seeded with leaven. Contact with air should be avoided (risk of turning into vinegar). The result is an alcohol content of 6-8%. The fermented draff is subject to distillation. During the boiling process a steam of water and alcohol rises and condenses. The process is discontinuous. At first, esters, aldehydes, methanol and other volatile components are distilled. Then, mainly alcohol (ethanol) is distilled, and in the end, the water content increases. The distillation vessel is called alembic and it is sealed, so that the steam passes through a serpentine tube, which is cooled by water in order to condense. The collected liquid is subjected again to a distillation in order to obtain a higher concentration of alcohol. The distillation process is stopped when the taste of alcohol weakens. Aroma is provided mainly by the specificity of the fruit.
Sometimes other types of spirits are prepared by additives, such as: during the second distillation process, a bag of cumin seeds or anise is inserted. The volatile compounds will provide a specific bouquet to the spirits. A concentration of 25 - 40% for spirits and 30 - 50%
for brandy will result. This designation is only given to plum brandy. Plums, but also other fruits are used: blueberries, apricots, cherries, currants, mirabelles, mulberries, apples, blackberries, pears, cherries, raspberries, etc. Spirits of superior quality are produced by aging: the plum brandy ages in 1-3 years, other fruit brandy - up to one year. The brandy is allowed to age in oak barrels. The wood will interact with the liquid components and will modify the bouquet, flavour and color. In other variants, during the second distillation, flavouring agents (anise, caraway, etc.) are added. Their volatile components are condensed in brandy, providing it pleasant fragrances.
At Borca, broken plum kernels are added to the draff subjected to distillation.
At Tarcău and Borca, mulberry wood chips or sticks are inserted into and glass to give it yellow colour.
At Borca, mint leaves are inserted into the brandy bottle. They give the green colour and flavour.
At Tarcău brandy is made also of mixed fruit and culture berries.
At Hangu, apple brandy with plum kernel (core kernel) is made; mint leaves or mulberry wood chips are used to provide colour. In other variants, the distilled liquid is passed through a gauze with chopped plum bark.
Sometimes, also toasted cumin seeds (inserted into the freshly distilled spirits) are used.
Brandy with fenugreek is produced at Tarcău, Ceahlău, Bicazu Ardelean, Bicaz Chei.





Cumin drink ★★☆
(Grinţieş)
8 tablespoons sugar are caramelized. Add a cup of water and boil, then add 2 tablespoons cumin. Boil well, add up to 1.5 l water and 1 l alcohol. Strain and leave a few hours to calm down. It is kept cool.

Vinegar ☆☆☆
To ensure the necessary amount of vinegar for the household, one uses cider, fermented fruit juice or low alcohol wine. A correction with refined alcohol is made to make sure that there is 10% ethanol in the mixture. The procedure is perfoemd in a pot or "budăi" (the one used to make "borş" is very good). A mixture of beech wood chips that have been pre-soaked in vinegar is inserted into the liquid. Wood chips contain acetic acid bacteria. The fermenting mass is mixed and kept at 25 - 30°C (near the stove). It is stirred periodically (2-3 hours) and aerated (by filling a kettle with the liquid and pouring it back from a distance of 50 cm from the pot). The operation takes 7-8 days. The mixture is filtered and and kept cool. It is used in cooking, canning and for medical purposes (external massages). It preserves the original herbal flavours: grapes, apples, pears etc.

Balsamic vinegar ★★☆
(Tazlău)
The homemade wine vinegar is added currant fruits, tarragon leaves, thyme leaves, garlic cloves in the presence of pine chips. It is macerated for 3 weeks.

Cognac from Pipirig ★★☆
(Pipirig)
Double distilled brandy from plums, apples and other fruits is used. 25 walnut seed coats (partition walls) are inserted into the brandy. It is macerated for 18 days, strained, kept cool. The drink obtains a brown colour, like cognac.











