



Can Fine Dining Be Packaged?

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the potential of fine dining restaurants to offer their luxury services in the form of packaged experiences, along with the operational, aesthetic, and strategic challenges that accompany this process. The concept of fine dining is defined within the framework of high-quality gastronomy, aesthetic presentations, and personalized service. Adapting these characteristics to packaging processes brings forth various issues concerning the sustainability of service quality. A qualitative research method was adopted for the study, and semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection tool. Interviews were conducted with a total of seven R&D chefs (two women, five men) working in restaurants listed in the Michelin Guide and The World's 50 Best Restaurants rankings. The findings were categorized under themes such as customer profile, restaurant identity, physical location, challenges encountered, and the fine dining packaging experience. The results indicate that fine dining restaurants need to develop creative solutions aligned with their brand identity, beyond merely addressing economic factors in packaging processes. In this regard, the study offers significant insights into the transformation of fine dining services, contributing to both industry professionals and the academic literature. This study contributes to academic literature by evaluating the delivery options of fine dining restaurants and providing information about this process. The study also draws attention to economic and social issues that will guide industry professionals. Industry professionals and academic literature can make an assessment based on the data presented here.

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INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry, particularly the food and beverage sector, represents one of the leading sources of global employment. The diversity of the products and services offered by this sector necessitates its classification. Within the restaurant industry, one such classification includes luxury restaurants, which are characterized by the highest levels of service. Fine dining restaurants fall under this luxury restaurant category (Felix et al., 2024). However, the restaurant industry is one of the sectors most significantly impacted by disasters that disrupt infrastructure and restrict human mobility, particularly pandemics and epidemics. During pandemic periods when human movement was restricted, the food and beverage sector endeavored to maintain its economic sustainability through delivery services. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, delivery services became increasingly important, and it has been observed that some establishments redesigned their operations to focus on delivery services post-pandemic (Yang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). By their very nature, fine dining restaurants aim to provide guests with a gastronomic experience that goes beyond mere dining (Walker, 2022). In other words, fine dining establishments offer high-quality, flavorful, and distinctive dishes, accompanied by premium beverages, within a luxurious ambiance and with professional service. To deliver such services, these restaurants require trained personnel, an appropriate environment, and specialized equipment. Given these requirements, it can be argued that fine dining restaurants, within the food and beverage sector, are among the most vulnerable establishments in the face of pandemics.

The purpose of this study is to assess the perspectives of Research and Development (R&D) chefs from fine dining restaurants—some of the most prestigious establishments in the food and beverage sector—concerning the application of delivery services in fine dining. A qualitative research methodology was employed, and data were gathered through interviews with seven R&D chefs working in Europe. A semi-structured interview guide was developed based on the existing literature, and after necessary revisions were made following feedback from 10 academic experts, the chefs were contacted. To ensure the accuracy of the data collected, all the restaurants represented by the participating chefs were selected from establishments listed in renowned restaurant rating guides (Michelin Guide and The World's 50 Best Restaurants). The R&D chefs who contributed to the study were from restaurants based in Spain (San Sebastian), Scandinavia (Denmark), Italy, France, and Germany.

The findings of the study indicate that seven R&D chefs, consisting of five men and two women, participated in the research. It was also found that all R&D chefs held university degrees and had received education in the field of gastronomy. The key themes that emerged regarding the delivery service in fine dining restaurants included: Customer Profile, Restaurant Character, Location, Challenges, and the Delivery Experience. This study, which focuses on the feasibility of delivery services in fine dining restaurants, is considered to be of significant value. In academic literature, the concepts of delivery service and fine dining are far apart. When fine dining is mentioned, comfort and luxury come to mind, while fast food is associated with delivery service. This study aims to show that luxury and delivery service can coexist, that experiences can be had through delivery services, and that everything that can be experienced in a fine dining restaurant can also be experienced in people's homes through delivery services.

