



Understanding the Culinary Gap: Why Artichoke is Missing in Hatay's Gastronomic Heritage

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the reasons why artichokes, a symbolic product of Mediterranean cuisine, have not been incorporated into the cuisine of Hatay, a city that holds the UNESCO Creative Gastronomy City designation. Additionally, the study will explore the concept of "absence" in gastronomic culture. An open-ended investigation involving 102 participants residing in Antakya, Defne, and Samandağ has revealed that the absence of artichokes in the daily culinary practices of the region cannot be attributed exclusively to structural constraints, such as accessibility and cost. The findings indicate intertwined dynamics, including weak intergenerational transmission, negative taste perceptions, a lack of cooking knowledge, and the symbolic exclusion of artichokes from the local culinary repertoire. In this context, artichokes are not merely a vegetable that is not consumed; they are regarded as an indicator that reveals the limits of the relationship established with the local palate, cultural identity, and social memory. The study provides a distinctive viewpoint on the preservation and reproduction of cultural identity by demonstrating to the field of gastronomy literature that culinary cultures can be interpreted not only through existing elements but also through deliberate or persistent absences.

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Introduction

Artichoke (*Cynara scolymus*) is a perennial herbaceous plant belonging to the Asteraceae family and is native to the Mediterranean region. Its cultivation and consumption date back to antiquity, when it was valued for both its nutritional richness and medicinal properties (Dalby, 2003). The wild ancestor of the cultivated artichoke (*Cynara cardunculus*) naturally grew in regions such as Italy, Tunisia, and Greece, and was gradually domesticated into the familiar edible form known today. The fleshy bracts and flower base collectively referred to as the "artichoke heart" have been prized for their delicate flavor and texture (Lattanzio et al., 2009). Since ancient times, artichokes have occupied a dual role in Mediterranean civilizations: as a food and as a symbol of refinement and vitality. In Roman sources, Pliny described artichokes as "an indispensable part of luxurious tables," while medieval Arab physicians such as Avicenna (1973) praised their hepatoprotective and digestive benefits. In Egyptian, Greek, and Roman societies, artichokes were cultivated and consumed mainly by the upper classes, often featured in celebratory feasts such as Christmas (Fernández et al.,

2006). The mature flowers were also used as natural milk coagulants in cheesemaking (Shah et al., 2014), a practice that continues in parts of the Mediterranean. Today, artichokes are prepared in a variety of forms; fresh, frozen, or preserved, and incorporated into thousands of recipes, illustrating their enduring culinary versatility (Şekara et al., 2015).

Beyond their nutritional value, artichokes also hold rich symbolic and aesthetic significance. They have long been associated with health, longevity, and delicacy, functioning as an emblem of Mediterranean identity (Lattanzio et al., 2009; Montanari, 2006). Yet, within this same geographical and cultural zone, Hatay an important gastronomic center in southern Türkiye presents a striking paradox. Despite its favorable Mediterranean climate and fertile lands, artichokes remain largely absent from the culinary repertoire of Hatay. Hatay, a UNESCO "Creative City of Gastronomy" since 2017, possesses one of the most diverse and multicultural cuisines in the Mediterranean basin. Its culinary identity reflects centuries of coexistence among Arab, Turkish, Armenian, and Christian

communities, resulting in a unique fusion of flavors, symbols, and rituals (İflazoğlu, 2023). However, the near invisibility of artichokes in this gastronomic landscape reveals a deeper cultural dynamic that cannot be explained solely through environmental or economic factors.