3.6. Traditional menus

Menu for the patron saint feast

The patron saint feast is a celebration of the village or parish and is a good opportunity for showing off one's culinary skills. Lunch is organised at the church or in the village center (school or church yard), but also in every householder's home. Here, personal guests are welcomed (friends, relatives), but also poor people.

Traditionally, the patron saint fest menu consists of:

- poultry or veal soup (sour soup), served with homemade bread and brandy (appetizer);
- stuffed cabbage rolls (various recipes, according to area) served with "cozonac" and homemade wine or malt beer;
- roast chicken, beef, pork (appeared later) served with pickles or lettuce, bread and "sprinkled" with wine;
- "cozonac" (the traditional dessert).

Menu for souls days

For funeral luncheons and memorial services, the lunch is organised in the yard of the person who is remembered, and survivors, relatives, neighbors and other persons to whom the aid is requested contribute to it.

The menu consists of:

- a cabbage salad with olives (as an appetizer) with bread rolls; served with brandy;
- chicken or pea soup (if fast period) with bread rolls; served with wine;
- stuffed cabage rolls with meat or vegetables (if fast period) with "cozonac"; served with wine;
- cakes (usually without cream, dried).

As appetizer brandy is served, usually two small glasses. Next, wine is served, two larger glasses. Each participant to the lunch also receive a bread roll, a lighted candle and a tablespoon of "colivă".

Menu during field work



The activities in the field (agricultural, hay campaigns, working in the forest) include moving from home to the workplace for a longer period than the interval between the meals of the day. In these conditions, the meals are prepared in advance, put in a bag or a basket and are consumed at mealtimes. For a full day of work, from morning till evening, sequence of meals is the following:

In the morning, at 5.00 - 6.00 a.m, most householders do not eat anything. Those who do, have a cup of warm milk and a snack including cheese (curd cheese, "urda" cheese) with fresh onions.

Brunch at 9.00 a.m., adds to the food requirements: boiled eggs, cottage cheese with cream, yogurt with polenta (still warm, as it was prepared in the morning) or with bread, bread, spread with jam or "poverlă".

Lunch, at 13.00 p.m., followed by a rest. On a blanket or carpet, a clean towel is laid and the dishes prepared in morning are placed on it: potatoes, vegetables, with "dresească" soup, "tochitura", beaten cheese, potato or bean dish with salad or pickles.

Dinner, at 16.30 p.m., with what remains of lunch. One usually has the evening meal at home, at 19.30 - 20.00. It includes milk, homemade dairy, fries.

Menu at the end of the week

On Saturday afternoon, a series of dishes are prepared to mark the celebration of Sunday. A chicken is slaughtered, of which soup and steak or chicken with cream, stuffed cabbage rolls are made. Also, pies, "alivenci", bread rolls are baked in the oven. Other preserved or smoked meats are used to prepare main dishes. Some of them are consumed during the following week as well. The Sunday meal takes place after returning from church, at 12.30 - 14.00 p.m. and it gathers the whole family. The structure of the meal is complete: appetizer, soup, main course (roast, stuffed cabbage rolls, etc.), dessert (pie sor other kinds of cakes). The meal is accompanied with a glass of brandy as aappetizer and a glass of wine at the second course. During the summer, lambs, calves are slaughtered and then there are the needed resources for a hearty Sunday lunch. Also for weekdays, various meat dishes are prepared, but things are simplified in terms of gastronomic ritual, as work takes priority.

Menu at sheepfold

Shepherds and people who come to take their cheese, as scheduled eat at the sheepfold. Shepherds put dairy products on the table, those coming from the valley bring greens. The dishes are divided into two categories: light (e.g. soups) and consistent. They consume soups made of potatoes, beets, vegetables and other weeds (sorrel, watercress, etc.) to which whey or "jintuit" are added. Also, "jinţiţa" (which is unseparated "urda" cheese) may be added as well. The hearty dishes are based on curd cheese and "urda" cheese. All dishes are served with polenta. A common dish is "balmoş". At least six recipes have been identified for "balmoş". It also recovers the crust removed from the curd cheese during the maturation process (leavening).