Literature Review (Conceptual/Theoretical Framework):

After the French Revolution, the food and beverage industry underwent rapid change and transformation, leading to its development (Walker, 2012). In response to this development, both local authorities and researchers have

classified food and beverage establishments based on their structures, objectives, and types of service (Cousins et al., 2014). In other words, food and beverage establishments are classified according to the products they produce, the spaces in which they serve, and the customer profiles they cater to. Among food and beverage establishments, the popularity of restaurants categorized as fine dining has been steadily increasing. Although the term "fine dining" refers to high-quality food and elegant dining rooms, in gastronomic literature, it is often associated with French cuisine and French culinary culture. Some researchers have defined fine dining restaurants in the following ways: For instance, Cousins, Lillicrap, and Weekes (2014) define fine dining restaurants as establishments where service techniques are developed according to the nature of the food. Davis et al. (2018) describe fine dining restaurants as venues that serve high-quality products and dishes, present meals in luxurious environments, and have extravagant and expensive décor and ambiance. Walker (2011), like other researchers, describes fine dining restaurants as places where service, food, beverages, and the environment are expensive, luxurious, and professionally executed. Furthermore, Walker notes that fine dining restaurant customers tend to choose these venues not for everyday dining but to celebrate special occasions. Cousins et al. (2019) define fine dining restaurants as places where, in addition to high-quality food and presentation, various cooking methods are used, and cooking is done according to the guests' requests and preferences, incorporating the guests' health and hedonic conditions into the menu creation process. Some researchers have described fine dining restaurants as high-end establishments that do not reflect a specific ethnic cuisine but prefer to use local products from their location, leveraging technology to modernize tradition and provide their guests with distinct gastronomic experiences (Harrington et al., 2011; Hwang and Ok, 2013; Radjenovic, 2014; Çavuş and Nazik, 2022). According to the relevant literature, one of the most significant characteristics that differentiate fine dining restaurants from other food and beverage establishments is that the service they provide aims to meet the social and psychological needs of individuals (Kim et al., 2020). These restaurants typically serve their meals with high-quality service, a quality venue, and a refined ambiance.

When examining studies on fine dining restaurants, it is observed that researchers have generally focused on the quality of food (Nguyen et al., 2022; Filimonau et al., 2023), service quality (Tuncer et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2022; Vo-Thanh et al., 2022), pricing (Osorio et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2020), ambiance (Kandemir-Altunel and Çifçi, 2021; Leong et al., 2023), and healthy and safe food (Ellis et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2020). Furthermore, there are numerous studies that examine the emotional, psychological, and hedonic satisfaction, socialization, and social status aspects of fine dining restaurants (Kim and Choe, 2019; Tsaur and Lo, 2020; Leong et al., 2023). However, there are very few studies regarding the delivery service in fine dining restaurants (Çavuş et al., 2024). In this context, the current study is considered to be of significant importance.

Definition of Fine Dining Restaurants

Fine dining restaurants are establishments that represent the highest segment of the restaurant industry, aiming to provide high-quality food, professional service, and an elegant ambiance (Radjenović, 2014). These restaurants offer not only a dining experience but also an artistic, cultural, and emotional journey (Basil & Basil, 2009). The ultra-fine dining concept represents an approach where aesthetic and hedonic elements take precedence over service quality. In these establishments, there are typically dress codes, multi-course tasting menus, artistic plating presentations, and carefully selected wine pairings (Tambunan, 2020). The multisensory fine dining approach, on the other hand, blends art, science, and technology to create experiences that engage all five senses (Yemsi-Paillissé, 2024).

Historical Development and Characteristics of Fine Dining Restaurants

The origins of fine dining restaurants can be traced back to the first modern restaurants in 18th-century Paris. Following the French Revolution, the unemployment of aristocratic chefs led to the emergence of the first public luxury restaurants (Akdeniz, 2019). During the 19th and 20th centuries, hotels, clubs, and independent restaurants in Europe and America contributed to the development of the fine dining culture (Eeckhout, 2012). The introduction of the Michelin Guide in the early 20th century marked a significant turning point in establishing quality and prestige standards for restaurants (Lane, 2014). In particular, figures such as Julia Child in the United States popularized French cuisine, helping to bring fine dining culture to a broader audience (McLean, 2013). In the modern era, fine dining has evolved into a holistic experience that extends beyond taste to encompass visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory elements (Yemsi-Paillissé, 2024).