While existing studies on food heritage typically focus on dishes and ingredients that are *present* in culinary systems (Scarpato, 2002; Bessi re, 2013), very few have explored the meanings attached to what is *absent* or excluded. Yet, absence is a powerful analytical category in understanding how food identities are constructed. As Fischler (1988) suggests, what societies choose to reject is as revealing as what they choose to consume. Douglas (1972) further argues that such exclusions stem not from ecological necessity but from symbolic classification systems that define social boundaries. Bessi re (2013) similarly highlights that food heritage is shaped by both inclusion and exclusion. From this theoretical standpoint, the absence of artichokes in Hatay cuisine represents more than a gap in agricultural practice it is a cultural marker shaped by taste, symbolism, and social acceptance. This study therefore investigates the phenomenon of “culinary absence” as a lens to interpret the formation of gastronomic identity in Hatay. Accordingly, the research addresses the following questions: What cultural, social, and economic factors have contributed to the absence of artichokes in Hatay cuisine? How do local taste preferences and culinary traditions influence the invisibility of artichokes in everyday food practices? In what ways does the concept of “absence” help explain the construction of gastronomic identity in Hatay?

By answering these questions, the study aims to move beyond descriptive gastronomy and contribute to the theoretical understanding of “absence” in food studies. Although previous research has explored the nutritional, symbolic, and agronomic dimensions of artichokes (Pignone & Sonnante, 2004; Sonnante et al., 2007; Lattanzio et al., 2009; Ceccarelli et al., 2010; S kara et al., 2015; Gostin & Waisundara, 2019), no prior work has examined how such a culturally emblematic Mediterranean plant remains unintegrated into a Mediterranean city’s cuisine. The study’s methodological limitations its focus on three districts and the use of online surveys are acknowledged; however, the diversity of responses ensured data saturation (Ak ay & Koca, 2024). The key contribution of this research lies in its novel application of the concept of culinary “absence” to explain the symbolic invisibility of a food that is geographically local but culturally marginal. Finally, artichokes carry mythological and aesthetic meanings that enrich their cultural symbolism. In Greek mythology, Cynara, a mortal woman loved by Zeus, was transformed into an artichoke after rejecting his advances, embodying themes of hidden beauty and inner strength (Anderson, 1994). In Renaissance Europe, artichokes appeared frequently in still life paintings as symbols of fertility and elegance (Doğan & Yaşlıca, 2022). Understanding their absence from Hatay’s cuisine thus requires an exploration not only of agricultural conditions but of the complex interplay between taste, symbolism, and collective memory that shapes local food identities.

The Cultural and Symbolic Values of Artichokes

Throughout history, artichokes have become a symbol of affluence, largely due to their high cost and challenging cultivation. In ancient Rome and medieval Italy, artichokes were considered a food of choice for the upper class and were rarely consumed in commoners’ kitchens (Montanari, 2006). In the culinary context of the Ottoman palace kitchen, artichokes were classified as “refined vegetables” that were served seasonally. These vegetables were meticulously presented at select tables in various forms, including dishes prepared with olive oil, stuffed, and accompanied by almonds (Yerasimos, 2002). In this context, artichokes were not only a nutritious vegetable but also a cultural element representing social status.

In Islamic and Ottoman folk medicine, artichokes were regarded as a “medicinal plant” with applications for liver cleansing, bile secretion regulation, and detoxification of the body (Ayan & Karpuz, 2020). They became a food that symbolically “cleansed the body and soul,” especially through cures prepared in the spring months. In the modern era, this perception has merged with the detox culture, reinforcing the functional food quality of artichokes. Artichoke-based teas, capsules, and supplements have gained a place in health trends (Lattanzio et al., 2009).

Consumption Practices from Antiquity to the Present Day

The history of artichokes can be traced back to the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. This plant, referred to as kynara or cinara, has been utilized for both nutritional and medicinal purposes (Dalby, 2003). In his *Naturalis Historia*, Pliny (1938) characterizes artichokes as “the luxury vegetable of rich tables.” The Roman aristocracy’s practice of marinating artichokes in vinegar-based sauces and consuming them cold can be regarded as an early manifestation of the modern “antipasto” concept (Anderson, 1994). During the medieval and Renaissance periods, artichokes emerged as a hallmark of opulent dining tables in Florence, particularly among the Medici family (Montanari, 2006).