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Instead of conclusions

Living and working in the Neamț mountain area!

Is there a secret to the mountain healthy life?!? Yes there is! And it is not hard to guess. Medicine teaches us, especially through George Emil Palade (whom we consider our Nobel pize laureate) that the biological and biochemical processes in the body are determined by the transfer of substances through semipermeable membranes. These membranes are dividing walls between cells, between nucleus and cytoplasm, between various organs, between the circulatory system and every organ of the body. On both sides of these membranes there is an equilibrium and also deviations from this equilibrium, that transmit signals about the fairness of the process or about the various disorders that require remedies.

The frequency of the deviations from the osmotic balance, as well as their harmonization, is related, among others, to the food we eat and the water we drink, even to the air we breathe (both through the lungs and through the skin). If we live in a well-defined environment and consume food, water, air in these areas, the body creates its own predictability and defines an optimum metabolic function of these parameters.

When we consume food or water from another source (from other geographical areas), they no longer resonate with the balance that took so long to establish. Thus, the body is forced to sudden reactions and far from the ordinary balances, which threatens to distract the metabolism of the body out of its own pace. This opens a pathway to the occurrence of diseases.

For guests (tourists) things are different. Due to living in an urban stressful environment, in other locations, away from the place of origin, the cellular and membrane balances have already been disrupted. The mountain cure aims to "remind" the body and its processes of a dynamic framework that is still in its "memory" and which it can recreate, as a forgotten matrix.





Work



The residents of the mountain villages are still dependent on their skills to successfully exploit the local resources and the generosity of nature. Animal husbandry remains a top concern. The traditional family pattern is adjusted to the established social and economic mechanisms: the husband is the head of the family and the main source of energy for the household activities. He undertakes the hard work of the household. If he fails to ensure the basic needs, he seeks other solutions: employs in the local forestry or in other activities that could provide wages. After he discharges from the job obligations, he continues the household activities as the circumstances request (season, opportunities, the permanence within the household). The "permanence within the household" reflects the need for continuous monitoring of the agricultural and animal wealth, to ensure their optimal development. The farmer cannot leave the home for longer periods of time because crops and animals would suffer in his absence. Only urgent and important needs determine the householder to leave home. Even in winter! In the novel "Hatchet" Sadoveanu illustrates such a situation: "See the seven houses in the valley? Smoke rises through seven chimneys. It means that the householders are home and things are in order. If there is no smoke coming out of one chimney, it means the householder has a problem and is away." Vitoria Lipan, when she left home, she put all things in order, so as no problems should occur in her absence. The housewife from the mountain village has "lighter" responsibilities in the home: cleaning, preparing meals, household chores, raising children, which involves food preparation and preservation, education of children in the gradual involvement in easier household chores, taking on responsibilities. Perhaps the most important role of women in the household is that of manager of the assets, of the financial resources, the expenses, the health status, the lifestyle and image in the community. "Behind every successful man, there is a woman" is a perfectly true saying in the mountain households. Children are the hope of the family: the hope of continuity, the hope of assistance in old age, the hope of support with the housework when they grow older, the hope that they will live better days.

Entertaining

Traditionally, the mountain people do not have holiday and amusements are more sober. The rest occurs in moments of respite, decided by the nature. In the traditional sense, there is no concept of rest. It would not be possible either, since the crops and the animals need of permanent human assistance. Even the rest periods are seasonal. Therefore, the joy of the mountain people intervenes in the daily activities, in the Sunday rest, the joy of the harvest, the joy of raising children and the fatality of the certain, but unpredictable end.

People from the mountains are happy when the harvest is rich, the animals are healthy and they have moments of tranquility. If the results of their work abound, they find opportunities to share with relatives and friends their satisfaction. The memorial services are frequent and well-known in the Neamt area, as a sign of veneration of ancestors.

