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Foodways Practices Among Iranian Students in Malaysia

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Abstract

Drifting to new places is a fertile ground for contemplating food, cooking, eating habits, and race. When people move to a new cultural environment, changes occur in their eating and cooking patterns. This phenomenon is seen as an obstacle for newly migrate students to authentically practice and prepare their ethnic food when they moved to new places that were practically remote. Hence, the main objectives of this study are to explore the foodways practices (preparation and consumption) among Iranian students in Malaysia. A qualitative research approach was applied in this study using a face-to-face interview method based on semi-structured interview questions related to the foodways practice and influence of food consumption. The finding revealed that Iranian students resided in Malaysia were able to practice ethnic foodways depicted from the ethnic foods prepared, such as *Joosh Kaboob*, *Gheimh*, and *Morgh Polou*.

Keywords: Immigrant, Ethnic Food, Foodways, Culture, Food Practices.

Introduction

The most traumatic event in one's personal life is shifting to a new cultural environment, especially for most immigrants who temporarily reside (Schaetti, 2002; Pitts, 2016). 'Migration phenomenon' is the mobility of population groups to a specific place. As stressed by Qullin (2006), 'migration' represents a permanent move for certain people, but for others, it is a temporary state before immigrants eventually return 'home'. Notably, one fragment of the migrant population consists of international students. Qullin (2006) furthers explained that this group moves from their homeland pursuing their higher education studies, which may not be available in their countries of origin. The enlightenment about international students is also described by Baruch, Budhwar, and Khatri (2007) that they are amongst talented groups that move temporarily from their homeland with the intent to pursue higher education. Moreover, some degree of culture and food 'shocks' are inevitable due to culture's dissimilarity. Food has often been recognized as an immigrant aspect that students found

most distressing (Furukawa, 1997). Hence, it is interesting to reveal that recent studies found that little research is done on the role of ethnic foods in students' academic sojourn, especially amongst the Iranian immigrants in Malaysia.

The first wave of Iranians flooding Malaysia included students pursuing higher education. Iran has a youthful populace. In 2005, the youth (between the ages of 15 and 29) comprised 35% of Iran's total populace, the most elevated recorded in its historical backdrop (Salehi-Isfahani, 2011). The upsurge number of international students in Malaysia, which is increasing year by year from 58,963 (2009) to 79,254 (2010) according to Book of Statistics (2010), is the main concern in this study. Iranians represent a large and important immigrant group in Malaysia. According to Enrollment of International Students in Public and Private Higher Education Institutions by Country of Origin 2010 – 2012 statistics, there were over 13,500 Iranian immigrants in Malaysia. Most Iranians are students who emigrated through academic profiling and middle-class backgrounds with relatively high levels of education. Hence, it is assumed that Iranian students in Malaysia encountered difficulties in food choice and preference as Malaysian and Iranian food cultures are different. Due to the cultural differences, they are not so keen to adopt local food patterns and local food ingredients. In line with that, it is believed that availability of the ingredients, whether dry or fresh become the main constraint for Iranian students to prepare their traditional foods although they have knowledge and experience to prepare and cook their local cuisine.

To date, most studies highlighted the persistence of ethnic food 'foodways' (Chapman, Ristovski-Slijepcevic, and Beagan, 2011; Edmonds, 2005; Redman, 2014; Romo & Gil, 2012), changes in ethnic food patterns (Pan *et al.*, 1999; Perez-Cueto *et al.*, 2009; Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007; Wandel *et al.*, 2008), time limitation, inconvenience, cost, quality and unavailability of food to prepare ethnic food (Brittin & Obeidat, 2011; Sukalakamala and Brittin, 2006; Sussner, Lindsay, Greaney, and Peterson, 2008), lack of experience in meal planning such as shopping, preparing and cooking (Kremmyda *et al.*, 2008), retain ethnic food to ensure academic success (Brown, 2008), and emotionally attached to the home country by eating ethnic food (Locher *et al.*, 2005; Brown, Edwards and Hartwell, 2010; Waugh, 2011). The recent study by Kamarul Rashid and Muhammad (2015) revealed that Malaysian sojourners in the United Kingdom face difficulties preparing ethnic foods mainly due to the accessibility of ingredients.