In the Ottoman geography, artichokes were introduced to palace and city kitchens, particularly in regions such as Istanbul, Bursa, and Izmir. Beginning in the 19th century, culinary preparations such as “stuffed artichokes” emerged in the palace kitchen. With the advent of the Republic, this dish became synonymous with Aegean cuisine, and “artichokes with olive oil and chickpeas” emerged as a classic (Yerasimos, 2002; Artun, 2021).

Artichokes have also gained a cultural identity in other Mediterranean cuisines, with characteristic recipes that reflect their incorporation into diverse culinary traditions. Examples of this include Carciofi alla Romana and Carciofi alla Giudia in Italy, Artichaut vinaigrette in France, and alcachofas con jam n in Spain (Capatti & Montanari, 2003; David, 1999; Foods and Wines from Spain, 2024). In the United States, California’s Castroville is recognized as the “Artichoke Capital of the World,” a designation that celebrates the cultural significance of artichokes in the region through annual festivals (Castroville Chamber of Commerce, 2023). In Turkey, the Urla Artichoke Festival plays a pivotal role in promoting the geographically marked Sakız Artichoke and contributing to regional development (Evliyaoğlu, 2024).

In contemporary culinary practice, artichokes have emerged not only as a staple ingredient in traditional recipes but also as a creative and aesthetic element in modern gastronomy. Artichokes, which have become a local and seasonal symbol in the context of the “slow food” movement (Petrini, 2013), are presented in sophisticated dishes in modern kitchens using techniques such as carpaccio, mousse, confit, and espuma (Scarpato, 2003). Moreover, with the increasing popularity of vegan and vegetarian diets, artichokes have experienced a resurgence in their value as a functional vegetable, owing to their high fiber and antioxidant content (Leitzmann, 2014).

Despite the historical association of artichokes with savory dishes in traditional cuisines, contemporary gastronomy has also incorporated this vegetable into desserts. In Italy, “Gelato di Carciofo” (artichoke ice cream) and in France, artichoke mousse paired with white chocolate are examples of this experimental approach (Scarpato, 2003; Capatti & Montanari, 2003). While the production of artichoke jam is predominant in Morocco and Tunisia, Italy is distinguished by the incorporation of Cynar, an artichoke-based liqueur, as an aromatic component in various dessert preparations. From a functional food perspective, artichokes are utilized in detox desserts, energy balls, and gluten-free recipes due to their high fiber content, low caloric value, and low glycemic index (Lattanzio et al., 2009; Leitzmann, 2014). These applications demonstrate that artichokes are being redefined not only as a traditional ingredient but also as an “innovative culinary ingredient” aligned with contemporary health trends.

Materials and Methods

This research constitutes a qualitative study designed to explore the cultural and social reasons behind the limited use of artichokes in the local cuisine of Hatay, as well as individuals’ consumption habits, perceptions, and symbolic interpretations of this vegetable. The study was structured within the framework of a case study model, which allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific phenomenon within its real-life context (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). The qualitative approach was preferred to capture the participants’ lived experiences, values, and meanings related to food, which cannot be adequately reflected through quantitative methods.

Sampling and Participants

The study sample consisted of 102 female participants residing in the districts of Antakya, Defne, and Samandağ in Hatay, selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: Residing in Hatay for at least ten years, being responsible for household food preparation, and having basic familiarity with local dishes and ingredients. The decision to include only women was deliberate, as women are the primary actors responsible for home cooking, food selection, and recipe transmission. This social reality positions them as key transmitters of culinary knowledge and memory, making their insights essential for understanding changes in local food practices.

