

Culinary Tourism in Juasseh, Sub-district of Kuala Pilah

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i1/19544> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i1/19544

Published Date: 09 January 2024

Abstract

This article explores the significance of traditional foods in Juasseh, Negeri Sembilan, within the context of the new Tourism Policy in the 9th Malaysian Plan. Despite policy emphasis on promoting food, culture, and heritage tourism, the true potential of these resources remains underappreciated. Focusing on Kuala Pilah, specifically Kampung Pasir Ambor and Kampung Juasseh Pekan, the study aims to identify distinct traditional foods and common preparation methods among local experts. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews and cooking demonstrations. Major findings reveal both similarities and differences among traditional food experts, contributing insights into the role of experts in shaping food experiences at tourist destinations. The study underscores the need to preserve and promote Juasseh's traditional foods for future generations, enriching the culinary tourism landscape. Results are valuable for tourism product development and local authorities, providing insights for community-friendly projects in rural areas. The research suggests further opportunities to explore the intersection of food and tourism in suburban contexts, contributing to the understanding of food tourism and addressing gaps in empirical research. In conclusion, the study enriches the literature on food tourism and emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional culinary heritage in suburban areas like Juasseh.

Keywords: Culinary, Traditional Food, Tourism

Introduction

The new Tourism Policy by the Tourism Ministry in the 9th Malaysian Plan has set out policies to encourage the promotion of food, culture, and heritage tourism as one of the new niche products to be developed extensively for the next ten years in Malaysia. Despite this, the real potential of food, culture, and heritage as tourism resources is not fully realized. They are not well attended and only started to be appreciated in the last few years. To address the sustainability of food tourism development, one needs to identify and enhance the traditional food or product that is embedded with the local community and promote it for future generations.

Kuala Pilah is a town and district in Negeri Sembilan. It is located 25 miles away from Seremban. Kuala Pilah has sub-districts and they are Mukim Juasseh, Mukim Terachi, Mukim Kepis, Mukim Pilah, Mukim Seri Menanti, Mukim Ulu Jempol, Mukim Langkap, Mukim Parit Tinggi dan Ulu Jempol, Mukim Ampang Tinggi dan Bandar K. Pilah, Mukim Ulu Muar dan Mukim Johol. The research involved Kampung Pasir Ambor and Kampung Juasseh Pekan which is one of the small towns in Mukim Juasseh which located approximately 10 kilometers from Kuala Pilah town.



Figure 1: Juasseh, Sub-District of Kuala Pilah

This study aimed at investigating empirically if there were distinct types of traditional foods in Juasseh and if there were common agreeable methods of preparation and consumption among the traditional food experts. Thus, in achieving that, the specific objectives of this study are to identify the underlying dimensions of Juasseh communities and their food images, to identify the experts and way of preparing the popular identified foods, and also to determine the relationship between communities' evaluation of popular foods and potential brand of the culinary tourism industry in Juasseh. Very relying upon literature, this paper discovered a gap that is unclear which aims to give new bits of knowledge to upgrade comprehension of food tourism, especially in suburban areas such as Juasseh.

Identifying the ingredients, the preparations, as well as the end products, is the main purpose of this study. In other words, this research attempts to examine if there were distinct types of traditional foods in Juasseh and if there were common methods of preparation and consumption among traditional food experts. However, there is little research empirically demonstrating if there is a difference between one expert in making that particular product and repeat visitors in terms of food experience at a particular destination. Hence, this study was undertaken to address the gap. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and cooking demonstrations by the experts. There is still an enormous need to conduct in the area focused on using tourism as a means of developing a community. Thus, it is hoped that this study will further enrich the literature on this subject.

The authority responsible for tourism product development and the local authority will find the results from this research very useful to help design tourism projects that will be "community-friendly" and that the community's voice will always be useful input to any tourism project planning in the rural areas. Based on the conceptual framework, the study

investigated the type of traditional food that existed in Juasseh and examined the ingredients, the methods of cooking, and the ways the food would be served.

Review of Literature

The World Tourism Organization (1985) defined cultural tourism as the movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals, and other related events. Essentially, cultural tourism is based on the mosaic of places, traditions, art forms, celebrations, and experiences that portray one's nation and its people (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2005). In line with this, Ramli & Zahari (2015, p. 477) expressed that the adaptations of food from various ethnic groups by the dominant or majority ethnic group in multi-racial cultural nations are believed will lead to commonly acceptable cuisines." Owing to the statement, Malaysia does have a variety of tourist attractions such as nature and cultural and community diversity (Loganathan & Harun, 2008).

