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Cambrils Hosted Its First International Food Tourism Conference

Travel professionals gathered in the Spanish town on Nov. 10 and 11 to market local culinary traditions as tourism products and business opportunities

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International tourism and travel industry professionals met in Cambrils, Spain, on November 10 and 11 for the first International Food Tourism Conference, an event aimed at turning local food traditions into tourism products and business opportunities.

The conference, known as IFOODTC 2026, was organized by Wine Events Worldwide and brought together travel agents, tour operators, destination representatives, tourism professionals, journalists and speakers, according to the organizers. The event focused on the role of gastronomy in destination development, with sessions on sustainability, marketing technology, local identity and the commercial links between food producers and the travel trade.

Organizers said the event was designed to raise the international profile of food tourism and show how food can serve as a strategic asset for destinations seeking new visitors and new tourism experiences. They did not release attendance figures in the information made public on November 16, but said the meeting drew participants from a broad range of international markets, including Japan, Argentina, the United States, Australia, South Africa and Norway.

The program mixed conference presentations with site visits and tastings intended to introduce delegates to Cambrils and the wider Costa Daurada region. Organizers said attendees visited the Confraria de Pescadors de Cambrils to learn about romesco and local maritime cuisine. They also took part in an olive oil tourism experience with Mestral Oleotour at the local agricultural cooperative and sampled dishes and products linked to the port area, including bluefin tuna, fideuà rossejada and rom cremat.

Anthony Swift, director of IFOODTC, said the choice of Cambrils for the first edition was intended to present the town’s culinary identity to an international audience. In remarks released by organizers, he said food tourism should be understood as more than restaurant visits or tasting experiences and should instead connect visitors with local people, traditions, landscapes and products. He also said the conference was meant to act as a bridge between local businesses and international tourism markets.

That commercial angle was reflected in a business-to-business workshop held during the event. Organizers said the session gave local tourism operators, international buyers and other industry participants a chance to hold meetings, make contacts and discuss potential partnerships. The conference’s stated goal was not only to promote the region’s food culture but also to help translate that exposure into sales channels and longer-term tourism business.

The speaker lineup, according to the published agenda, included Peter Syme, Judith Lewis, Cinta Ibañez, Elia Carceller Sauras and Juan Manuel Revuelta, among others. Discussions covered destination strategy, sustainable food tourism and the use of emerging marketing technologies. The broader theme running through the event was that gastronomy can support tourism development while also helping preserve agricultural and fishing traditions that are part of a destination’s identity.

The conference received support from the Patronat de Turisme de Cambrils, the Costa Daurada tourism board and the Catalan Tourism Agency. That local and regional backing underscored how food tourism is increasingly being treated by public tourism bodies as part of economic development policy, especially in destinations that want to distinguish themselves through local products and cultural heritage rather than mass-market tourism alone.

Cambrils has long promoted itself through its seafood, fishing culture and restaurant scene, and the organizers used those assets as the foundation of the event. In a second statement, Swift said the aim was for delegates to experience the destination directly rather than simply attend indoor sessions, arguing that the town’s fishing traditions, agricultural heritage and local produce could form a compelling story for international visitors.

The launch of IFOODTC comes as destinations in Europe and elsewhere place greater emphasis on experience-based travel and on tourism tied to regional identity. By centering the conference on trade contacts as well as cultural programming, organizers positioned the event as both a showcase and a marketplace for food tourism. They said the first edition was intended to lay the groundwork for future international collaboration among destinations, hospitality businesses, producers and travel professionals.