Position and Importance of Fine Dining Restaurants in the Restaurant Industry

Fine dining restaurants are key players in the gastronomy sector, setting quality standards and pioneering industry innovation (Hallak et al., 2017). These establishments serve as centers not only for luxury consumption but also for gastronomic education, chef expertise, and industry professionalism (Lane, 2014). Research indicates that customer satisfaction and loyalty are critical factors in the success of fine dining establishments (Arora & Singer, 2006). Moreover, these restaurants successfully integrate digitalization and technological innovations (e.g., POS systems) for operational excellence (Tran et al., 2017). Employee loyalty and motivation also tend to exhibit longer-term commitment in comparison to other sectors within the industry (Dipietro et al., 2019).

Economic Role of Fine Dining Restaurants in the Food and Beverage Industry

Fine dining restaurants play a significant role in the food and beverage sector by generating high profit margins, creating employment, and contributing to gastronomic tourism (Granzin & Bahn, 2015). Additionally, they support the regional economy through partnerships with local farmers and producers (Grumadaite & Babu, 2024). Studies have shown that sustainability practices are increasingly prevalent in the fine dining sector and contribute to reducing environmental impacts (Grumadaite & Babu, 2024). Customer satisfaction and brand loyalty are also pivotal to the economic success of these restaurants (Arora & Singer, 2006).

Method

The study was conducted using the interview technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods. In this context, participants were asked specific questions, and analysis was performed by determining codes and themes based on the data obtained. In this study, a qualitative research method was employed to collect the data. A preliminary study was conducted to determine questions that would ensure validity and reliability. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth investigation of various aspects of unique topics. The research was conducted in accordance with a descriptive research model. Qualitative research methods are frequently used in exploratory and descriptive studies, where events and phenomena are analyzed in detail.

The population of the study consists of R&D chefs from restaurants in Europe listed by restaurant evaluation organizations (Michelin Guide and The World's 50 Best Restaurants). The sample of the study includes R&D chefs from restaurants located in Spain, Italy, Denmark, Germany, and France. Two R&D chefs from Spain and one from each of Italy, Denmark, Germany, and France participated in the study. In total, seven R&D chefs, two women and

five men, were interviewed. Due to the saturation level of the responses provided, seven participants were deemed sufficient and the study was terminated. The selected participants were deemed to meet the criteria of the study and were therefore chosen. The participants are experienced chefs who have proven themselves in their field and work in Michelin-starred restaurants. The primary focus of the study was to gather insights from R&D chefs regarding the take-out service in fine dining restaurants. Based on the literature, R&D chefs are found to play an important role in several processes in fine dining restaurants, including concept development, menu creation, service techniques, sourcing, and staff training (Van Doleweerd & Bruns Alonso, 2023; Chen et al., 2023). Given their responsibilities, it was believed that reliable data on the topic could be gathered from these chefs.

Data Collection Process:

Data was collected between November 2023 and June 2024. To obtain data from the R&D chefs, an interview method was employed. The interview method is one of the most commonly used data collection techniques in qualitative research, involving two-way interaction with participants face-to-face, via phone, or through electronic channels. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Demir, 2014: 291). In this study, R&D chefs' opinions on take-out service were obtained through interviews. A semi-structured interview form was prepared in advance. The questions in the interview form were derived from related literature (Çavuş et al., 2024). The form was reviewed with subject-matter experts and chefs to create categories, and necessary adjustments were made. The preliminary study was conducted with Michelin-starred chefs who are experienced in their field, and the same questions were asked as in the interview form. After the preliminary interview was completed, it was not included in the main data so as not to affect the main data. Afterward, a pilot study was conducted with ten chefs. The same questions were asked to participants in both the preliminary study and the main study. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section covers data such as age, occupation, position, and years of experience. The second section asks questions about managers' opinions on delivery service, whether there is a relationship between fine dining and delivery service, whether food safety can be ensured in delivery service, and factors to consider when providing delivery service. Additionally, questions were asked about the development of the kitchen sector before and after the pandemic, the impact of the pandemic on the kitchen sector, and the evolving and changing demands of the sector due to the pandemic. Following the pilot, some questions were removed from the form, and the final version of the interview form was established. Interviews were recorded with the consent of the chefs and audio recordings were taken. The interviews lasted between thirty-five and ninety minutes.