The diversity of cultures and societies that are translated into the diversity of these types of food has also become the strength of the country to attract more tourists recently. This is where the element of food is seen to be able to further strengthen the Malaysian tourism industry apart from natural resources and various activities as well as ongoing tourism programs. Hall and Sharples (2003, p.10) defined food tourism as "visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production region are the primary motivating factor to travel".

Different activities can be part of culinary tourism, including visiting restaurants and festivals and attending cooking classes. The most common activity for culinary tourists is to try local restaurants and even street food stalls to learn about the cuisine of the location. Thus, the offering of local products and cooking practices to both foreign and domestic visitors add a new dimension to the appearance of the tourist destinations and generates additional economic activity in and around the destination, which in recent years has affected the combination of food and tourism demand.

At some point, the relationship between food and tourism is inseparable from each other even though it appears to be odd bedfellows at first glance. Both have been interwoven in many ways and both directions. Given the circumstances in today's tourism when more and more modern travelers seek not only the sun, sea, and sand but also an enriching, refurbishing, and educational experience through their travels including food hunting. However, it is believed that the attractiveness of food as a tourist product has partly derived from the relationship between food and culture, the art of preparing and serving, and/or the cooking styles of a particular place aspect. According to Ramli & Zahari (2015), the uniqueness of food in a particular culture is closely related to the ingredients, and especially the preparation methods. In other words, the gastronomic experience is the motivation that motivates people to travel. It was also interesting to find that Asian people are more likely to engage actively in food experiences and also viewed food safety, décor, and authenticity as the key attributes when making food choices (Chen, 2013).

According to Nazri et al (2017) traditional Malaysian cuisine has been greatly influenced by traders from neighboring countries, such as Indonesia, India, the Middle East, China, and Thailand. Malaysian gastronomic products are a mix of various races, particularly Malays,

Chinese, Indians, and other ethnic groups. Ramli et al (2015) stated that from a Malaysian perspective, it has been associated closely with classical and traditional foods that are continuously prepared and consumed by all generations without major alteration in the original flavors. Food heritage has been reflected in the environmental history, beliefs, ideology, and food technology of society in an era. Muhammad et al (2015) describe those children should be trained to eat traditional foods since they are young, especially during the adolescence period when they are trying to find their own identity by watching others surrounding them.

Traditional foods are those that have been passed down through the generations or have been consumed for many generations. Traditional foods and dishes are by their very nature traditional, and they may have a long history in a national dish, regional cuisine, or local cuisine. According to Nor et al (2016) Ingredients, preparation, cooking methods, equipment, and culinary abilities are the traits or knowledge communicated in the Malay traditional cuisine transferable process between generations between mothers and daughters. Oral communication, observation, and hands-on learning were the methods used to transfer Malays food knowledge, and the processes began in their adolescent years and have continued to this day through a variety of methods, including telephone instruction, festive, holiday season, and family gatherings. Som et al (2019) have proven that local heritage food represents national identity to tourists.

Methodology

This study solely used a qualitative approach to archive the objectives of the study. According to Astalin (2013, p. 123), qualitative research is “mainly concerned with the original research question, the people or situations being studied, and the way the data is analyzed, interpreted, and presented.” A qualitative approach that has been applied helps to better understand the process of preparation and consumption (foodways) of the identified traditional foods. The information gathered through this approach has provided an in-depth understanding of the process and the reasons for such activities.

The study was initiated through a brief literature review of tourism, culture, and food. This is enabling an overall understanding of the definitions and scope of the study. The carrying out of a field study enables the site to be examined and important features of the site recorded. This study was conducted by using three-step procedures. First, a list containing the traditional foods, that were identified by interviewing the experts in the study area. Second, the respondents were asked about the dimension under investigation such as (i) common ingredients used, (ii) methods of preparation & cooking, (iii) equipment used in preparation & cooking, (iv) occasion product is served & to whom, (v) how is the food served & served with what other food via face-to-face semi-structured interviews and during cooking demonstrations by the identified experts.