It is also believed that Iranian students have limited time to prepare their ethnic food due to hectic lecture schedules and class preparation. Moreover, inadequate equipment, utensils, and facilities also become barriers to practicing the ethnic 'foodways'. Additionally, it is also believed that Iranian students have less knowledge and experience about the ingredients and 'foodways', which become a limitation for preparing traditional foods. Nevertheless, none of the studies in Malaysia explores foodways practices among international students towards food authenticity sustainability. Therefore, there is a clear need to conduct this research deliberately to reveal ethnic food and 'foodways' practice among foreign students in Malaysia. Thus, this study contributes to the understanding and exploring a student's life, which is a new cultural setting yet persists the practices of ethnic 'foodways'.

Literature Review

Drifting to new places on different terms is fertile ground for food, cooking, eating, and race. Changes occur in their eating and cooking habits as people migrate to a new cultural environment. Moreover, transnationally relocated people often use food to represent themselves as a group and build bonds with one another to form a support system in an unfamiliar environment. The migrant people or refugees like to demonstrate more cultural ability around food – i.e., how to grow, prepare, cook, and celebrate food. Pilcher (2008) denoted racism against migrant food practices has had an active presence in public health and urban planning policy as well as in the multicultural sentiment that “once we eat others’ food we all get along” (Hage, 1997).

Furthermore, Ralph and Staeheli (2011) claimed that while facing seclusion, alienation, and longing for home, some migrants utilize food to bond the gap. Hence, working against efforts to ‘whiten’ their diets, migrants are creatively forced to re-create their own food products (Gabaccia, 1999; Heinze and Gabaccia, 1999). Meanwhile, Collins and Coleman (2008) symbolized overcoming ‘the splitting of memory and lived experience’ might be associated with ‘nostalgic gastronomy’ (Roy, 2010) since it recreates what one envisions as food from home, often utilizing substitute ingredients (Cwiertka, 2003). Consequently, Choo (2004) said that ‘nostalgic gastronomy’ empowers migrants the opportunity to live pleasantly in a Malaysian community. Mankekar (2002), in her study, asserted the accessibility of “local” grocery stores also bring back the memories of home and to engage in practices which originally done in originated countries (Carlsen, 2003; Collins, 2008; Longhurst, Johnston, and Ho, 2009). Thus, various impersonations of race difference and food are performed through genderism, social class, and relations with dominated groups within particular places (Cook and Crang, 1996; Cook, 2008).

Pursuing this further, Brown, Edwards, and Hartwell (2010) stressed that international students in a temporary migrant situation or sojourners prefer to eat familiar home country food because of its association with feelings of comfort and reassurance. For instance, in New Caledonia, traditional or ethnic foods are preferred even in migrated situations. Ethnic foods are often sourced from various geographical areas and prepared by combining traditional and modern cooking methods, specific combinations of ingredients, spices, and herbs. According to Khokhar, Ashkanani, Garduño-Díaz, and Husain (2013), variation in these foods’ composition due to several factors, including acculturation, eating habits, cooking methods, availability of ingredients, and agronomic conditions, might be considered vital for sustainability and improving diet biodiversity.

The practices of ethnic foods are known as ‘foodways’. These ‘foodways’ are benign through ethnic foods’ preparation and consumption (Koc and Welsh, 2001; Salehuddin *et al.*, 2011). They revealed that ‘foodways’ are represented through preparation related to the ingredients, equipment, and cooking methods, while consumption is through the types of eating utensils and serving styles. As accentuated by Wagner, Brown, and Mussell (1984) in Hitchcott (2003), foodways served as powerful metaphors of group identity. In line with that, Hitchcott (2003) also noted that the migrant chooses to perform their ethnic identity in one of three ways; (i) demonstrating a willingness to adopt the culture of the host country; (ii) maintaining his or her ethnic difference; or (iii) accepting the pluralism of migrant identities.

