



Baqaqa Qatoq

Rasht; a culinary capital in UNESCO Creative Cities Network

Iranica Desk

Rasht, celebrated for the unique aromas of local dishes crafted by the grandmothers of Gilan Province, a member of the Creative Cities of Gastronomy network in 2015. It joins notable cities such as Adelaide, Australia; Barcelona, Spain; Bergen, Norway; Budapest, Hungary; Detroit, USA; Liverpool, UK; Rome, Italy; Montevideo, Uruguay; Salvador, Brazil; Singapore, and 22 other cities across 46 countries worldwide.

Marjan Nemati Sabaa, a journalist, highlighted that tourism is one of the most significant strategies for various nations pursuing sustainable development. Consequently, a heightened focus on different forms of tourism can have a substantial impact on the economy. From historical and cultural perspectives, Iran stands out as an essential tourist destination in the region. Culinary tourism, in particular, emphasizes food as a primary motivation for travel, chntn. ir wrote.

Culinary tourism can be viewed as a journey to a destination that offers rich cultural experiences, unique meals, and

local flavors. Food plays a crucial role in tourists' decision-making processes when selecting travel destinations. The diverse local dishes of Gilan Province significantly contribute to its reputation as a flagship of Iran's food industry within the tourism sector.

Few can mention Rasht without conjuring memories of its delicious dishes and enticing aromas. The fame of these culinary delights is recognized not just in Iran but also across the globe. When Gilan Province and Rasht are discussed, the distinctive flavors and aromas of their local cuisine shine forth alongside their rich history, vibrant traditions, and warm hospitality. This reflects the ingenuity of the region's inhabitants and their artistry in creating a wide variety of dishes from a limited range of natural ingredients.

The kitchens of Gilan Province are filled with the enticing scents of local foods, prompting foreign tourists to inquire about traditional dishes upon their arrival. UNESCO, as an educational, scientific, and cultural organization, established the Creative Cities Network in 2004 to



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prioritize creativity and cultural industries at the core of local development and international collaboration.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) encompasses seven creative fields: handicrafts, folk arts, media arts, film, design, gastronomy, literature, and music. Its mission is to strengthen creativity and promote the production, distribution, and enjoyment of cultural products and services at the local level.

This initiative also seeks to foster creative expression — particularly among vulnerable groups such as women and youth — while increasing access to and participation in cultural life, as well as maximizing the benefits



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derived from cultural products. The integration of cultural and creative industries has long been one of the major attractions for travelers visiting Gilan Province, which is renowned for its rich

and vibrant culinary landscape. Thus, defining food destinations can provide a fresh perspective on culinary tourism.

According to this understanding, food routes not only help preserve local



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destination for food tourism. Consequently, food routes can orient the travels of this type of cultural tourist. Approximately 300 local dishes have been identified in the province, with 30 dishes officially registered on the national list and 20 more currently undergoing the registration process.

The global recognition of Rasht as a Creative City of Gastronomy, combined with innovative concepts such as defining food routes in Gilan Province, aims not only to spread the aromas of Gilan's grandmothers' dishes around the world but also to preserve the authenticity and cultural richness of this land, ensuring it flourishes more than ever.

Recognizing Fooladshahr's contribution to modern heritage



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Fooladshahr, as a successful example of contemporary urban planning in Iran, holds narratives of the country's historical architectural heritage in a new form that must be conveyed to today's generation, said Ahmad Fathi, head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Lenjan.

Fooladshahr is one of Iran's modern and new cities located on the outskirts of the city of Isfahan, near the Esfahan Steel Company. Efforts have been made to intro-



duce it as a part of Iran's and Isfahan's modern heritage at International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement (Docomo-

mo), IRNA wrote. Fathi added that Fooladshahr is one of the prominent examples of contemporary architectural and urban heritage in Iran, reflecting the continuity of

our nation's past architecture intertwined with the modern era. Therefore, the need to recognize it for today's generation is felt more strongly than ever. He emphasized that the

mosques, streets, neighborhoods, houses, and kindergartens of this city each tell a part of the identity of Iran's historical architecture in a new form, and understanding this serves as a foundation for identity formation and enhancing the sense of belonging among citizens and audiences.

Fathi added, "Jaame Mosque of Fooladshahr, due to its contemporary architectural features, is one of the buildings for which we are preparing a national dossier, so that after review and approval, it can be listed among the national heritage

sites of Iran."

He noted that experts from Docomomo visited Fooladshahr in recent years and deemed this city valuable and capable of being included in the list of "Cities with Modern Architecture in the World," which requires proper documentation to achieve.

Fathi stated that the Lenjan Cultural Heritage Department, in collaboration with the municipality, the Islamic Council of Fooladshahr, the Esfahan Steel Company, the University of Art Isfahan, and the Fooladshahr Civil Development Company, aims to introduce the potential of this contemporary heritage through a series of meetings.

He mentioned that the first session of meeting will be held on January 10, and experts at this meeting will discuss the significance of the architectural and urban planning values of Fooladshahr. In conjunction with this, an exhibition of archival photographs related to the formation of the initial core of Fooladshahr by the Esfahan Steel Company will be presented for the audience. Fathi added that when talking about cultural heri-

tage, people often envision buildings constructed with traditional materials and methods, typically over a century old, while those built with steel and concrete frames do not usually fall into this category in the public's perception.

He emphasized that the historical and cultural values of these modern buildings in Iran have received less attention so far, even though some of these works are considered great achievements in architecture and urban planning. International organizations like Docomomo have been established to identify and promote these works.

The urban planning and architecture of Fooladshahr were carried out by Iranian and European engineers since the 1960s, with local access, green spaces, and the design of residential buildings based on modern architectural standards. Experts state that the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the residents provide a suitable opportunity for developing cultural tourism in this region, which is why Fooladshahr is also referred to as the "Rainbow of Ethnicities."