Data Analysis Process:

The data obtained from the R&D chefs were categorized, and codes and themes were generated by directly quoting from the chefs' responses. Basic themes were established during the coding process. Data was analyzed by coding within the subheadings of these themes, and the data analysis section was completed. Among the measures taken against bias during the data collection process was obtaining data from multiple sources rather than a single source.

Findings and Discussion

The research data obtained in the study are presented in detail in the findings section. The demographic information of the R&D chefs who contributed to this study, which investigates the take-out service of fine dining restaurants, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of R&D Chefs

Demographic Questions	Chef 1	Chef 2	Chef 3	Chef 4	Chef 5	Chef 6	Chef 7
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
Age	52	55	36	46	28	31	53
Professional Experience	20	38	11	20	8	10	35
Education Level	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	High School	Bachelor's	Master's	Master's
Culinary Education	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	Cooking and Wine Courses	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	Culinary Education	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	Culinary and Food Anthropology
Position	R&D Chef	R&D Chef	R&D Chef	R&D Chef	R&D Chef	R&D Chef	R&D Chef

Source: Created by the author.

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the R&D chefs from fine dining restaurants who contributed to the study. In this study, a total of seven R&D chefs, including two women and five men, were interviewed to gather data. Regarding the age range of the chefs, the youngest was 20 years old and the oldest was 53 years old. The chefs' experience and educational background are significant for obtaining reliable data relevant to the study's objectives. In this context, the education levels of the R&D chefs are noteworthy. The majority of the chefs hold postgraduate degrees, while the remaining chefs have at least a bachelor's degree. It is evident that all the chefs have received culinary education.

In this study, which investigates the suitability of take-out services in fine dining restaurants, the findings obtained from interviews with the R&D chefs cover several key themes: Customer Profile, Restaurant Character, Location, Challenges, and the Fine Dining Take-Out Experience.

Customer Profile

When examining the data obtained from R&D chefs regarding the take-out service in fine dining restaurants, the following categories were primarily mentioned under the customer profile: 'Other restaurant chefs', 'Food and beverage sector representatives', 'Foodies', 'Gourmets', 'Gastronomy writers', and 'Gastronomy academics and students'. The chefs' opinions on the matter are as follows:

Chef 3: "Our guests are usually our colleagues or foodies who are likely to share their experiences on social media, so they don't just want food; they want to see the preparation process, the service, and the restaurant's atmosphere. They want to hear the story of the dish."

Chef 4: "Michelin-starred restaurant customers generally aren't coming just to fill their stomachs, they are more likely to be gastronomy professionals coming for an experience. These could be food writers, chefs, even academics or students interested in this field... So, their reason for coming isn't just to fill their stomachs, they want to experience something, and we can provide this experience as a whole, but with take-out, it's a bit difficult."

Chef 7: "Our customer profile usually doesn't prefer take-out... For example, a food writer wants to write about the entire experience here, from how they were welcomed, the parking lot, the service staff's behavior, the sommelier's suggestions, food and wine pairing, the chef's demeanor, the kitchen, the ambiance of the dining room, and many more things... So, tell me, which of these can you offer with take-out?"

As reflected in the chefs' statements, it was found that the customer profile of fine dining restaurants is distinct. In other words, guests who prefer these restaurants are more interested in experiencing gastronomy than simply satisfying hunger. In this context, the majority of the chefs contributing to this study believe that take-out services are not suited to their customer profile.

A review of the relevant literature reveals similar findings. For instance, Tsaur and Lo (2020) concluded that guests who choose fine dining restaurants tend to seek excellent service, quality food, ambiance, and the physical environment. Barrera-Barrera (2023) conducted a study in Spain to identify the characteristics of consumer experiences in Michelin-starred restaurants and predict their effects on restaurant ratings. The study revealed that the guests of these restaurants are typically gastronomy professionals. Furthermore, a study conducted with Michelin-starred restaurant chefs in Spain showed that the majority of fine dining restaurant customers are gourmets, food writers, social media influencers, and gastronomy students and academics (Çavuş and Nazik, 2022).