The convergence of food with culture and history is perceived through the study of 'foodways'. Many researchers explored this area to understand the uniqueness of ethnic culture. The 'foodways' practices bond people to a geographic region, a climate, a period of time, and an ethnic or religious group and tighten family ties. Therefore, based on the above discussion, it revealed how 'foodways' are alive in people's lives, including the immigrant perspective that could appreciate the role and importance of ethnic groups. As soon as an ethnic group enters a different socio-cultural environment, they have to deal with the pressure of changing their diet. Previous research found that the acculturation process immediately transforms upon arrival. Furthermore, an ethnic group was confronted with culture shock with the Western lifestyle, which is entirely like chalk and cheese. Even though these changes may be made, Punjabi families in Vancouver, Canada, showed persistence of traditional cuisine and somehow incorporated western food in their daily consumption (Chapman, Ristovski-Slijepcevic and Beagan, 2011).

In line with the same notion, Hartwell, Edwards, and Brown, (2011) and Hotta and Ting-Toomey, (2013) studied food as the significant research category in recent ethnography study of the temporal immigrant, international students. The findings claimed that food was the least important aspect to change and have excellent connectivity with an emotional and physical perspective. Culture is unique, distinctive, and inimitable. Furthermore, culture belongs to a specific ethnic group who act and behave similarly from the previous generation to generation. Therefore, food would be the last element in the literature to change and revolutionize.

A study by Waugh (2011) found that the Thai community in Washington D.C. ultimately manifested Thai culture and practices via foodways. The author claimed that people outside of their home country use food practices of Thai cuisine to reshape and reaffirm their cultural identities. Furthermore, they socialized by eating and sharing Thai food such as Thai eggplant, pineapple, young coconut, sticky (sweet) rice, lychees, durian, papaya, duck, dried fish, liver, pork stomach, lard, palm sugar, Thai tea, *kai yang* (grilled chicken), *khaw thom* (rice soup), *laap* (spiced ground pork), *mee grob* (noodles, meat, and sugar), *naam phrik kapi* (fish, chili sauce), and *pad thai* (stir-fried noodles) through their culture consistently from the procurement process, shopping, cooking, and eating.

Following this further, Edmonds (2005) conducted an exploratory and descriptive study on traditional food and diet revealed that newly immigrated Honduran women in New Orleans, United States, have successfully maintained their customary food habits. Although their typical diet is available to them in New Orleans and continues to eat their conventional foods, they make changes in their nutritional patterns and physical activity patterns since coming to the United States. Furthermore, rice, natural fruit juices, beans, tortillas, beef, plantains or bananas, and eggs are reported as typical food eaten every day in Hondurans. However, despite facing a new culture setting the Honduras women to sustain their traditional food and foodways.

Brown *et al.* (2010) explained that international postgraduates students in England preferred to eat home-cooked national dishes to attach emotionally to their origin country. They also point out that home culture food played an important role in social life since preparation,

cooking, and eating the food is part of communication and physical act. Locher *et al.* (2005) found that home food is positively associated with nostalgic home and familiar taste thoughts. Additionally, Brown *et al.* (2010) further claimed that there is limited research on international students' acculturation concerning food habits and the food environment. They conducted a qualitative approach to a group of postgraduate international students at a university in the South of England. Asian students tend to eat their staple food such as rice and noodles, directly reflecting culture and nationality. However, they confront with limited time for preparation as the challenge to eat their traditional food.