The methodology used is based mainly on the personal experience and practices of the respondents (the experts). Thus, the semi-structured interviews and observation method were used to collect the core information for this research. Tools that suit the nature of research enough to adapt to each dimension under investigation. Considering the respondents' background, the interview questions have been developed in the Malay language. This would enable the respondents to have a clear understanding of the questions asked and also their familiarity with the food and terms used. This has helped in contributing to the high number of reliable and consistent feedback. In this study, not many respondents are expected to be participants. Therefore, to determine the selection of participants,

sampling judgment that emphasizes the use of opportunities, time, and research questions was used. Based on the above criteria, there were four (4) traditional food experts selected for this study, and the process of selecting the respondents was based on the steps below:

Step 1: The head of the communities of Juasseh were contacted and were requested to suggest a few names of the traditional food experts in the community.

Step 2: All the prospectus traditional food experts were contacted via telephone to get permission to conduct the interviews and cooking demonstration at their convenience time.

Step 3: All the traditional food experts were asked to identify and list all the traditional foods that they usually make and from the identified names, 4 types of traditional foods named Kuih Kelepong, Kuih Koci, Kuih Sopang / Sopang / Pekpok, and Rendang Ayam Juasseh were consistently mentioned and were selected for further study.

The data analysis process was done in two stages, namely analysis during data collection and analysis after data-intensive and formal data collection. A qualitative data analysis technique called thematic analysis involves reading through a data set, such as the transcripts of in-depth interviews or focus groups and looking for patterns in meaning to derive themes. There are a few steps that were taken to enable researchers to move quickly and effectively in obtaining the necessary data. In addition, it can also guarantee the reliability of the data to ensure the accuracy of the answers or meanings conveyed through interviews and observations.

- i. Comparison of the main ingredients of the listed traditional foods by each of the traditional food experts.
- ii. Comparison of the main preparation and methods of cooking of the listed traditional foods by each of the traditional food experts.
- iii. Comparison of the equipment used to prepare and cooking of the listed traditional foods by each of the traditional food experts.
- iv. Comparison on the occasions of the listed traditional foods would be served to the guest and whom the foods were prepared by each of the traditional food experts.
- v. Comparison of how the listed traditional foods are served and what the other foods were usually served together by each of the traditional food experts

Results and Discussion

Overall Level of Similarity and Differences in Traditional Foods of Juasseh

10 questions were posed to the respondents and their responses to the 10 questions that there are similarities dan differences were as indicated in the following. Results showed that all respondents indicated that they had some knowledge of the traditional food and that (1) the traditional food from Juasseh mainly used local plants from the jungle such as anau or belulut tree from the nira water for making gula Anau, banana leaves, coconut, herbs, and spices (2) the uniqueness of the traditional food of Juasseh is based on the method of preparation, (3) the traditional food of Juasseh uses of glutinous flour, grated coconut, gula Anau, coconut milk, local herbs & spices and Daun pudding (5) in Malaysia, the traditional food of Juasseh may share similar names with those from other areas, but the differences are in the type of ingredients and the cooking technique used.

Comparative Findings of Responses Based on Product Types

Results showed the responses of the 4 traditional food experts on the following 10 aspects that were posed to them according to the 4 products of kuih Kelepong, kuih Koci, kuih Sopang, and Rendang Ayam Daun Puding Juasseh. The similarity and differences in 10 aspects questions about the basic ingredients for each of the traditional foods of kuih Kelepong, kuih Koci, kuih Sopang, and Chicken Rendang with Pudding leaves were identified by the 6 food experts. Each of the food experts had individually identified the ingredients for kuih Kelopong, kuih Koci, kuih Sopang, and Rendang Ayam Daun puding. The common methods of preparation were identified by the 6 traditional food experts for kuih Kelepong, kuih Koci, kuih Sopang, and Rendang Ayam Daun puding. Based on the analysis on determining the level of Foodways Knowledge on the traditional foods the results showed that foodways referred to the way food is prepared and served. The following were the significant findings based on the thematic analysis of relationships between the experts and the four traditional foods of Kuih Kelepong, Kuih Koci, Kuih Sopang, and Rendang Ayam, the results indicated a slightly significant difference among the experts. One of the study's aims was to find out the level of traditional foods knowledge among the experts in the community. Unfortunately, during the expert selection process, it was realized that experts especially senior citizens were quite limited in getting them.

Conclusion

This study aimed at identifying some types of traditional food available in Juasseh, in particular, it is a unique way of making it. The results of this study are expected to help identify the actual way of making as well as help preserve this traditional food and diversify the culinary tourism products also the video could be distributed and be seen by those interested in the information. The study hopes that this heritage food can be preserved and enjoyed by future generations.

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