Restaurant Character

Based on interviews conducted with R&D chefs regarding take-out services in fine dining restaurants, key themes such as 'menu creation and implementation process', 'food integrity', 'staff qualifications', and 'creativity' emerged in relation to the restaurant character. The opinions of the R&D chefs on the topic are as follows:

Chef 1: "...Our restaurant's character is not suitable for take-out. We use seasonal ingredients to create our menu, and sometimes we create weekly or daily menus. For example, the menu is shaped according to the fish we get from the sea. We design the menus as a whole, including cooking, service, the equipment used in the service, the dining room, and even the music played in the room. We cannot fit all of this into a take-out service."

Chef 2: "...During the pandemic, our R&D team came up with a few ideas for take-out... they were great ideas, but most of our staff have built their careers around fine dining menus and don't just work on cooking food to satisfy someone's hunger. If we look at the qualifications of our staff, we have not only chefs but also nutritionists, environmental scientists, food engineers, and designers. In this context, the professional expertise of this staff is also involved in the menu creation process... In short, take-out does not fit the character of the work we do."

Chef 6: "Our concept is about providing guests with a gastronomic experience, meaning we aim to surprise them constantly. For this, the creativity of the menus needs to be high. Therefore, it cannot be said that this is possible for take-out. On the other hand, especially during the pandemic, our R&D team came up with some great ideas for take-out. For example, eco-friendly packaging, and the idea that the packaging we use could be repurposed as pet food. Also, creating menus where guests can be part of the food process (e.g., they finish a portion of the dish at home). Despite these ideas, I don't think take-out is suitable for fine dining restaurants; it seems contrary to the nature of our work."

Chef 7: "...We thought about take-out during the pandemic and even tried it... However, we saw that customers didn't prefer these dishes very much because our meals were more expensive compared to other businesses offering take-out. We realized that the customers who choose us don't just come for food. They want the complete experience, including service, ambiance, wine, photos with the chef, and many other things. Therefore, even though there were creative ideas for take-out, I don't think it's sustainable."

From the chefs' statements, it can be concluded that the take-out service is not suitable for the character of fine

dining restaurants. The key features of fine dining restaurants—such as menu integrity (including service, ambiance, and equipment), staff qualifications (comprising professionals from various disciplines), and creativity—were found to be incompatible with take-out services.

A review of the literature also shows that fine dining restaurant characteristics are frequently studied. For instance, Vizzoto et al. (2020) describe fine dining restaurants as establishments offering high-quality food, luxury kitchens, meticulous service, and a sophisticated atmosphere. Lai et al. (2020) characterize fine dining restaurants as venues with specialized staff, personalized menus, and wine recommendations that complement the dishes. Many other studies have stated that consumers prefer fine dining restaurants due to non-food characteristics (e.g., scenery, ambiance, service) (Liu et al., 2022; Marković et al., 2021). Given these features of fine dining restaurants, it can be concluded that take-out services are not suitable for the fine dining character, as customers might be able to get quality food but will miss out on the other aspects of the fine dining experience.

On the other hand, one of the R&D chefs mentioned that they had worked on some take-out initiatives, including making the packaging eco-friendly and potentially repurposing it as pet food. This finding is considered significant. The food and beverage sector underwent many changes and transformations during the COVID-19 pandemic (Gupta et al., 2023). It is known that some luxury restaurants shifted to take-out services to maintain their economic viability (Çavuş et al., 2024; Çifçi & Alrawadieh, 2023). In a similar study, Çavuş et al. (2024) found that some fine dining restaurant chefs in Istanbul paid attention to using eco-friendly materials for their take-out services and even worked on designing packaging that could be used as animal feed. This result aligns with the findings of the current study regarding packaging materials. Although it may seem challenging, it can be said that offering take-out services in fine dining restaurants is not impossible.

