

## **Implementation of Cooking Class Program to Improve Culinary Product Competitiveness of Women's Farming Group (KWT) in Margomulyo Village, Sleman, Yogyakarta**

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the implementation of a cooking class program to enhance the competitiveness of culinary products produced by the Women Farmers Group (KWT) in Garongan Tourism Village, Sleman, Yogyakarta. KWT, as part of the local economic actors, plays an essential role in developing traditional culinary potential but often faces challenges in product innovation, presentation quality, and marketing. The cooking class program focuses on improving cooking skills, presentation techniques, and understanding hygiene standards and culinary aesthetics that align with the tourism and hospitality industry's demands. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving training participants and village tourism managers. Data analysis uses the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the cooking class program positively impacts the quality of taste, product appearance, and KWT members' confidence in marketing their products in the tourism market. Active participation also promotes recipe innovation using local ingredients and increases product value. These findings recommend the importance of continuous training based on local potential to support women empowerment and tourism village sustainability.

**Keywords:** Cooking Class; Culinary Product Competitiveness; KWT

### **RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

Community-based tourism (CBT) is growing in various regions of Indonesia, including Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta. CBT is a global strategy for sustainable development, especially in rural areas (Goodwin, 2020). A key element in CBT is the active participation of local communities, including women, in providing tourism services such as traditional culinary (Scheyvens, 2021). KWT plays a strategic role in developing village-based culinary products. However, many still face challenges in product competitiveness in terms of innovation, quality, and marketing. Margomulyo Village in Sleman exemplifies a tourism village that utilizes local potential, including agriculture-based culinary products. However, these products remain weak in aesthetics, innovation, and marketing strategies (Hidayat & Prasetyo, 2022). The cooking class program is an intervention introduced in several villages to boost creativity and capacity among local culinary actors, especially KWT members. It aims not only to develop cooking skills but also to introduce hygienic practices, presentation aesthetics, and market-standard packaging. Studies show culinary training increases MSME competitiveness through innovation and market knowledge (Chen et al., 2020). In Sumberejo Kulon Village, a similar program combining cooking class and digital marketing significantly



increased participants' understanding of culinary promotion via social media from 10.52% to 92.10% (Prawida et al., 2023).

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Women Empowerment in the MSME Context**

Women in rural areas often drive local economies through micro and small enterprises. Empowering them through entrepreneurship training improves household economic capacity and strengthens their decision-making role (UN Women, 2021). (Kabeer, 2020) emphasizes that besides technical training, access to IT and market networks is crucial to help women shift from traditional entrepreneurs to competitive economic actors. (Sulastri, 2022) found that ongoing entrepreneurship training significantly boosts productivity and innovation in local culinary business management. (Tambunan, 2019) stated that women-led MSME tend to adopt adaptive and community-based approaches but still face capital and legal access constraints. (Rahayu et al., 2021) highlight psychological factors like confidence and family support as critical to the success of women entrepreneurs in the informal sector. Thus, empowerment programs should combine technical, social, and emotional dimensions for holistic impact.

### **Cooking Class as a Capacity-Building Strategy**

Experiential learning-based training like cooking classes is proven effective in enhancing technical and entrepreneurial capacity, especially among women in the informal sector. This learning model emphasizes hands-on participation, enabling deeper and more practical understanding (Kolb & Kolb, 2022). It also trains managerial aspects such as menu planning, ingredient management, and culinary marketing. (Prabowo, 2023) found that practice-based training in the culinary sector improved local product value and MSME competitiveness, especially in tourist destinations. Cooking classes also attract tourists when packaged as tourism attractions, expanding market reach for local products.

### **Culinary Product Competitiveness**

Culinary competitiveness is increasingly complex, affected by recipe innovation, product quality, branding, and ingredient sustainability (Porter, 2021). In Indonesia, local food resilience, environmental sustainability, and post-pandemic creative economy revival are key themes. Products that showcase local wisdom while meeting hygiene and aesthetic standards are more competitive domestically and globally (Richards & Wilson, 2023). Local culinary competitiveness increases significantly when tied to cultural storytelling—such as ingredient origins, cooking traditions, and values. Consumers now seek not just food, but experiences and stories. This approach builds emotional connections through cultural storytelling (Putri et al., 2024). MSMEs must utilize digital platforms—social media, marketplaces, and e-payments—to expand reach and adapt to shifting consumer behavior, especially among youth (Ardiansyah, 2024). Sustainable ingredients also define competitiveness. Culinary products using local, eco-friendly, and ethically sourced materials are increasingly favored (Yuliani & Sari, 2023), presenting both challenges and opportunities for MSME.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the process and impact of implementing the cooking class program on KWT culinary product competitiveness in Margomulyo Village, Seyegan District, Sleman. This method allows contextual and in-depth exploration of training



activities and group dynamics. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation. Analysis used the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2019): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This cyclic and continuous model enabled researchers to capture the real impact of cooking classes on KWT members' ability to create more competitive culinary products in local and tourism markets.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Women Empowerment in the MSME Context

