



PAPER – OPEN ACCESS

Malay Gastronomy as the Development of North Sumatran Local Wisdom

Author : Arie Azhari Nasution, Lestari Dara Cinta Utami, Mardiah Mawar Kembaren
DOI : 10.32734/lwsa.v5i3.1397
Electronic ISSN : 2654-7066
Print ISSN : 2654-7058

Volume 5 Issue 3 – 2020 TALENTA Conference Series: Local Wisdom, Social, and Arts (LWSA)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Published under licence by TALENTA Publisher, Universitas Sumatera Utara



Malay Gastronomy as the Development of North Sumatran Local Wisdom

Arie Azhari Nasution, Lestari Dara Cinta Utami, Mardiah Mawar Kembaren

Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia, 20155

arieazhari@usu.ac.id, lestaridaracinta@usu.ac.id, mardiah@usu.ac.id

Abstract

This paper discusses the gastronomy of Malay specialties as the development of local wisdom found in North Sumatra by describing and analyzing Malay gastronomy starting from the composition, manufacture, results, and local wisdom. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method by focusing on the form of Malay gastronomy based on observation and interview data collection techniques. As a result, Malay gastronomy is very important to develop because it has local wisdom in the form of local welfare wisdom, namely education, mutual cooperation, preservation, environmental care, all of which lead to cultural creativity.

Keywords: Gastronomy; Malay; Local Wisdom; North Sumatra

1. Introduction

It is undeniable that Indonesia has a lot of cultural diversity that has its own local wisdom in each of its cultural products. As explained by Koentjaraningrat [1] that culture is a complex thing such as knowledge, art, belief, morals, law, customs, and all abilities and habits acquired by a person as a member of society. Culture has several forms which include: First, culture as an idea, idea, value, or norm; Second, culture as an activity or pattern of human action in society; The third is the form of culture as objects made by humans. This form of culture is concrete because it is the objects of creation, works, actions, activities, or human actions in society.

One form of culture that is concrete in nature from the results of creativity, works, actions, community activities is regional specialties or commonly called culinary. Currently, culinary has become a tourism development commonly known as "gastronomy". In Online KBBI [2], gastronomy is defined as the art of preparing delicious dishes; culinary art. The latest thing that has developed related to gastronomy is the term gastronomic tourism. Gastronomic tourism is another way to enjoy tourist attractions while also preserving culture through efforts to preserve culture in the food and beverage sector or commonly called culinary tourism [3].

However, gastronomic tourism has not been widely applied to tourist attractions in Indonesia, especially in North Sumatra. Worse yet, efforts to preserve typical food or traditional food originating from certain regions are increasingly rare. This is indicated by the large number of people who do not know anything and the origin of some typical foods from North Sumatra, especially in this case, Malay. In addition, not many people are aware of the use of traditional cooking techniques according to ingredients, boiling, sauteing, steaming, frying and others commonly used in tradition to produce a strong taste of cuisine. Most people today cook with spices available in supermarkets that have been processed through machines and become modern packaged products.

In this study, the revitalization of Malay cuisine or food is a concern because not many researchers pay attention to culture, especially in terms of gastronomy. The fading knowledge and interest of the community regarding traditional regional cuisine and good processing methods and creating uniqueness in terms of taste makes this research useful for

the future as a reference material in terms of Malay gastronomy. In addition, this research will also focus on local wisdom.

Local wisdom comes from two words, wisdom and local. So, local wisdom is a local idea that is wise, full of wisdom, good value, which is embedded and followed by the members of the community. In the sense of the English-Indonesian dictionary, local wisdom means wisdom in a certain place or region [4].

Based on some of the opinions above, the authors conclude that local wisdom is something that has good cultural values which have actually been taught for a long time from our ancestors and are still maintained and preserved from generation to generation so that it becomes a common tradition. Likewise with Malay gastronomy with efforts to revitalize it.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive research method by focusing on the form of Malay gastronomy based on a combined data collection technique (triangulation). Data was collected using the interview method (depth interview) which was carried out directly at the location where the Malay community was located who knew about Malay specialties. In addition, documentation methods such photos from interviews and photos of food as results of interviews will be used so that the results are valid.