There are findings that consumption of traditional food is associated with eating at home. Romo and Gil (2012) reported that Latin American immigrants in Barcelona, Spain, showed the persistence of dietary habits from the country of origin. They also addressed the relationship between the length of time spent in Spain and the persistence of dietary habits, as dietary habits are among the last lifestyles to change when coping with new and foreign cultures. Scholars also reported the changes in ethnic food among Asian students born in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea studying in the United States (Pan *et al.*, 1999). Most students prepared ethnic style-food such as noodles, steamed white rice with either a stir-fried Chinese vegetable dish or mixed dishes of meat or seafood with vegetables and soup to celebrate Asian festivities such as Lunar New Year, Lantern Festival, and Dragon Boat Festival. It was also observed, Pakistani and Sri-Lanka immigrants to Norway change their ethnic foodways because of changes in work patterns and climate consideration. They consumed from 3 to 1.5 hot meals per day to comfort themselves to the host country (Wandel *et al.*, 2008). Due to busyness and hardship in working set pressure and force to decrease ethnic food consumption and preparation.

In addition, finding from Perez-Cueto *et al.* (2009) study has found that among international students enrolled at Ghent University in Belgium, 85% of 235 students have changed their ethnic diet since they arrived in Belgium. The move of the temporal population, such as international students, encouraged them to change ethnic foodways perceived by the unavailability of ethnic food in a different culture and food environment. Likewise, Sukalakamala and Brittin (2006) found 79% of 336 Thai students at ten (10) universities in the United States change their eating habits.

The previous study explains about the 'Glasgow effect' on Greek postgraduate students studying at the University of Glasgow, Scotland changed their dietary habits probably due to lack of experience in meal planning such as shopping, preparing, and cooking. The effect is related to their temporary translocation from the Mediterranean to a Northern European environment (Kremmyda *et al.*, 2008). Not only that, but Vienne (2009) also reported that the changes in foodways had occurred among Vietnamese Americans in Orange County, California, because of the unavailability of ingredients in the United States. Furthermore, she also mentioned that the long-distance travel and walk to buy the ingredients also discouraged the students from retaining their ethnic foodways.

Methodology

This study seeks to explore the foodways practices among Iranian students in Malaysia. Hence, a qualitative approach was applied to suit the objective of the study. The

qualitative approach focuses on learning from the informer's viewpoints regarding issues or problems, and the study of qualitative research is very interpretative (Silverman, 2013). Informers were identified by purposeful sampling based on relevant criteria; i) Iranian students who are resided in Malaysia for more than a year, and ii) have no intention to stay in Malaysia permanently. A list of the informers was obtained from the School of Graduate Studies website, University Putra Malaysia (UPM), and a phone call was made in getting an interview appointment with the informer. A total of seven (7) postgraduate Iranian students from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) were interviewed, and data saturation had been reached from these seven informers. The interviews were conducted from May to September 2015. In each interview, informers were asked a series of semi-structured questions focused on study objectives. The interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes on average. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Throughout data collection and analysis, trustworthiness was demonstrated by implementing an audit trail, member checking, peer review, and researcher's field notes.

Result and Analysis

The results were mainly based on the qualitative findings from the interviews with the selected informers, Iranian students currently living in Malaysia. The justifications and discussion of the practices of ethnic foodways and the types of food prepared by the informers' point of views are further discussed briefly.

Informers Profile

Table 1: Informers Profile

Inform er	Age	Gender	Education	Origin	Current Area of Living in Malaysia	Family of members living in Malaysia	Time Expect ed to Stay in Malaysi a	Reason for Coming to Malays ia
Inform er 1	29	Male	Master in Food Technology (UPM)	Isfaha n	Sri Kembanga n, Selangor	Alone	4-5 years	Further study
Inform er 2	33	Male	Master in Food Technology (UPM)	Isfaha n	Sri Kembanga n, Selangor	Alone	4-5 years	Further study
Inform er 3	27	Female	Master in Food Science (UPM)	Tehra n	Sri Kembanga n, Selangor	Stay with housemat es	4-5 years	Further study

Inform er 4	28	Femal e	Master Food Technology (UPM)	in	Isfaha n	Sri Kembanga n, Selangor	Stay with housemat es	4-5 years	Further study
Inform er 5	29	Femal e	Master Food Technology (UPM)	in	Tehra n	Sungai Besi, Selangor	Stay with housemat es	4-5 years	Further study
Inform er 6	28	Femal e	Master Food Science (UPM)	in	Kerma n	Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor	Stay with husband	4-5 years	Further study
Inform er 7	29	Male	Master(UP M)		Tehra n	Sri Kembanga n, Selangor	Stay with wife	4-5 years	Further study

The informer's views foodways practices (preparation and consumption) of Iranian food prepared in Malaysia.

