

## Exploration Of Traditional Cooking Techniques as Regional Culinary Cultural Identity

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**Abstract.** Traditional cuisine is an important part of cultural heritage that reflects the identity of a region. One of the main elements of traditional cuisine is cooking techniques, which are passed down through generations within the community. This study aims to explore traditional cooking techniques and understand their role in shaping regional culinary cultural identity. This study used a qualitative approach with exploratory methods. In collecting the data, this research was conducted through observations of food processing, interviews with culinary practitioners or traditional cooks, and documentation of the use of traditional cooking ingredients and equipment. The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research results show that traditional cooking techniques are not only related to food processing but also represent the distinctive characteristics of regional cuisine. The use of specific cooking techniques, such as boiling, steaming, or long-term low-heat cooking, influences the flavor, texture, and uniqueness of traditional dishes. Furthermore, the use of local ingredients and traditional cooking utensils strengthens the authenticity and distinctiveness of regional cuisine. Thus, traditional cooking techniques play a crucial role in maintaining the cultural identity of regional cuisine and are part of efforts to preserve local gastronomic heritage.

**Keywords:** traditional cooking techniques, regional cuisine, cultural identity, gastronomy, culinary heritage.

### RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The traditional culinary industry is currently experiencing complex dynamics amidst increasingly intense globalization and modernization. Globally, traditional foods are no longer viewed simply as a consumption necessity, but also as a representation of a society's cultural identity and gastronomic heritage. In Indonesia, the diversity of traditional culinary traditions reflects the social and cultural richness formed through a long history of interaction between regions and ethnicities. However, the development of modern food trends, digitalization, and changing preferences of the younger generation are beginning to shift the presence of traditional culinary traditions in everyday life. This situation poses serious challenges to efforts to preserve and strengthen cultural identity through local food.

Empirically, various findings indicate a decline in interest in consuming traditional foods, particularly among the younger generation, who are more attracted to fast food and global products. Observations indicate that the potential of traditional culinary traditions as a tourist attraction has not been optimally utilized due to limited promotion and innovation (Harsana & Triwidayati, 2020). Furthermore, community-based promotional activities still face challenges in terms of sustainability and adaptation to digital technology developments (Mastur et al., 2024). This fact highlights a gap between the vast potential of traditional culinary traditions and the limited development practices in the field.

This issue is crucial to research because traditional culinary arts play a strategic role in shaping a community's social and cultural identity. Food not only serves to fulfill biological needs but also symbolizes values, norms, and meanings passed down through generations. In the Indonesian context, traditional culinary arts serve as a medium for representing both national and local identity. Research shows that traditional foods have strong cultural significance in shaping social identity and maintaining local wisdom values (Pugra et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding the meaning and practices of traditional culinary arts is crucial for maintaining cultural sustainability amidst social change.

Although several studies have examined traditional culinary arts from tourism and economic perspectives, there are still limitations in exploring the dimensions of experience, meaning, and the accompanying social processes. Most studies tend to focus on economic potential and promotional strategies, thus underexploring how individuals and communities interpret traditional culinary arts in their daily lives. Yet, gastronomic practices are closely linked to the formation of cultural identity and broader social practices (Dewantara et al., 2023). This gap indicates the need for a qualitative approach that is able to explore subjective experiences and social dynamics that occur in traditional culinary practices.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore the meaning and role of traditional culinary arts in shaping the social and cultural identity of the community. The study focuses on the experiences, interpretations, and practices of practitioners and communities in maintaining traditional culinary arts amidst social change. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich studies in the field of cultural and gastronomic studies through an interpretive qualitative approach. Practically, the results are expected to serve as a basis for formulating strategies for preserving traditional culinary arts that are more contextual, adaptive, and sustainable.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Traditional Culinary

Traditional cuisine is part of a society's cultural heritage, reflecting its values, history, and social practices. Contextually, traditional cuisine can be defined as food passed down through generations, using local ingredients, and processed using unique techniques inherent to a particular culture. This cuisine serves not only as a means of consumption but also as a symbol of identity and cultural representation. In the Indonesian context, the diversity of traditional cuisine demonstrates the complexity of cultural and historical interactions that shape national identity (Rohmawati, 2024). Previous research also confirms that traditional cuisine has great potential as a tourist attraction due to its unique flavors, processes, and cultural values (Harsana & Triwidayati, 2020). However, in practice, utilizing this potential still faces challenges in terms of innovation, promotion, and adaptation to changing times.

