

Experiential Learning in Sustainable Gastronomy in the Finnish Higher Education

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Due to the global environmental developments and more conscious consumers, there is a growing interest towards sustainable food systems worldwide. In the Nordic countries New Nordic Food has also brought sustainability and re-localization into discussion. Sustainability calls for holistic trans-disciplinary approaches and system thinking in education, however, this cannot yet be seen much in the existing curricula in higher education.

JAMK University of Applied Sciences introduced in autumn 2014 specialization studies on Sustainable Gastronomy as part of Bachelor of Hospitality Management degree (111 ECTS credits out of 210 ECTS cr degree), educating graduates with a comprehensive understanding of the sustainable food chain and eco-gastronomy. The future graduates can pursue their careers in various sectors, one of them being the public food services, a sector prominent in Finland for example due to its free school catering system since 1940s.

Due to the relatively high number of elective studies (25cr), the students will graduate with an individual focus, which can be also public food services. In order to educate innovative and responsible agents of change in the dynamic context of food in society, experiential learning was chosen as a pedagogy. The students' competences will be built in cooperation with the industry, for example through company and producer visits, study tours, real-life development projects, practical training periods and thesis assignments. The graduates will have good professional and academic competences to continue either in our Master of Hospitality Management degree programme focusing on sustainable services, or in other holistic food related master programmes.