Cooking class participation increased women's food processing skills, confidence, economic independence, and entrepreneurial roles. Previously, most KWT members were limited to domestic roles with no steady income. After training, members' views on self-potential and entrepreneurship shifted positively. Margomulyo Village showed urgent needs for knowledge in commercial kitchen hygiene, food styling, and marketing. The cooking class addressed these. Food plating was a new concept. One member said:

*"We've never learned how to present food attractively for buyers." (Interview, May 3, 2025) Marketing was still traditional. Another said: "We've only sold to neighbors or at village events, never tried online promotion."*



**Figure 1** KWT Members [Field Observation, 2025].

#### 1. Impact on Entrepreneurial Capacity

Post-training, new initiatives included:

- a. Forming small snack production groups
- b. Proposing better packaging and labelling
- c. Creating social media accounts for promotion

#### 2. Lack of Food Styling Knowledge

Most members were unfamiliar with aesthetic food presentation. One member noted:

*"We've never learned how to present food attractively." (Interview, May 3, 2025) This indicates the need for specialized food plating training.*

### Cooking Class as Capacity-Building Strategy



The cooking class was a gateway to women's economic empowerment in the MSME context. One member said:

*This training opened my mind. I used to think housewives had few options. Now I know I can have my own business.* (Interview, May 4, 2025)



**Figure 2** Cooking Class [Field Observation, 2025].

Another shared:

*Now we're more appreciated. We're involved in discussions about products and business.* (Interview, May 4, 2025)

These findings align with Utami & Ananda (2022), showing culinary training improves women's economic, psychological, and social empowerment. Experiential learning-based training such as cooking classes has been proven effective in enhancing the technical and entrepreneurial capacity of communities, especially women in the informal sector. This learning model emphasizes the direct involvement of participants in practical processes, enabling a deeper and more applicable understanding of the skills being taught (Kolb & Kolb, 2022). This approach not only improves technical skills in cooking and food presentation but also develops managerial aspects such as menu planning, raw material management, and culinary product marketing strategies.

In India, cooking class training boosted women's home business income by 30% within a year (Raj & Patel, 2021). A Philippine study by Mercado et al. (2023) reported improved skills, confidence, and business networking. These suggest cooking classes are platforms for both skill transfer and social-economic empowerment.

### **Culinary Product Competitiveness**

In today's competitive food scene, taste alone isn't enough. Competitiveness also requires innovation, marketing, and sustainability. Innovation is key. Modern consumers crave novelty in flavor, ingredients, and presentation. MSMEs with creative menus using local ingredients or modern techniques stand out. Food plating has gained importance, especially with consumers posting food



photos online. Sustainable sourcing and environmental awareness are added values. MSMEs using local, organic, ethically produced ingredients with eco-friendly packaging gain consumer trust.

One KWT member said:

*We tried new recipes using local ingredients like tomatoes, chilies, and papayas—the taste was unique. (Interview, May 7, 2025)*



**Figure 3** The Product [Field Observation, 2025].

Authentic branding is also vital. Culinary products paired with cultural narratives family recipes, traditional cooking methods build emotional bonds with consumers through cultural storytelling. Digital tools are essential. Online marketing, social media, e-payments, and online stores improve accessibility and brand professionalism. After the training, KWT members improved taste, appearance, and packaging. They also began using social media, broadening their market reach. This study proves that well-implemented cooking class programs enhance not just technical skills, but strategic understanding of culinary competitiveness.

## CONCLUSION

The cooking class program implemented for members of the Women Farmers Group (KWT) in Margomulyo Village, Sleman, has proven to make a significant contribution to enhancing the competitiveness of local culinary products. This training not only teaches technical skills such as cooking techniques, food plating, and attractive packaging, but also has broader impacts on participants' psychological and social aspects, such as increased self-confidence and entrepreneurial spirit. The research findings show that participants have begun to develop awareness of the importance of aesthetics in product presentation and modern marketing strategies, including the use of social media. Moreover, the active involvement of KWT members in creating innovative recipes based on local ingredients indicates an increase in creativity and adaptation to the evolving market tastes. Therefore, practical-based training programs such as cooking classes can be an effective strategy for empowering rural women and developing micro-enterprises in the culinary sector. For the sustainability of this program, continued support from the government, academics, and other stakeholders is needed to ensure the training is conducted sustainably, in line with local potential and the current demands of the tourism industry.



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