### Traditional Food Cooking Techniques

Traditional food cooking techniques are an important aspect that determines the authenticity and quality of traditional culinary delights. This technique includes processing methods, the use of traditional tools, and the selection of materials in accordance with local wisdom. Operationally, cooking techniques can be measured through indicators such as processing methods (boiled, steamed,

grilled), use of traditional spices, and the skill of the actor in maintaining authentic taste. Studies show that traditional cooking techniques not only function to produce food, but also serve as a medium for transmitting cultural knowledge between generations (Baharin et al., 2025). However, modernization of cooking tools and techniques often changes the original characteristics of food, giving rise to a dilemma between efficiency and preserving authentic values.

### Traditional Cuisine as Cultural Identity

Traditional cuisine plays a significant role in shaping and representing a community's cultural identity. From the perspective of social identity theory, food functions as a symbol that connects individuals to their social groups through consumption and production practices. Research shows that traditional food contributes to the formation of social identity through its inherent values, meanings, and cultural practices (Pugra et al., 2025). Furthermore, gastronomic practices are closely related to rituals and traditions that strengthen social cohesion within a community (Dewantara et al., 2023). Thus, traditional cuisine not only reflects cultural identity but also plays a role in maintaining the sustainability of social values.

**Preservation and Transformation of Traditional Culinary** The preservation of traditional culinary arts has become a crucial issue amidst social change and technological developments. Preservation efforts encompass not only promotion but also maintaining authentic values through sustainable practices. Previous research has shown that community-based promotion can raise public awareness, but it still focuses on external aspects such as marketing and tourism (Mastur et al., 2024). This approach has not fully addressed the internal dimension of meaning and the experiences of cultural practitioners.

Conceptually, traditional culinary arts are closely related to cooking techniques, which are the primary process determining food authenticity. These techniques not only produce products but also transmit cultural values. This process shapes meaning, which is then internalized by individuals and contributes to the formation of cultural identity. Thus, there is an interconnected relationship between traditional culinary arts, cooking techniques, meaning, and cultural identity as a unified social construct. However, previous research has not explored the subjective experiences of practitioners in interpreting traditional culinary practices. Existing studies tend to position culinary arts as external objects, rather than as experiences lived within a socio-cultural context. Therefore, this study uses a conceptual framework that views traditional culinary arts as cultural practices produced through cooking techniques, socially interpreted, and represented as cultural identities. This approach is expected to provide a deeper and more contextual understanding.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at describing the phenomenon of traditional culinary cooking techniques and their role in shaping the cultural identity of the community. This approach was used to understand the phenomenon in depth in a natural context without variable manipulation (Sugiyono, 2019; Creswell, 2014). The study was conducted in the Special Region of Yogyakarta from January to March 2026. The object of the study was traditional culinary cooking techniques and their role in shaping cultural identity, while the subjects consisted of traditional culinary practitioners, such as chefs, culinary business owners, and community members involved in culinary practices. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques and expanded through snowball sampling.

Informant selection was based on specific considerations according to the research needs and to expand data sources (Sugiyono, 2019). Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Creswell, 2014). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as member checking to ensure data validity (Sugiyono, 2019).

The technique of data analysis of this study used thematic analysis with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and systematic drawing of conclusions to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the research data (Miles & Huberman, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that traditional culinary cooking techniques not only function as a food processing process, but also as a cultural practice that is full of meaning and plays a role in the formation of the cultural identity of the community. Based on data analysis from interviews, observations, and documentation, three main themes were found, namely: (1) cooking techniques as a cultural heritage, (2) social meaning in culinary practices, and (3) culinary as a representation of cultural identity.

### 1. Cooking Techniques as Cultural Heritage

The findings indicate that traditional cooking techniques are passed down through generations through informal learning within families. Informants stated that cooking skills are not acquired through formal education, but rather through direct experience and repeated practice within the family environment.

One informant said:

"Saya belajar dari orang tua sejak kecil, awalnya hanya membantu, lama-lama diajarkan cara memasak yang benar." (**Masyarakat**)

"I learned from my parents since I was little, at first I just helped out, but over time I was taught how to cook properly." (Community)

Cooking techniques such as boiling, steaming, and simmering over low heat for prolonged periods are enduring characteristics. These techniques are not only technically functional but also reflect cultural continuity. Field observations indicate that the use of traditional tools and specific cooking methods is still maintained to maintain authentic flavors.

### 2. Social Meaning in Culinary Practices

Beyond the technical aspects, traditional cooking practices have strong social significance. Cooking activities often take place in social contexts, such as family gatherings, celebrations, or traditional ceremonies. This process creates social interactions that strengthen bonds between individuals within a community.

The informant explain:

"Masakan ini biasanya dibuat kalau ada acara keluarga, jadi bukan sekadar makan, tapi kumpul juga." (**Juru Masak**)

"This dish is usually made at family events, so it's not just about eating, but also about gathering." (Cook)

These findings suggest that traditional cuisine serves as a social medium connecting individuals with their communities. The process of cooking and consuming food provides a space for building togetherness, sharing values, and strengthening social solidarity.

