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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**Support** - No financial support.**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Completed but not published.**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.**INPLASY registration number:** INPLASY202560044**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 10 June 2025 and was last updated on 10 June 2025.**INTRODUCTION**

Review question / Objective The objective of this article is to systematically examine how the concept of gastronomy is understood, used, and described in the scientific literature in the context of public meals.

Background Meals within the foodservice sector can be classified into two main categories: the public sector and the commercial sector. Public meals are typically tax-funded and served in institutional settings such as schools, hospitals, elderly care homes, and prisons. They are designed to meet essential needs, such as providing adequate nutrition, and often offer limited consumer choice. In contrast, commercial meals, including those in restaurants and tourism settings, are privately financed, profit-driven, and consumed voluntarily. An increasing number of

people consume meals in various public arenas such as schools, hospitals, and elderly care facilities, although the organization of public meals varies globally. As such, public meals have become an important everyday phenomenon with significant potential to impact public health and the sustainability of the food system. Consumers of public meals often have limited choice of what and where to eat, relying instead on professionals who plan and serve the meals. This reliance is most pronounced among individuals who receive all their meals from institutional settings, such as elderly care homes or prisons. In such contexts, it becomes vital that meals encompass more than nutritional value and also incorporate gastronomic elements.

Using the definition proposed by Jönsson and Tellström (2009)— “Food and meal designs with high knowledge content in order to stimulate pleasure in the meal consumer” —, which

encompasses both the notion of knowledge and human experiences of food and meals, we suggest that gastronomy can be a valuable tool for enhancing and highlighting the complexity and importance of the public meal experience.

Rationale We have previously explored the relation between public meals, health, sustainability, and gastronomy from various perspectives. However, our findings indicated that the intersection between gastronomy and public meals remains largely under-researched and rarely applied in practice. Despite the large number of people who rely on public meals daily, there is a noticeable lack of academic attention to the gastronomic dimension and the role of pleasure in public meal experience. By integrating gastronomy, it is possible to combine the hedonic liking of food with healthiness and sustainability, opening new possibilities for innovation in the public meal sector.

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis For this scoping review exploring the concept of gastronomy in the context of public meals, selected parts of PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews protocol were adopted, e.g. regarding eligibility criteria (item 6), information sources (item 7) and search strategies (item 9), while other parts of the PRISMA protocol were not fully followed, as we did not intend to conduct a full systematic review.

The literature search was conducted on June 7, 2023, by a professional librarian, assisted by the authors. Four databases were used: PubMed, Web of Science Core Collection (Web of Science), Scopus, and Academic Search Premier (EBSCO). Given the varied terminology for public meal settings, a broad search strategy was used, using the search term “gastronom*” (in title, abstract and/or keywords), to ensure relevant articles were not missed.

Eligibility criteria Eligible articles were those using the concept of gastronomy in the context of public meals, published as full-text papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals between January 1, 2013, and June 7, 2023, and written in English.

In this review, public meals were defined as meals served in institutional settings commonly funded by public resources, including preschools, schools, elderly care, social care, prisons and probation services, military services, and hospitals. Articles addressing gastronomy in contexts other than public meals were excluded. Additionally, animal studies, intervention studies on patients assessing health outcomes, and studies exploring various

aspects related to teaching/educational performance were considered as out of scope and excluded. Studies conducted outside a meal context (e.g., those using only instrumental food assessments) were also excluded.

Source of evidence screening and selection

Duplicates were removed using EndNote, and all identified articles were downloaded and imported into Rayyan. The screening proceeded in three automated steps within Rayyan. First, due to the definition of public meals, articles related to tourism were excluded using “tourism” as a keyword, as this was outside the scope of the present study. In the next step, experimental and animal studies were excluded using the keywords: beagle(s), broiler(s), cell(s), in vitro, mouse/mice, murine, piglet(s), porcine rabbit(s), rat(s), rodent(s), and soil. In the third step, articles published in journals considered outside the scope of this review, e.g., journals focused on molecules, chemistry, tourism, environmental management, biology, botany, pharmaceuticals, and geography, were excluded. Decisions on which journals to exclude were made jointly by the authors. After these automatic exclusions, the remaining articles were screened manually by at least two authors based on titles and abstracts. Judgements were recorded in Rayyan, and any discrepancies were resolved by consensus. Articles not meeting the inclusion criteria were excluded. The remaining articles were then read in full text by all authors, and final inclusion decisions were made jointly by all authors.

Data management All identified articles were downloaded and imported into Rayyan. Screening decisions was documented directly in Rayyan by at least two independent reviewers. After screening, data from included studies was extracted. The spreadsheet will include fields such as publication year, country, study setting, definitions and use of gastronomy, and type of public meal context. All files will be stored securely in accordance with data management practices at Kristianstad University.

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence All articles included in the final selection were assessed exploratively to examine how the concept of gastronomy was used and described in the context of public meals. The following information was extracted from the included articles: author(s), year of publication, country, setting, method, aim, and main findings or conclusion. As part of the analysis of the articles, texts were initially marked and coded, focusing on how the concept of gastronomy was used. With

inspiration from thematic analysis (Brawn & Clarke), themes were thereafter generated, capturing how the concept of gastronomy was used and described in the articles.

Presentation of the results The results will be presented in tables.

Language restriction English.

Country(ies) involved Sweden.

Keywords gastronomy, public meals, food, school meals, hospital meals, scoping review.

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