Location

One of the important findings of the present study concerns the location of the restaurant. Interviews with fine dining chefs revealed that themes such as ‘distant from residential areas’, delivery difficulties, transportation costs, and ‘low population density in the restaurant’s location’ emerged in relation to location. The opinions of the chefs on the topic are as follows:

Chef 3: “...Even if the previously mentioned factors (service, ambiance, equipment, menus suitable for take-out) were addressed, most restaurants like ours are located outside residential areas. Therefore, take-out service would be very difficult due to the restaurant’s location...”

Chef 1: “...The nearest residential area to our restaurant is 25 km away, and it’s a small town. How can you serve a fine dining menu to a location that’s 25 km away? Moreover, even if we solve this transportation issue, how much can we sell to these people...”

Chef 5: “...Our restaurant is located in a small village, and the concept is designed around this village and the local products here... Our guests come from different countries knowing this. As you mentioned, we could only offer take-out service to people in this village, but how many people from this village would choose us, or how much take-out could we sell... As you can appreciate, the salaries of the staff working in such restaurants are high... Considering all of this, the location of the restaurant makes take-out service impossible.”

Chef 6: “Our guests generally come from foreign countries. As I mentioned earlier, these people come for a

gastronomic experience. Our location has a very low population, so we have almost no local guests. During the pandemic, we briefly considered take-out and developed some new menus suitable for basic packaging, but it was not very successful... because of the low population.”

From the interviews with R&D chefs, it is evident that the majority of the chefs believe the location of the restaurant is not suitable for take-out services. Most restaurants are located far from residential areas or in towns with very low populations. Consequently, chefs frequently emphasized the difficulty of offering take-out services. When reviewing the relevant literature, one of the most significant factors influencing consumer restaurant preferences is the restaurant’s location (Walker, 2012: 94). Restaurateurs typically consider factors such as ease of access (Qu, 1997; Kim et al., 2010), proximity to raw materials (Cullen, 2004; Rahman, 2012), and the presence of potential customers in the area when selecting a location. Particularly, ease of access has been highlighted as an influential factor in customer preferences in several studies (Ha & Jang, 2010; Ariker, 2012). The findings of the present study on this theme align with the relevant literature. As expressed by the chefs, transportation difficulties and low population density in the area make take-out services impractical for fine dining restaurants.

Challenges and Fine Dining Take-Out Experience

When examining the challenges and take-out experience in fine dining restaurants, it became clear that the chefs had differing views on the topic. The key elements identified include: ‘food quality’, ‘service quality’, ‘staff experience’, and ‘prejudice toward take-out services’. These aspects were articulated by Chef 2, Chef 3, Chef 4, and Chef 5 as follows:

Chef 2: “...Of course, take-out is possible, and we have experienced staff who can deliver the best take-out service. Our lab team is specialized in developing new menus, and I know our staff with training in various disciplines will assist us with packaging materials. However, as I mentioned before, I don’t think our guests would want take-out service.”

Chef 3: “...When thinking long-term, if we have to offer take-out, we would adjust our R&D kitchen accordingly. Compared to other food and beverage businesses, restaurants like ours have more experienced staff. In short, since our staff’s job is to constantly create new menus, if there is demand for take-out, we will develop new menus for it...”

Chef 4: “There are some challenges in offering take-out in fine dining restaurants; these are not related to the food or packaging materials but more about whether the high-quality food we produce will maintain its quality by the time it reaches the guest. On the other hand, the service of the food is the most important element affecting food quality. How will we provide service for take-out? These are all unanswered questions.”

Chef 5: “...Take-out could be possible for fine dining restaurants, especially those in central locations. During the pandemic, we tried it and think we were partially successful. If an unusual (pandemic) situation occurs, and people do not go out for a long time, they will get tired of eating burgers every day. In this context, we could offer take-out service for fine dining, incorporating the people into the process by delivering it to their homes. Ultimately, fine dining restaurants have the trained staff to do this in the best way.”