## 2. Culinary as a Representation of Cultural Identity

The third theme shows that traditional cuisine serves as a symbol of cultural identity. Informants associated certain foods with regional origins and a distinct local identity. Cooking techniques are a key factor in maintaining this authenticity.

One informant stated:

"Kalau orang sini pasti tahu makanan ini, itu sudah jadi ciri khas daerah kami." (**Pemilik Usaha Rumah Makan**)

"People here definitely know this food, it has become a characteristic of our area." (Restaurant Business Owner)

Furthermore, it was found that changes in cooking techniques due to modernization can influence perceptions of culinary authenticity. Several informants expressed concern that the use of modern tools could diminish the authentic characteristics of traditional foods.

The results of the study indicate that traditional cooking techniques function not only as technical processes but also as cultural practices that contain values, social meaning, and cultural identity. This finding confirms that traditional culinary arts are part of a living cultural system and are continuously passed down in community life. The first theme, "cooking techniques as cultural heritage," indicates that the process of knowledge transmission occurs informally through direct experience within families. This finding aligns with research by Baharin et al. (2025), which states that culinary techniques serve as a medium for intergenerational cultural transmission. However, this study emphasizes that this process involves not only transferring technical skills but also values and perspectives on food as part of family identity. This reinforces the view that culinary practices have strong historical and cultural dimensions (Rohmawati, 2024).

The second theme, the social meaning of culinary practices, demonstrates that cooking serves as a space for social interaction that strengthens relationships between individuals. This finding is consistent with Dewantara et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of culinary arts in fostering social cohesion. However, this study broadens this perspective by demonstrating that social meaning is formed not only in the context of rituals or traditional ceremonies, but also in informal daily activities, such as cooking together as a family. Thus, traditional culinary arts can be understood as a dynamic and contextual social practice.

The third theme, culinary arts as a representation of cultural identity, demonstrates that traditional foods serve as symbols that distinguish a community group. This finding supports the research of Pugra et al. (2025), which states that food plays a crucial role in the formation of social identity. However, this study also reveals a tension between preservation and modernization. The use of

technology in the cooking process increases efficiency but has the potential to diminish authenticity. This aligns with Roy's (2020) findings regarding the challenges between authenticity and adaptation in culinary culture.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that changes in cooking techniques impact not only technical aspects but also public perceptions of the authenticity and cultural value of a food. In this context, authenticity is determined not only by the ingredients, but also by the processes and techniques used. This finding enriches gastronomic studies, which have traditionally focused more on the end product than the process (Muñoz-Benito et al., 2023; Boukid, 2024).

Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating three main aspects: technique, social meaning, and cultural identity, within a single, interrelated analytical framework. This approach provides a more comprehensive perspective than previous research, which tends to view culinary arts from a tourism or economic perspective (Mastur et al., 2024; Harsana & Triwidayati, 2020).

Practically, the results of this study demonstrate that preserving traditional culinary arts cannot be achieved solely through promotion or commodification but must be supported by strengthening cultural practices at the community level. Involving younger generations and documenting cooking techniques are crucial steps to maintaining the sustainability of traditions amidst social and technological change (Mtskerashvili, 2025; Arellano et al., 2025).

This study is limited by its location within a single region, which prevents it from broadly describing the diversity of culinary practices. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the role of digital technology, social media, and culinary innovation in transforming traditional culinary practices and meanings across various cultural contexts. This research offers novelty by positioning traditional cooking techniques not merely as a technical aspect of food processing but as a key element connecting cultural heritage, social meaning, and cultural identity within an integrated analytical framework. Unlike previous research that focused more on culinary products, tourism, or economic aspects, this study emphasizes the cooking process as a living and dynamic cultural practice in people's daily lives. Furthermore, this research also reveals the tension between preservation and modernization in traditional culinary practices, providing a new perspective on understanding cultural sustainability in the contemporary era.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that traditional culinary cooking techniques function not only as technical processes but also as cultural practices that shape social meaning and the cultural identity of a community. Cooking techniques are passed down through generations through informal learning within families, which not only transfers skills but also values and traditions. Furthermore, traditional cooking activities serve as a space for social interaction that strengthens relationships between individuals. The process of cooking and consuming food serves as a means of building togetherness and transmitting cultural values between generations. Traditional cuisine also serves as a symbol of cultural identity that distinguishes a community, where cooking techniques are a crucial element in maintaining the authenticity and characteristics of food. However, this research also identified challenges in maintaining traditional cooking techniques amidst technological developments and changing lifestyles. Modernization provides efficiency but has the potential to diminish the authenticity of traditional cuisine. Therefore, the preservation of traditional cuisine needs to focus on strengthening cultural practices through the involvement of younger generations and the

documentation of cooking techniques. This research emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between preservation and adaptation in the face of social change.

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