Previously, there is a brief clarification on the informers' profiles. The information obtained from the interview relating to the objectives of the study is discussed in the subsequent series of the analysis. However, this section has been divided into two (2) divisions to obtain the unerring verbatim in depth.

Cooking Practices and Types of Dishes

Question 1: Do you cook Iranian food here? If yes, who prepares it?

Essentially, eating and consuming ethnic food for those staying in the East is an exciting part of this study. Throughout the interview, most of the informers stated that they cooked and prepared Iranian dishes. The result also indicates that the male informers preferred to have their meal outside instead of the female informers. Mostly, the informers conveyed that they cooked by themselves and are helped by friends and even husband to prepare their daily food. The table below indicates the informer's verbatim:

Table 2: Question 1

Informer	Answer
1	"Not particularly...I prefer to dine outside rather cook my own meal..."
2	"Not too often...I prepared them myself mostly. Sometimes I invited my friends to join me. More fun and makes me feel like home..."
3	"Yes... By me most of the time."
4	"Sometimes. I prefer to dine outside... But sometimes I cook too. I prepare the dishes myself."
5	"Yes... If I get a chance to do it. I prepare the dishes with my housemates. Sometimes by myself."
6	"Yes. I mean, of course... I'm living with my husband, so he demands it."
7	"No, I don't... But my wife did."

Question 2: How often do you prepare your meal at home? If you do, please name the dishes and how to prepare them.

The excitement became higher when the second question (Q2) was asked. Surprisingly, most of the informers prepared their daily food to be consumed every day. For instance, *Gheimeh*, *Khoresht*, rice, pasta, *Morgh Polou*, Curries, *Joosh Kaboob*, *Koresh*, and Couscous are the common types of dishes prepared in Malaysia. Informer 1 noted that he rarely prepared his own meal and preferred to dine outside and is known as a simple person as well and is not selective in terms of food consumption. However, informers 2, 3, and 5 reported that they cooked by themselves, while informers 6 and 7 indicated that their husbands and wives were also responsible and helpful in preparing their daily food. Undoubtedly, this is evidence that an ethnic group is maintaining its native food selection. The responses from the informers are as follows:

Table 3: Question 2

Informer	Answer
1	<i>"Hurmm... Once a week I guess. Do you mean Iranian food? I cook rice mostly. Alongside with chicken,. Or beef sometimes. It's called Gheimeh. Some kind like a dry stew."</i>
2	<i>"Twice a week. At the weekend usually. I'm far too busy to cook my own meal every day. But if I had the opportunity to do so, I really enjoy it. I cook rice most of the time. I do prepare my own version of "Gheimeh" (which is some kind of stew) at home. The method is pretty simple. Same like to prepare American stew. Just throw all the ingredients into the pot. Let it cook for about an hour..."</i>
3	<i>"Almost every day I rather say. Yeah.. almost. I like to prepare my own meal. What kind of dish? Hurmmm.. (pause). Depends, I don't have any particular dishes listed. Its depends on what's left in my fridge (laughing). But rice, of course, rice. And some chicken and vegetable along with. I cook Khoresht Kol Galam (which is spicy fried cauliflower). I love it! My mom prepares it like almost every day back home. I rarely cook fish here. It's quite costly I rather say, Since we are "starving artist" here, so yeah... chicken seems legit (laughing). I made Morgh Polou (which is likely chicken teppanyaki) for dinner"</i>
4	<i>"...Once a week.. or twice a week. Not more than that. I'm not good at cooking, to be honest (laughing). But I did try my best. Sometimes I invited my friends to join me. We cook together. Hurmmm... Rice mostly. Pasta sometimes, but I prefer rice.. I tend to keep it simple as I can. I made Josh Curry... It's like your curry but I put yogurt into it. And almond paste. I tried to grill the chicken before but it almost blew off my kitchen (laughing)!"</i>
5	<i>"Depends...(pause). At night sometimes. If I'm not too tired. You know... with the classes and all... (small giggles) I do cook at the weekend if I'm not going anywhere. What food?...(pause) Instant noodle! (laughing). Rice. I cook rice at most.... Chicken Curry.. My style of course.. (laughing). Hey, I'm not that good but I'm trying here."</i>
6	<i>"Quite a lot I must say. My husband prefers to eat at home. So I cook almost every day. Oh of course by myself. Sometimes my husband helps me also."</i>
7	<i>"Depends,...(pause). Usually, all the cooking is prepared by my wife. I don't complain much. But we do eat outside too."</i>