When evaluating the R&D chefs' opinions regarding the challenges of offering take-out services in fine dining restaurants, it is evident that some chefs believe it is possible to provide such services, emphasizing that they have experienced staff capable of creating suitable menus and packaging materials. However, other chefs expressed

concerns that take-out might affect the quality of food and service. Similar findings were observed in a study by Çavuş et al. (2024), where some fine dining chefs in Istanbul noted that take-out might impact food quality, making it a challenging service. In the same study, some chefs were more open to take-out, preparing meals in a way that allowed guests to add finishing touches, such as sauces or garnishes, at home. Similarly, in the present study, some chefs mentioned that menus could be designed to involve guests in the cooking process. It can be concluded that fine dining chefs have similar opinions on the matter.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study provides significant findings by analyzing the perspectives of R&D chefs from selected fine dining restaurants in Europe regarding the take-out service. In this study, a total of seven R&D chefs, including two women and five men, were interviewed to gather data. Regarding the age range of the chefs, the youngest was 20 years old and the oldest was 53 years old. The chefs' experience and educational background are significant for obtaining reliable data relevant to the study's objectives. In this context, the education levels of the R&D chefs are noteworthy. The majority of the chefs hold postgraduate degrees, while the remaining chefs have at least a bachelor's degree. It is evident that all the chefs have received culinary education. According to the results, the primary value proposition of fine dining restaurants, the gastronomic experience, is not limited to food alone but represents a holistic approach completed with service, ambiance, and personal touches. Take-out service, lacking this sense of unity, is considered unsuitable for the customer profile and brand value of fine dining restaurants.

From a customer profile perspective, the visitors of these restaurants are generally experience-oriented individuals with high gastronomic awareness, motivated by social status. Although technically possible, the characteristic features of the restaurants (seasonal and creative menus, specialized staff, sophisticated atmosphere) create significant challenges in maintaining the expected quality and preserving brand perception when offering take-out service. Additionally, the geographic location of restaurants and low population density are other critical factors that hinder the economic sustainability of take-out services.

However, some creative suggestions from the R&D chefs are noteworthy. The use of environmentally friendly packaging, home-completion menus that engage customers, and sustainable material designs show potential for creating a niche market for fine dining take-out services in the future. In addition, the study serves as a guide for future studies due to its contribution to the lack of literature on this subject.

Recommendations for the Industry:

1. Fine dining restaurants should increase R&D investments to develop creative packaging concepts that will protect their brand during crisis periods.
2. If take-out service is to be offered, a holistic experience design should be implemented, including not only food but also packaging, presentation, and customer interaction.
3. Restaurants with limited local customer potential should consider alternative revenue models such as online events, culinary workshops, and digital chef talks, instead of focusing solely on take-out.
4. Environmentally friendly packaging and sustainable practices should be seen as strategic elements for increasing brand value and customer loyalty, and they should be highlighted.

5. Restaurants should evaluate the creative capacities of their existing R&D and kitchen teams not only for crisis-driven initiatives but also for long-term innovative service designs.

"Since there are no studies on this subject in the relevant literature—except for the study conducted by Çavuş et al. (2024) all sources cited in the bibliography serve to support the study's recommendations rather than directly addressing the specific research topic."

Recommendations for Academic Studies:

1. Quantitative and qualitative studies should be conducted to measure the impact of take-out applications on customer satisfaction, brand perception, and customer loyalty in fine dining restaurants.

2. Comparative international studies should be conducted to examine the resilience strategies of fine dining establishments in the event of future pandemics or crises.

3. Interdisciplinary studies examining the relationship between environmentally friendly packaging, sustainability, and gastronomic experience should be encouraged.

4. Case analyses should be prepared focusing on the leadership and innovation approaches exhibited by chefs and managers in the fine dining sector during crisis periods.

5. Experimental research should be conducted to examine fine dining customers' take-out expectations and the impact of this service on gastronomic satisfaction.

Apart from the study conducted by Çavuş et al. (2024) in Istanbul, no other research addressing this specific topic has been identified in the relevant literature. This highlights the originality and importance of the present study. As a pioneering work, it is structured to provide a foundation for future research. Subsequent studies may adopt qualitative or quantitative approaches, depending on their objectives and contextual characteristics.

In conclusion, this study provides a unique contribution to assessing the crisis adaptability of fine dining restaurants, offering valuable insights for both industry professionals and the academic community for the future.

Declaration

The ethics committee permission required for the research was approved by Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, Human Research Ethics Committee in Social Sciences at the 2022/01 meeting dated 30.01.2022.

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Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission

