Designing a living lab around *a tasting menu*

Tasting, discussing and rating alternative proteins at a restaurant table

LIKE-A-PRO 02

ON THE MENU

Vegan salami · Pea patties with mushroom sauce · Oyster mushroom pizza · Pea protein burger · Almond flour cookies

PROJECT
LIKE-A-PRO (Horizon Europe)

ORGANISATION
Zeytince Association, İzmir, Türkiye

PRACTICE
Tasting-menu living lab

VENUE
Rast Urla restaurant, Urla

DATES
24 October and 21 November 2024

PARTICIPANTS
17 in the first round, 4 tables

Read the factsheet
Like-A-Pro living labs

"What changes when people taste alternative proteins before they talk about them?"

In the previous meeting participants discussed alternative proteins as an abstract topic and asked above all for tasting and recipes. Information alone was not turning curiosity into choice.

THE PRACTICE

On 24 October and 21 November 2024 Zeytince ran a two-round tasting-menu meeting at Rast Urla restaurant in Urla. The menu had three stages: a packaged product (starter), a main dish cooked with alternative protein, and a dessert. Each stage brought the product's packaging to the table, and the chef from our team explained the recipes and ingredients. The menu card doubled as the evaluation card: for every plate, participants rated packaging, smell, appearance, texture and taste from 1 to 5. In the first round 17 participants sat at four tables, each with two facilitators, and the meeting closed with a joint reflection.

WHAT HAPPENED

The products were highly appreciated for taste, aroma and appearance. 16 of 17 participants rated the almond flour cookies' taste good or very good, and most said they would not have noticed the alternative protein. All participants would recommend the pea patties. The main barriers were price (most would pay at most €4 for a vegan salami that costs €9) and plastic packaging. Participants wanted QR codes with the carbon footprint, protein content and recipes. These lessons became shelf and restaurant-menu mock-ups in the next iteration.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

01 Turn the menu into the evaluation card: a few short questions and a 1–5 scale next to every plate.

02 Split the menu into stages: packaged product, cooked dish, dessert. Show the packaging at each stage.

03 Let a chef explain the recipes and let participants take the recipes home.

04 Work with small tables and facilitators at each; close with a joint reflection.

05 Always ask about price and packaging: that is where the real barriers to acceptance appear.

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