Data Collection Process

Data were collected in January 2025 through an online semi-structured form developed by the researcher. The form included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions and was first reviewed by a panel of three academic experts two specializing in gastronomy and cultural studies, and one in qualitative research methodology to ensure content validity and clarity. A pilot study was conducted with eight participants who were not included in the final sample. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the wording, sequence, and clarity of the questions. The final version of the form consisted of two sections:

- Demographic information, including age, marital status, education level, and district of residence.
- Artichoke-related questions, designed to elicit participants’ perceptions, knowledge, and experiences. In this section, participants were asked about whether they consume artichokes, their reasons for consuming or not consuming them, consumption frequency, sources of procurement, preparation methods, and the types of dishes in which they use artichokes. They were also asked to share their views on the popularity of artichokes in Hatay cuisine and the reasons for their limited use. Additionally, participants were invited to provide suggestions for increasing the prevalence of artichokes in Hatay cuisine.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Before data collection, participants read an informed consent statement explaining the purpose, confidentiality principles, and voluntary nature of participation. Consent was provided electronically by checking a confirmation box. No personal identifiers were collected, and all ethical standards were strictly followed. The study was approved by the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, on 07.11.2024 (Protocol No: E-21817443-050.99-441279).

Data Analysis and Coding Process

The collected data were analyzed through content and thematic analysis, following the four-step process proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994): (1) data reduction, (2) data display, (3) coding and theme identification, and (4) drawing and verifying conclusions. Initially, all open-ended responses were subjected to open coding. Codes with similar meanings were then grouped into categories and main themes. To enhance reliability, the researcher and a secondary coder (a qualitative research assistant with a master’s degree in social sciences) independently coded the same data subset. The intercoder reliability was calculated using Cohen’s Kappa, yielding a concordance rate of 0.86, indicating a high level of agreement (O’Connor & Joffe, 2020). A codebook was created to document code definitions, inclusion criteria, and illustrative quotations. This ensured consistency throughout the analysis process.

Data saturation was achieved as recurring patterns and ideas began to emerge consistently across participants. To ensure analytical credibility, findings were compared with theoretical concepts from prior studies, maintaining conceptual and interpretive consistency (Bryman, 2016; Akçay & Koca, 2024).

Table 1. Coding–Theme Alignment Based on Main Themes

Code	Theme	Illustrative Participant Statement
I've never tried it before.	Unfamiliarity with artichokes	"I've never eaten it before, so I'm not sure if I like it."
I don't know how to cook it.	Lack of knowledge about how to cook artichokes	"I've never prepared it before and don't know the proper steps."
It doesn't suit our family's taste.	Perception of unsuitability for the palate	"We're not used to its taste."
It's too expensive in the markets.	High price	"I can't buy it even if I want to."
It's not part of our traditional dishes.	Lack of cultural affiliation	"Our traditional recipes don't include it."

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 102)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	102	100.0
	Male	0	0.0
Age	18–24	7	6.9
	25–34	25	24.5
	35–44	42	41.2
	45–54	22	21.6
	55 and above	6	5.8
Marital Status	Married	76	74.5
	Single	26	25.5
Educational Level	Primary Education	30	29.4
	High School	24	23.5
	Associate Degree	5	4.9
	Bachelor's Degree	35	34.3
	Postgraduate	8	7.8
Occupation	Housewife	41	40.2
	Private Sector Employee	31	30.4
	Public Sector Employee	30	29.4
District of Residence	Samandağ	38	37.3
	Defne	36	35.3
	Antakya	28	27.5

Results

The data obtained within the scope of the research were evaluated in terms of the participants' demographic characteristics, artichoke consumption status, reasons for consumption and non-consumption, perceptions regarding the visibility of artichokes in Hatay cuisine, and suggestions for its dissemination. In this section, the demographic distribution of the participants is presented, followed by a thematic discussion of the consumption patterns and cultural perception of artichokes.

As indicated in Table 2, the majority of participants are between the ages of 35 and 44 (41.2%) and are married (74.5%). Regarding the participants' educational attainment, a significant proportion are university graduates, accounting for 34.3% of the sample, followed by those with a primary education, constituting 29.4%. In regard to occupational status, the data indicates that housewives constitute the predominant proportion of the sample (40.2%). The district distribution demonstrates a balanced structure, with Samandağ (37.3%) and Defne (35.3%) exhibiting higher participation rates, while Antakya displays a lower rate of 27.5%. This demographic distribution suggests that the sample encompasses middle-aged, married individuals with a middle-upper education level and that it is representative of different districts of Hatay.