In addition, people from the mountain entertain through ancient customs which highlight the aesthetic features: floral patterns on clothing and rugs that adorn the house, but also a good food, a nice house, a resisting church fill their soul with pride and encourage them to work harder and better. In their case, it is perfectly suitable George Enescu's quote, "to rest from labour through labour". Here one can find enthusiasm together with persistence, satisfaction, material and spiritual contentment, exhaustion, hope and spirit.

What to eat

One of the most important needs of the people is nutrition. The daily food and lifestyle ensure a balanced functioning of each organ and of the body as a whole. Therefore, what you eat is crucial. Recently, when, for solving global problems of nutrition, artificial food formulas have been adopted, aspiration for "healthy food" has become a phrase and the main vital and yet untouched dyke lies still in the mountains. Traditional mountain products are assigned as "healthy" and can be considered as a reference for building food policies and strategies at any time.

The two main religious holidays, Christmas and Easter, associated with important food events (lamb and pork dishes are related symbols), but also with other occasions throughout the year, stimulate people "from the town" and "from the field" to climb to the mountain area for a health cure.

Eating healthy is an aspiration more and more difficult to achieve and the easiest solution remains a trip or a stay in the mountains.

Mountain cuisine

The diversity of the mountain products, certain combinations of spices and other natural additives develop a particular component of the culinary art that give flavour and refinement to consumption.

The mountain cuisine becomes an important pillar for adding value to the local food and an important support for the development of tourism in various forms: ecotourism, tourism, health tourism, spiritual tourism etc. Watching a wonderful mountain scenery can be associated only with good food, a natural energizing, or an outdoor party (during summer) or a party at the "fireside" (during winter) with stories, songs, poems, legends, riddles that bring their charm and generate memories.

The revival of the mountain development is conditioned by the way the mountain people will discover the commercial and business valences of their work and will learn to handle the costs, profits, revenues. They should seek and manage wealth and enjoy the results of their labour, including the marketing of the products that generations before them have not capitalized on the market for fear that they could not ensure the necessary food for themselves throughout the entire year.



Hospitality

Hospitality is probably the most important attribute of the mountain people. The scattered villages and the large distances between households leads to a communication gap which is offset by hospitality events, when there is an exchange of information about what happens in the world, facing the hardships of life in the mountains, with trouble and joy.

Hospitality highlights the most noble of human emotions and feelings, a sense of support "to feel at home" and a desire to return to spiritual sources. It becomes an emotional support for the daily life and work of those who were guests, even for one day.

The hosts show a sense of satisfaction that their house was honoured by distinguished guests, who knew how to appreciate their life and work.

Hospitality is a more subtle support of the development of the mountain tourism. It generates feelings of appreciation and solidarity, hope and security.



Disturbing factors

These cannot be bypassed. The mountain hosts and guests influence each other and the assimilation of modern elements affects the traditional way of life, of food, of the spirit, the welfare and needs of all kinds.

- the welfare is every man's desire and is sharpened by the increasing mobility, by the technological progress, and by the seeming facility to earn money more easily;
- the communication, which replaces distances allows information and decision-making at a much higher rate;
- the technological progress that brings performant equipment, especially with basic concerns: improved animal breeds and more productive work equipment;
- the desire to go and see the world has become more realistic. People return with different views, different attitudes and even with solutions as to change their way of life.

There are also other factors, perhaps equally important. A balanced approach and an balance between modern and traditional is required, so that the change should not cause disturbances and should maintain viable basics. At this point, the presence of "harbingers of time" is needed, ones who should know how to inform the public about the implications, risks, failures and should offer solutions of agreement, which should not lead to confusion and unpredictable developments.



Mountain food mosaic

Although the mountain area of the Neamț county seems insignificant, we identified a very diverse mosaic of natural events in people's daily activities. A genuine mountain area was identified, which lies on Bistrița valley upstream Bicaz Valley (west of Bicaz) and on the upper side of Ozana river (Pipirig village). A second transition area includes mountain – and hill parts, which are identified in the biodiversity, the differentiated and diversified agriculture, in more competitive and profitable approaches at the lower limit of the traditional character.