Data were taken from several informants to make it easier for researchers to understand Malay gastronomy. Thus, interviews with key informants who understand and master the social situation of the research object are very important [5]. The key informants in this study are the Malay community in special Malay areas, both producers of Malay food and beverages and people who do not have traditional Malay food businesses and culinary enthusiasts who act as informants.

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the research that has been done in the field, there are several areas that are the source of the distinctiveness of Malay gastronomy in North Sumatra. The areas are Serdang Bedagai Regency, Langkat Regency, Batubara Regency. This typical Malay food is usually made by the community both for daily food and at events such as traditional events.

3.1. Various Typical of Malay Gastronomy

In this section, we will discuss some of the typical Malay gastronomy in some areas of North Sumatra which have been mentioned above.

3.1.1. Botok

Botok is a typical food of the Malay community of Pantai Cermin, Serdang Bedagai Regency. According to the informant, Rosmawati [6], botok is made of approximately 44 kinds of ingredients to be used as seasonings plus spoiled fish or fish found in the sea in a rotten condition. The spices are usually leaves or top leaves. The ingredients for making this botok can be seen in the following table. The ingredients for Malay gastronomy in this article use Indonesian so that can be easily understood by readers when searching for ingredients mentioned.

Tabel 1. Ingredients of Botok

Shoots Leaf Ingrediensts		
<i>Kemangi</i>	<i>Katok (daun nasi-nasi)</i>	<i>Ulam raha</i>
<i>Rerruku</i>	<i>Lambok</i>	<i>Jambu bol</i>
<i>Umbi kayu</i>	<i>Umbi kayu</i>	<i>Jambu air</i>
<i>Mangga</i>	<i>Jeruk purut</i>	<i>Kunyit</i>
<i>pegaga</i>	<i>Asam glugur</i>	<i>Asam belimbing</i>
<i>berbuas</i>	<i>Patok leman</i>	<i>Daun mengkudu</i>

Shoots Leaf Ingrediensts		
<i>Pucuk petai</i>	<i>Ukam</i>	<i>Sekentut</i>
<i>Belinjo</i>	<i>Lebaran</i>	<i>Pucuk Kuini</i>
<i>Pucuk pokat</i>	<i>Janggus</i>	<i>Pepaya</i>
<i>Kangkung</i>	<i>Meranti</i>	<i>Kacang Kayu</i>
<i>Labu Manis</i>	<i>Lebu Lemak</i>	<i>Pakis</i>
<i>Jambu Biji</i>	<i>Daun Salam</i>	

The ingredients above are the basic ingredients for botok. The other ingredients commonly used for cooking are red chilies, shallots, garlic, candlenuts, ginger, turmeric, coriander, finely ground cumin, cumin, lemongrass, salt, sugar, and fish.

The process of making this typical Malay food is fish that has been rotted, washed and then boiled. After boiling, the water is filtered and separated from the fish bones. Then, stir-fry the mashed spices and add the bay leaf. Wait until it smells good. Then various kinds of leaf shoots are sliced and put into the pan. Put the filtered fish water into the pan. Wait a bit dry. After that, put the thick coconut milk into it. Then, add salt and sugar to taste. Wait until it boils.



Figure.1. Botok

3.1.2. Bubur Lambok

Porridge is one of the unique Indonesian foods. The Malay community, especially in Pantai Cermin, has a special food called Lambok porridge. Making this porridge is actually quite simple. The ingredients used are also ingredients commonly used for cooking in the kitchen. The spices and ingredients for making this Lambok porridge are rice, coconut milk, potatoes, carrots, and wet shrimp, soup leaves, fried onions, pepper, and salt.

The process: boil rice until it becomes porridge. Put the potatoes and carrots that have been sliced into the rice porridge. Then, add thick coconut milk. When almost cooked, add the soup leaves, pepper, and salt to rich the taste. Stir until all evenly. After cooking, the hot porridge is served in a bowl by sprinkling fried onions on top. Porridge is ready to be eaten.