When examining participants' artichoke consumption, it was found that the majority did not consume artichokes (67.6%; n = 69). Among the reasons for not consuming artichokes, "not knowing how to cook them" (40.6%) and "not liking the taste" (36.2%) stood out, while "being expensive" (26.1%) and "being difficult to find" (20.3%) were also mentioned as significant barriers.

Participants who consume artichokes (n = 33) generally do so because of their health benefits (48.5%), followed by a desire to try different flavors (27.3%) and family tradition or liking the taste (12.1%). In terms of consumption frequency, those who rarely consume artichokes (a few times a year) constitute the majority at 72.7%.

Supermarkets (54.5%) are the most common place to purchase artichokes, while local markets (30.3%) and greengrocers (15.2%) are less preferred. In terms of preparation methods, artichokes are mostly prepared with olive oil (81.8%), while their use as a garnish or in mixed vegetable dishes is limited (9.1% each).

The predominant opinion among the participants was that artichokes are not a prevalent component of Hatay cuisine (83.3%, n = 85). According to respondents, the primary reasons for the unpopularity of artichokes include "not being palatable" (24.7%), "not being part of cultural heritage/not being traditional" (21.2%), and "not being

appealing in terms of taste” (11.8%). Additional reasons include a lack of habit (7.1%) and an absence of visual or olfactory appeal (3.5%).

Upon examination of the multiple-choice reasons provided, it was revealed that the most prevalent reasons cited by participants were “not suiting the local palate” (52.9%) and “not having a place in traditional dishes” (45.9%). Furthermore, the dearth of comprehensive recipe and usage information (32.9%), its exorbitant price compared to other vegetables (25.9%), and its sporadic availability in markets (22.4%) were also cited as factors contributing to its unpopularity.

A considerable proportion of the participants asserted that artichokes played no role in their family’s culinary traditions and that this vegetable was not a component of the culinary heritage that had been transmitted from one generation to the next. Statements such as “We didn’t eat artichokes” (P:17) or “No one in my family ever cooked artichokes” (P:42) demonstrate the profound influence of cultural transmission on the perception and incorporation of artichokes within the local culinary landscape. This phenomenon underscores the notion that food culture is not merely a product of individual predilections, but is also influenced by social memory and family learning processes.

Another salient reason cited by participants pertained to the incongruity between the taste characteristics of artichokes and the robust, pungent, and profoundly flavored culinary traditions of Hatay cuisine. Participants described artichokes as having a “bitter” or “unusual” taste, expressing this incompatibility with statements such as “it’s not as intense as Hatay dishes” (P:33) or “the taste is not for us” (P:59). This scenario exemplifies the pivotal role that culinary expertise and cultural food norms play in the successful integration of a product into the kitchen environment.

A notable deficiency in the knowledge of participants of advanced age regarding the proper methods of cleaning and cooking artichokes was observed. Statements such as

“I don’t know how to do it” (P:21) or “Even if I looked up the recipe, I wouldn’t dare because we didn’t make it at home” (P:70) reveal that a lack of practical kitchen knowledge is a factor hindering consumption. This finding indicates that the transfer of gastronomic knowledge is a pivotal factor in not only the preparation of meals but also the incorporation of ingredients into culinary culture.

The high price of artichokes and their sporadic availability in markets emerged as another obstacle to consumption. Participants noted the limited economic accessibility of the products, as evidenced by their tendency to disregard price tags when encountering items at the greengrocer’s. It is invariably costly” (P:11) or “In Samandağ, one might procure it at the market once a year” (P:91). Consequently, the incorporation of artichokes into daily culinary practices is precluded not only by cultural considerations but also by economic and seasonal factors.