Even within the two areas there are differences regarding the way of managing the animals throughout the year, the bargaining with the shepherds, the way of preparing the cheese, the preserved products, the use of by-products, the accuracy in respecting the manufacturing process parameters, the dishes from resources managed within the household or the community.

If we intend to achieve standardization in the food mountain products, the following features must be taken into account:

- the basic dairy products at the sheepfold are the curd cheese and "urda" cheese, which are processed after a few days of fermentation and storaged by every householder by kneading with salt and ramming. Other products and by-products vary from one area to another;
- ss far as the meat products are concerned, noticeable are the slaughtering of lambs for Easter and of pigs for Christmas, to obtain products for immediate consumption or for storage on longer term, so as to ensure food throughout the year. However, there is a diversity of approaches which differ in each of the mountain region.
- the altering of the traditional character of the mountain products is mainly due to the adoption of controlled cold techniques (refrigerators, freezers) which keep the products in the primary processing shape and maintains their freshness. As a result, diversity is lost.



Tradition and change

The chance of maintaining the traditional practices and products is less orthodox. The rigors of the European Union apply to commercial products. Given that the mountain products are still designed satisfy the needs in the household, no controls and compliance constraints may be applied. Only the change of management in the field and the orientation of manufacturers' interest towards the market will change things.

This thing becomes increasingly clear, considering that in more and more villages, there are now two categories of livestock reares: small producers (of 1-4 cows and 25-35 sheep), who are not willing to trade, and large manufacturers (more than 10 cows and 150 sheep), whose objectives are clearly orinted towards trade.

On the other hand, the traditional "technology" has a highly empirical character, based on organoleptic "measurements". Because of that, the product quality varies from batch to batch (batch meaning a wheel of curd cheese or a ball of "urda" cheese) and the risk of depreciation is particularly high.

There are a number of conditions related to change: the shift from personal consumption to commercial consumption interferes with the rigors of food marketing, which are quite drastic. The commercial interest for traditional food products involves increasing production, the development of domestic industries, and crafts, the drawing up of procedures to define the representative features, and to ensure their reproducibility.

The Neamț Branch of the Mountain Forum of Romania aims at mediating the changes in the field, by trying to reconciliate the traditional and commercial requirements.

Steps forward

The most important opportunity for the near future is defining mountain product by the European Commission. This creates the premises for the capitalization of the mountain products on a strong platform for organic products, without the need for adjustments, inaccurate definitions and subjective assessments.

In this context, the question of building a roadmap which should represent the mountain road towards the development of the mountain civilization is asked, by making use of the most advanced resources as provider of health and comfort. In this way, the economic balance will improve and the mountain people will realize their role and their status in the Romanian national universe.

The Mountain Forum of Romania will contribute through steady efforts with solutions and resources to the development and implementation of the Roadmap (complete and adapted to realities and perspectives).

The first element to be capitalized is undoubtedly the mountain food product, and this paper may be a starting point from necessary and useful programs and projects could be build in order to open the way towards development for the Neamț county mountain area, in conjunction with other mountain areas of the country.



About us

This paper represents the views of the authors in terms of design, information and messages. Of course, there will be remarks and criticism, there will be suggestions on how it should look, there will be real arguments. But, we would not be in such a situation, but those who see things differently. We take on all the shortcomings and disappointments of those who will not find in the essence of this work the items that they expect. We take on the deficiencies in definition and interpretation of the traditional phenomena. We believe, however, that traditions are dynamic and the included modern processes and phenomena are anchors in the contemporary realities and the adjustment efforts continue in the struggle for existence and for civilization of communities.

We will be pleased and grateful to those who will appreciate our efforts and will positively assess the information included.

We will feel satisfied because we have taken such a challenge and we have capitalized data, information and events, by applying the principles of specific disparity (you cannot judge a system based only on internal elements, but you should relate to at least one external element to create a reference, in this way one avoids becoming narcissist and perpetuates a touch of objectivity).

In the end, we address an invitation to all:

If you want to see and feel how one lives in the Neamț mountains, come and visit us!



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