Figure. 2. Bubur Lambok

3.1.3. Gulai Rebong

Gulai Rebong (Rebong curry) is a typical Malay food which is also known in several other ethnic groups. However, according to sources, Malays still often cook *gulai rebong* as one of their daily meals. The spices and ingredients needed in making this rebong curry are: red chili, onion, garlic, candlenut, ginger, turmeric, tomato. The ingredients mentioned above are grind first. Then the other ingredients are *belinjo*, bamboo shoots (*rebong*), lemongrass, bay leaves, anchovies, salt, sugar, cooking oil, and coconut milk.

The process: put 3 tablespoons of cooking oil into the pan, then add the spices that have been mashed until fragrant. Add the rebong and belinjo vegetables as well as coconut milk. After boiling, add the anchovies, salt, and sugar to taste. Wait until the rebong and belinjo are really soft. Food is ready to be served.



Figure. 3. Gulai Rebong

3.1.4. Sayur Asam Keladi

Tamarind vegetable (*Sayur Asam Keladi*) is a typical Malay dish originating from Batubara Regency [7]. The seasoning for making *Sayur Asam Keladi* is red chili, garlic, ginger, sliced tamarind, salt, the ingredients are white taro sticks and enough water.

How to make it, grind all the spices. Then, put the spices into a pan that has been filled with water. When the water boils, add 2 sticks of taro. Wait until the taro is really soft.



Figure. 4. Sayur Asam Keladi

3.1.5. Rondang Kopa

Rondang kopa is a typical Malay food from Batubara regency. To make this dish, you need ingredients such as *kopa*, chopped lemon grass, coconut milk, mashed ginseng coconut. In addition, the spices needed are red chili, onion, garlic, ginger, turmeric, coriander, cumin, and galangal.



Figure. 5. Rondang Kopa

In the process, everything is mashed at once with chopped lemongrass. Then all the spices and ingredients are mixed together. Once everything is mixed, put it in the pan to cook.

3.1.6. Bubur Pedas

Spicy porridge (*bubur pedas*) is a typical food of the Langkat Malay community, although spicy porridge is also widely found in other Malay communities [8]. This spicy porridge is quite different from the Lambok porridge from Pantai Cermin, Serdang Bedagai. The spices and ingredients used to make spicy porridge are more complex than lambok porridge. The ingredients needed are tubers, carrots, potatoes, young bananas, peanuts, rice, ginger, already wet, lemongrass, galangal, salt, coconut milk, flower lawing, cinnamon, soup leaves, fried onions. Meanwhile, the spices needed to be mashed are ginger, red chilies, shallots, garlic, turmeric, coriander, and cumin.



Figure. 6. Bubur Pedas

3.2. Local Wisdom of North Sumatra Malay Gastronomy

There are various Malay specialties in North Sumatra. Apart from what has been stated above, there are still dishes such as *pindang* fish, pickled fish, fish paste (*pepes ikan*), white *fajri*, *anyang*, *nasi lemak*, *lomak* curry, coconut crust sauce, and sour curry. This typical Malay food has its own values for the Malay community. This typical Malay dish is not only a meal for hungry people, but has its own local wisdom.

In this study, the local wisdom used is a revitalization model of local wisdom [9] which includes the activation, management, reprocessing of the inheritance of oral traditions and local wisdom to the supporting community. This will lead to local wisdom of welfare which includes hard work, discipline, education, health, mutual cooperation, gender management, cultural preservation and creativity as well as environmental care.

First, the spices and ingredients used by the Malay community are still traditional and come from the natural surroundings of the place where they live. The Malay community in Serdang Bedagai, for example, mostly uses fish as food, such as *botok*, *pindang* fish, pickled fish, and fish paste as the main menu. The spices used are usually easy to get because many people grow herbs around their homes.