The verbatim given by the informers is in line with the findings by Chapman *et al.* (2011), showing that Punjabi families in Vancouver, Canada are persistent in maintaining their

traditional food. Somehow, native foodways could be abandoned due to establishing a life in a foreign and different culture.

Availability and Accessibility of the Resources

The ingredients in a recipe are an essential aspect of food preparation. Therefore, for this part of the study, informers were explicitly asked on the availability of the ingredients and its resources. This analysis is also to answer the objective of the study, which comprises two (2) questions (Q3, and Q4).

Question 3: Are you able to find Iranian food ingredients in Malaysia? If yes, where do you get those ingredients? Please state the supermarket/shop/others.

The ingredients in a recipe are an essential aspect of food preparation. Therefore, for this part of the study, informers were explicitly asked about the ingredients' availability and resources. It is not a revoke proclamation that hectic lifestyles, tight schedules, and financial constraints are the lists of the influences to intemperance native ethnic foodways (Brown, Edwards and Hartwell, 2010; Ishak, Zahari and Othman, 2013). Likewise, the limitation of cooking skills and unavailability of the right ingredients and equipment were identified as a reason to neglect the practice of ethnic foodways. The third question (Q3) enquires more details about the ingredients. In Q3, the informers' responses are unexpected when they stated that it was convenient to find the ingredients and halal products at the shops or supermarkets in Malaysia, for instance, Balaji Store, Sahabat Roselle Marketing, Berkat Madinah, Tesco, and Giant. Moreover, the majority of them also stressed that some of the ingredients are not readily available. *Advieh*, *Sabzi*, and *Sumac* are examples of those ingredients. The table below indicates the informers' verbatim:

Table 4: Question 3

Informer	Answer
1	<i>"Not so much.. Some part of it, yeah.. But specifically, not so much. In my hometown, we use local spices quite a lot. Like Advieh,. It is quite difficult to find it here. Some other ingredients can be found at Balaji store in Selangor General Market."</i>
2	<i>"Some of them, yeah... I find them at Balaji store at Selangor General Market."</i>
3	<i>"Yeah... But not specifically. Just partially.. I find them at Balaji store at Selangor General Market and Sahabat Rossele Marketing in Bangi most of the time.."</i>
4	<i>"Oh yes I did. The raw ones I found them mostly at... What is it called..Hurmmm..(pause).. Wait, oh yes, Tesco (laughing). Or some other local hyper-market near this area. You can always find the spices at Balji store and sometimes in hyper-market too."</i>
5	<i>"The raw ingredients can easily be found in a local market like Giant, Tesco. But like specific spices like Advieh, Limoo Omani (dried lime), and Sabzi (some kind like basil leaf) are rarely found here."</i>
6	<i>"Some of them can be found at Balaji store and Sahabat Rossele Marketing in Bangi."</i>
7	<i>"It's hard to find them at first.. Well, of course because you are new here (laughing). But now I'm able find some of them at Balaji store in Selangor General Market, and sometimes at Berkat Madinah in Kampung Pandan, Kuala Lumpur."</i>

Question 4: Do you bring any local Iranian ingredients here?