It was reported by some participants that their initial exposure to artichokes occurred in recent years, primarily through social media and television programs. Statements such as “I saw it in Istanbul and tried it” (P:63) or “I see it a lot on Instagram” (P:88) demonstrate that gastronomic culture is encountering new flavors through modern communication tools. Nevertheless, this awareness has not guaranteed the integration of artichokes into Hatay cuisine; rather, it has remained at the level of individual experience.

These findings indicate that the limited presence of artichokes in Hatay cuisine cannot be attributed to a single cause. Rather, it is associated with a complex interplay of factors, including cultural memory, palate compatibility, culinary knowledge, economic accessibility, and the effects of modernization. The participants’ narratives demonstrate that food culture is influenced by economic conditions, as well as social memory, learning processes, and cultural habits. In this context, artichokes have become an element that can be considered a “symbol of absence” in Hatay’s culinary culture; they gain meaning more through their absence than their presence.

Table 3. Participants’ Artichoke Consumption Status and Reasons (N = 102)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Artichoke Consumption	Yes	33	32.4
	No	69	67.6
Reasons for Not Consuming	Do not know how to cook it	28	40.6
	Does not suit our taste	25	36.2
	Expensive	18	26.1
	Hard to find	14	20.3
	No one in the family consumes it	8	11.6
Reasons for Consuming	Health benefits	16	48.5
	Enjoy trying different tastes	9	27.3
	Family tradition	4	12.1
	Like its taste	4	12.1
Frequency of Consumption	Rarely (a few times a year)	24	72.7
	Once a month	6	18.2
	More than once a week	3	9.1
Source of Purchase	Supermarket	18	54.5
	Local market	10	30.3
	Greengrocer	5	15.2
Method of Preparation	Cooked with olive oil	27	81.8
	As a side dish	3	9.1
	Mixed vegetable dish	3	9.1

Table 4. Participants' Views on the Reasons for the Lack of Popularity of Artichoke in Hatay Cuisine (N = 102)

Variable	Reason	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Lack of Popularity Status	Participants who said "No" (not popular)	85	83.3
	Open-ended Reasons		
	Not suitable for taste preferences	21	24.7
	Not part of cultural heritage / Not traditional	18	21.2
	Flavor does not appeal	10	11.8
	Lack of habit	6	7.1
	Not visually or aromatically appealing	3	3.5
Multiple-choice Reasons	Does not suit local taste	45	52.9
	No place in traditional dishes	39	45.9
	Lack of knowledge about recipes and usage	28	32.9
	More expensive compared to other vegetables	22	25.9
	Not frequently found in markets	19	22.4

Table 5. Participants' Suggestions for Promoting the Use of Artichoke in Hatay Cuisine (N = 102)

Suggestion Item	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Teaching artichoke recipes and cooking methods	62	60.8
Including more artichoke dishes in local restaurants	48	47.1
Ensuring affordability and accessibility	44	43.1
Increasing its availability in local markets	39	38.2
Promoting artichoke through social media and television	36	35.3
Reinterpreting traditional dishes with artichoke	29	28.4
Introducing artichoke in school and municipal events	22	21.6
Developing artichoke-based products by women's cooperatives	17	16.7

Table 6. Knowledge and Usage Forms of Artichoke Dishes (Based on 33 Participants Who Consume Artichoke)

Usage / Known Dish Type	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Artichoke cooked with olive oil	27	81.8
Used as a garnish (with meat/poultry dishes)	3	9.1
Included in mixed vegetable dishes	3	9.1
Stuffed artichoke	0	0.0
Artichoke soup or puree	0	0.0

Table 7. Factors Hindering the Popularity of Artichoke and Strategic Suggestions According to Participants' Explanations (Based on Approximately 85 Open-ended Responses)

Observation / Suggestion Item	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Artichoke is consumed only cooked with olive oil; other recipes are unknown	51	60.0
Artichoke does not integrate with traditional Hatay dishes	34	40.0
Artichoke is not preferred due to appearance or smell	21	24.7
Most participants do not cook artichoke and lack recipe knowledge	43	50.6
Need to promote artichoke recipes and usage suggestions (educational need)	39	45.9
Suggestions for using artichoke in local dishes	17	20.0