Second, the Malay community also helps preserve traditional plants that are used as spices and flavorings for typical dishes. Plants such as tamarind, leaf *suring*, leaf *gotu kola*, coconut, lemongrass, ginger, banana tree, turmeric, fern, guava, fruit trees, and others are plants that almost always exist in people's yards. According to Rawiyah [10], Malay people who prefer to live with a large yard always use the yard to plant plants that can be used for cooking.

Third, typical Malay cuisine, can also be used as a taste enhancer, especially for people who are sick. This is due to the traditional spices and ingredients used, most of which contain good health benefits. People who are sick, for example, cooked *lambok* porridge (Serdang Bedagai), spicy porridge (Langkat Regency). With the traditional spices and ingredients used, sick people will usually taste Malay food because the taste is rich in spices so that the tongue of sick people in general can still feel it. One of the peculiarities of Malay gastronomy is its serving, which is more delicious when eaten warm. Seasonings that are put into cooking are more pronounced and provide warmth to the body.

Fourth, North Sumatran Malay food is still used in traditional ceremonies such as weddings. Typical dishes that are still often served as dishes in traditional Malay ceremonies are curry *lomak*, *anyang*, sour curry, spicy porridge, *lambok* porridge, pickled fish, coconut crust sauce, and white *fajri*. However, there are not many who apply this typical Malay cuisine in Malay traditional ceremonies because of the cost, but there are still some [7][8][9].

Thus, the local wisdom found in Malay gastronomy in the Malay community of North Sumatra is in accordance with the concept of welfare local wisdom, namely education, mutual cooperation, preservation, environmental care, all of which lead to cultural creativity. In education, Malay gastronomy still teaches and follows customs, namely the use of the community at Malay events which can still be found today even though it is quite rare. Mutual cooperation (*Gotong royong*) is defined as the Malay community who usually help each other in gathering food ingredients in the manufacturing process. For example in making *botok*. Usually, the community works together to find leaf materials that are used as *botok* materials. Likewise when there are traditional Malay party activities. Preservation and caring for the environment can be seen from people who still apply Malay specialties without using processed spices that contain chemical elements or those found in supermarkets.

4. Conclusion

Based on the things that have been stated, Malay gastronomy clearly has local wisdom that comes from the community. Malay dishes are more delicious when served and eaten warm because the traditional ingredients and spices contained in them will be felt by the tongue directly. In addition, Malay gastronomy also applies plant conservation because the ingredients come from simple plants that can grow around the house. Thus, the Malay community also always preserves the plants that are used as ingredients for cooking. These plants are also very

beneficial for health because typical Malay dishes usually do not use processed ingredients and spices like today. Many cooking ingredients are processed and chemically processed which can be harmful to the health of users. North Sumatra Malay gastronomy is very important as a reference for today's society because it has local wisdom both from cuisine and the way the Malay community processes ingredients and food.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to the USU Research Institute (LP) University of Sumatera Utara which has funded our research on Malay Gastronomy in North Sumatra, with contract number 65/UN5.2.3.1/PPM/SPP-TALENTA USU.

References

- [1] Koentjaraningrat. (2009). *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- [2] Badan Pengembangan Dan Pembinaan Bahasa. (2016). *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Daring*. Diakses pada 1 Juli 2021 melalui <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/gastronomi>.
- [3] Savarin, J.A.-Savarin. (2004). *The Physiology Of Taste*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- [4] Echols, J. & Hassan Shadzily. (1976) *Kamus Inggris-Indonesia*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia.
- [5] Sugiyono. (2016). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- [6] Rosmawati. (2021) "Results of Interviews with Informants Regarding Malay Gastronomy" on 17 July 2021.
- [7] Hamidah (2021) "Results of Interviews with Informants Regarding Malay Gastronomy" on 31 July 2021.
- [8] Samsul (2021) "Results of Interviews with Informants Regarding Malay Gastronomy" on 14 August 2021.
- [9] Sibarani, Robert. (2012). *Kearifan Lokal, Hakikat, Peran, Dan Metode Tradisi Lisan*. Jakarta: Asosiasi tradisi Lisan.
- [10] Rawiyah. (2021) "Results of Interviews with Informants Regarding Malay Gastronomy" on 18 July 2021.