Pursuing into this question, most informers conveyed that they brought some of their native or local spices here in Malaysia. For instance, almost all informers brought their own *Advieh*, a common spice used in Iranian cooking. In line with that, informers 1, 2, and 6 stated that they also bring their own *Sazfron*. They did mention the price of *Sazfron* in Malaysia is overpriced as compared to the one in Iran. Implying the proclamation as stated by Brown *et al.* (2010) and Schaetti (2002), financial constraints have been appointed as one of the barriers in practicing foodways and consumption. However, the fourth informer claimed that she did not bring any local ingredients when she moved to Malaysia but occasionally obtained some of them from her Iranian friends. Meanwhile, the fifth informer excitingly put the statement when she stressed out that she could not care less about the ingredients, claiming that she is just here to focus on her study. The ingredients are undeniably the prominent substances for the locals to practice their food and ethnic identity. In the same way, ingredients are also crucial for pertaining the food authenticity in each ethnic. It is true that foreign socio-cultural environment may seem contentious to an ethnic group. The informers described their local ingredients as below:

Table 5: Question 4

Informer	Answer
1	<i>"Back then, yeah.. I mean, when I first arrived here. But I haven't go back to my country since then. I bring my own Sazfron. It's quite expensive here in Malaysia."</i>
2	<i>"Of course. I brought my own Sumac and Sazfron here. Sumac is like MSG in Iran (laughing). I used it in almost dishes."</i>
3	<i>"I brought my own Advieh here. It is almost impossible to find Advieh here in Malaysia..."</i>
4	<i>"No. Unfortunately, I didn't bring any of them. Sometimes I get them from my friends.."</i>
5	<i>"Nahhh... I don't. Why should I? I'm here to study. Not to cook (laughing abundantly)."</i>
6	<i>"Oh yes! I have my "own" Sazfron and spices. Like Advieh, curry powder, you know,.. the one here is not similar to ours. So I brought one with me. What else,.. Oh, I also brought Advieh here. And here, I mean in Malaysia, Sazfron is very expensive. So that's why I brought my own..."</i>
7	<i>"I guess my wife did bring some. Advieh I think. Sazfron.. Some curry powders.. But usually, we buy them here"</i>

Conclusion

To conclude, ethnic identity is maintained through the practice of foodways among Iranian students in Malaysia. Iranian students, who study abroad, are expected to adapt to a new culture and adapt to new environments and surroundings. Moreover, despite being away from family, they succeeded in preserving their lifestyle, particularly cooking and eating ethnic food. Hectic schedule as a student never bothers them to abandon ethnic foodways. Assuredly, what can be concluded in this study is that the availability of ingredients and equipment is the foremost important factor to encourage Iranians to practice ethnic foodways. Following this further, cooking and eating ethnic food connect them to Iranian culture and remind them of their homeland. The study's findings are in line with other scholars (Edmonds, 2005; Chapman, Ristovski-Slijepcevic and Beagan, 2011; Romo and Gil, 2012; Redman, 2014; Rashid and Muhammad, 2015).

There are some limitations regarding this study. Because of the nature of the qualitative work, the findings reported in this study are time and context-bound. All informers are Iranian, aged from 26 to 33 years old, and pursuing their study at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Selangor, Malaysia only. Although this study was focused on students of Iranian ethnicity, the participation from a wider part of the Iranian community in Malaysia could insert valuable essence and information for future researches. The second limitation would be on the type of method or approach used. Although the study uses a qualitative approach, mixed-method using quantitative and qualitative might produce a synergized result and a different perspective than using a single approach. Besides, the study will gather valuable and essential data for our ethnic foodways' permanence and continuity. Future studies should include more representative samples from various ethnicities and the use of multiple respondents (Shoham and Dalakas, 2005), for instance, looking from other perspectives and triangulation with different ethnicities. It is also suggested that personal identity and social identity are two ends of a continuum with opposite effects on the same consequence (Terry and Hogg, 1996). Therefore, a study combining a range of identities might be intriguing.

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