The majority of participants (60.8%; n = 62) suggested teaching artichoke recipes and cooking methods. Next were increasing the availability of artichoke dishes in local restaurants (47.1%) and ensuring artichokes are affordable and accessible (43.1%). Other popular suggestions were increasing sales at local markets (38.2%), promoting artichokes on social media or television (35.3%), and reinterpreting traditional dishes with artichokes (28.4%). Items suggested less frequently include promoting artichokes at school and municipal events (21.6%) and encouraging women's cooperatives to develop artichoke-based products (16.7%).

The vast majority of participants who consume artichokes (81.8%; n = 27) prepare and consume them with olive oil. Their utilization as a side dish accompaniment to meat or poultry dishes (9.1%) and in mixed/vegetable dishes (9.1%) is restricted. No participants indicated that they were unaware of or did not consume different dishes

such as stuffed artichokes, artichoke soup, or artichoke puree (0.0%). This suggests that the variety of artichokes utilized in Hatay cuisine is limited and that the consumption of artichokes in the form of olive oil is traditionally predominant.

Participants cited various reasons in their open-ended responses for the limited use of artichokes in Hatay cuisine. The preponderance of responses indicated that the artichoke is predominantly recognized as a culinary preparation involving olive oil, and this singular utilization hinders its broader acceptance among the public (n=51). Approximately half of the participants (n=43) reported a lack of knowledge regarding the preparation of artichokes, which consequently resulted in their exclusion from their households' dietary routines. This phenomenon suggests a deficiency in practical culinary expertise, particularly among younger demographics.

A considerable proportion of participants (n=34) expressed the sentiment that artichokes are not adequately incorporated into Hatay cuisine. These individuals asserted that artichokes are regarded as a “foreign” vegetable due to their absence from the cultural memory and their limited presence in historical recipes. Conversely, approximately 25% of the participants (n=21) expressed an aversion to the aesthetic qualities and olfactory characteristics of artichokes, thereby categorizing them as non-preferred items on the menu.

Conversely, a number of participants (n=17) posited that the incorporation of artichokes into conventional Hatay culinary preparations could serve as a catalyst for their popularization. In this particular context, it was proposed that artichokes be incorporated into local dishes such as içli köfte, oruk, and tepsi kebabı as a vegetable filling. Furthermore, 39 participants indicated that community-based promotion strategies, including social media content, municipality-supported courses, and women’s cooperative production activities, should be implemented to popularize artichoke recipes and cooking methods. The findings indicate that artichoke consumption is influenced by a combination of individual taste preferences and broader factors, including access to information, cultural identity, aesthetic presentation, and social culinary education.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study reveals that the absence of artichokes in Hatay cuisine cannot be explained solely by ecological or economic conditions. Rather, this absence is a multi-layered process interwoven with cultural meanings, symbolic boundaries, and collective memory. The findings indicate that a culinary identity is shaped not only by the foods it includes, but also by the elements it consciously or persistently excludes. In the case of Hatay, artichokes, despite being a characteristic product of Mediterranean cuisine, have not secured a prominent place in everyday food practices or in the collective memory. The participant narratives suggest that this phenomenon of invisibility is perpetuated through various interrelated dynamics. The weakness of intergenerational cultural transmission emerges as one of the key determinants of this process. The failure to disseminate artichoke recipes, cooking techniques, and shared experiences hinders the incorporation of this vegetable into the collective culinary memory. Taste perceptions constitute an additional factor that reinforces this exclusion. The participants’ descriptions of artichokes as “bitter,” “foreign,” or “not suited to our palate” point to a culturally regulated taste regime rather than a sensory preference. This phenomenon aligns with Bourdieu’s (2018) assertion that taste is a socially constructed phenomenon, and it is consistent with Fischler’s (1988) observation that food acceptance is closely related to cultural familiarity.

The labeling of artichokes as a “non-local” product functions as a powerful symbolic boundary element in this context. As Douglas (1972) emphasizes, cultural classifications determining what is considered “edible” and what is “inedible” play a central role in maintaining social order. Hatay cuisine’s profoundly entrenched and well-established flavor repertoire manifests a relatively closed

structure with regard to elements lacking historical continuity. This results in the exclusion of artichokes on both a symbolic and a material level (Avieli, 2017). However, the findings also demonstrate that these boundaries are not entirely fixed. Notably, the findings indicate that young participants’ experiences with artichokes, as depicted on social media, and their assessment of this product within the paradigm of “Instagrammable food” imply the emergence of a novel milieu for cultural diffusion through digital platforms. As Johnston and Baumann (2014) have noted, global gastronomic discourses have the potential to imbue local cuisines with new layers of meaning; however, this effect remains limited and fragile in the case of Hatay.

A dearth of culinary expertise also plays a significant role in the underutilization of artichokes in culinary practice. As Sutton (2001) asserts, the cultural sustenance of food is not solely reliant on the ingredients themselves, but also on the practical knowledge and bodily memory associated with these ingredients. The absence of artichokes in this memory leads to the perception of artichokes as a “difficult,” “laborious,” or “unknown” product. While economic factors, including price and seasonal availability, serve to reinforce this phenomenon, it is evident that its absence cannot be solely attributed to material conditions. As Wilk (2006) also points out, the consumption of foods is closely related to social attitudes and cultural values. The findings of the study corroborate this interpretation. The finding that 67.6% of the participants had never consumed artichokes in their lives is indicative of the extent of this absence. The preponderance of artichokes in Hatay cuisine is not due to their centrality in the region’s culinary landscape; rather, they are utilized primarily in dishes prepared with olive oil, suggesting that artichokes are regarded as a “foreign” flavor. However, the participants’ recommendations for enhancing the visibility of artichokes, including the implementation of cooking classes, the incorporation of artichokes into restaurant menus, the promotion of artichokes at food festivals, the utilization of social media, and the support of women’s cooperatives, indicate a robust awareness that this absence can be transformed. Examples from Italy, Spain, and France demonstrate the feasibility of this transformation. In these countries, artichokes have been transformed from an ordinary vegetable into a powerful gastronomic symbol through local branding, geographical labeling, and creative culinary applications (Montanari, 2006; Bérard & Marchenay, 2006; Poulain, 2017). These experiences underscore the role of conscious cultural strategies and local actors.

Consequently, the absence of artichokes in Hatay cuisine should be considered not as a deficiency but as a meaningful boundary that defines cultural identity. However, this boundary also holds potential for innovation and reinterpretation. Rather than imposing artichokes as an external element on the local cuisine, a more constructive approach would be to treat them as a space for dialogue between tradition and change. This could serve to broaden Hatay’s gastronomic identity without weakening its established culinary practices. In the future, the re-evaluation of artichokes within the frameworks of gastronomic tourism, geographical labeling, and creative culinary practices could contribute to both cultural sustainability and local economic resilience.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by its all-female sample of 102 participants from Antakya, Defne, and Samandağ. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire province. Data collection through online forms also limited participants' ability to elaborate on their experiences. Additionally, the focus on consumer perspectives excluded insights from producers, chefs, and public institutions.

Future research could expand on these findings by including a more diverse participant base and combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Interviews with chefs, cooperative members, restaurant owners, and market vendors could provide a more comprehensive understanding of structural and cultural barriers. Comparative studies with regions such as the Aegean, where artichokes are widely used, could help develop applicable models for Hatay.

Declarations

Ethical Approval Certificate

The study did not collect any personal information, and it fully complied with ethical principles. This research was conducted with the approval of the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, dated 07.11.2024 and numbered E-21817443-050.99-441279.

Author Contribution Statement

Data collection, investigation, formal analysis, and writing the original draft, project administration, supervision, conceptualization, methodology, review and editing.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare no conflict of interest.

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