



Creative Gastronomic Innovation of Traditional *Blayag* as A Support for Sustainable Tourism

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Abstract. This research aims to enhance the role of traditional food in supporting sustainable tourism. Food and tourism are closely integrated, and the potential experiences contained in food have driven increased interest in tourism. *Blayag*, a traditional food from Karangasem, has the potential to support sustainable tourism and be well-received by tourists through creative innovations in taste, texture, color, and presentation, making it suitable for both visitors at a destination and for star hotels in Bali. This study is qualitative, and the standardization of the recipe was conducted through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with seven chefs from star hotels in Bali. It can be concluded that the Creative Gastronomy Innovation of traditional food *Blayag* as a Support for Sustainable tourism is a suitable dish as an attractive attribute in introducing local wisdom and providing a unique cultural experience for tourists. This creates opportunities for chefs to introduce traditional food and preserve it from extinction.

Keywords: *Blayag*, Gastronomy, Sustainable Tourism, Traditional Food

1 Introduction

Sustainable tourism and traditional food have a very strong connection, as both focus on preserving local culture and environment. Sustainable tourism emphasizes a type of tourism that is sensitive to the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism activities. The goal is to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive benefits for local communities and the environment. Traditional food can serve as a means to promote sustainable tourism, as it can attract tourists who are interested in experiencing local culture and cuisine. These two concepts can drive traditional food as a way to promote sustainable tourism, and in turn, sustainable tourism can help preserve traditional food (Muñoz-Benito et al., 2023).

Each type of cuisine, in terms of preparation, taste, color, and presentation, offers a unique experience. Culinary products not only showcase “special dishes” but can also evolve into a medium of interpretation that broadens tourists’ perspectives (Elistyawati et al., 2024). Local cuisine can offer tourists a new experience by innovating traditional dishes to suit their tastes, including aspects such as flavor, portion size, and presentation. This adaptation of traditional foods can contribute to sustainable tourism

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by utilizing local ingredients, positively impacting the community, and introducing local dishes, such as *Blayag*, to international visitors. *Blayag* is a traditional dish from Karangasem and Buleleng that provides a complete meal with carbohydrates, animal protein, and plant protein. However, its presentation remains quite simple, and few young people are involved in preparing *Blayag*. Therefore, it is important to document the recipe for *Blayag* so that younger generations can learn it, supporting the preservation of culinary culture. This aligns with the development of tourism, where creative gastronomic innovation of traditional foods like *Blayag* can support sustainable tourism.

This research introduces innovations in the processing and presentation of traditional *Blayag* food by modernizing the processing techniques without losing its traditional taste essence, and by introducing more appealing presentation methods tailored to the preferences of international tourists. This is expected to enhance *Blayag's* attractiveness in the global market while encouraging younger generations to become more involved in the preservation and development of traditional cuisine as part of sustainable tourism.

2 Methodology

This study is a descriptive qualitative research, using the focus group discussion (FGD) method. The data collected is thoroughly and comprehensively described. The data includes results from interviews or observations related to the research problem encountered in the field, experiments, and their outcomes. The FGD method involves discussions with practitioners from the hospitality industry and 6 chefs. The fishbone diagram of research activities is shown in Figure 2.

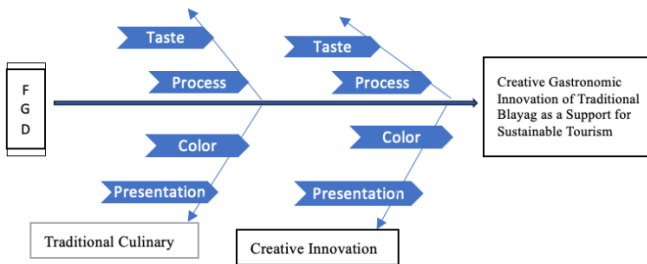


Figure 2. Fishbone diagram of research activities

The observational research is conducted in Karangasem Regency, focusing on *Blayag* vendors. The creative innovation of the traditional dish *Blayag*, a dish that can be served to tourists at tourist destinations and international hotels, is carried out in the kitchen laboratory at Politeknik Negeri Bali. The types of data used in the study are both quantitative and qualitative. The data sources used include both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected directly from sources through interviews,

observations, and stakeholders such as tourism practitioners, expert lecturers, culinary professionals, and *Blayag* vendors. Meanwhile, the secondary data is obtained from other sources such as records, books, magazines, and internet data related to culinary product innovation. The approach used for selecting respondents as data sources is through saturation sampling. In this method, all relevant respondents from the sources are included in the study. The methods used to collect data for addressing the issue of innovative processing and presentation of local *Blayag* cuisine as a menu item for tourists, both at tourist destinations and international hotels, include field observation, interviews, documentation, literature review, and FGD.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

Tourist visits to a destination are not solely driven by sightseeing; food can also be a significant motive for travel. Seeking extraordinary experiences at tourist destinations, where food and tourism often synergize within the tourism industry, is crucial. The role of local food in the configuration of sustainable tourism destinations is vital. The use of iconic food as a tourism attraction has several impacts, including increasing tourist consumption, generating a multiplier effect, positively affecting the local economy, and attracting tourists through iconic foods that reflect the character of a specific place (Bessiere, 1998).

Gastronomy: This refers to the effort to conceptualize food through a brief overview of social anthropology analyses conducted by researchers such as Fischler (1993), Poulain (1985), and Herpin (1988). Food is an integral part of the physiological, psycho-sensory, social, and symbolic environment. In addition to its hygienic and nutritional value, food also possesses psycho-sensory and symbolic characteristics. This food symbolism appears in various forms: 1. Food as Symbol: Some foods serve as the basis for fantasy and centralize symbolic virtues (e.g., bread, wine, cereal, black blood in hunter rituals); 2. Food as a Sign of Fellowship: Food shared and eaten with others represents a pleasant social relationship (e.g., business dinners, family celebrations, daily meals). Food summarizes and conveys a situation; it is information and meaning. The true sign is the functional unit of communication structure; 3. Food as a Marker of Class: Foods such as champagne, caviar, whiskey, and everyday wine, or tripe, are markers distinguishing signs that allow various social actors to identify each other and denote their lifestyle; 4. Food as a Symbol: This occurs in the culinary heritage of a specific region or geographical community; it serves as a banner under which the inhabitants of that region identify themselves. Thus, humans consume not only nutrients but also signs, symbols, dreams, and imagination. Eating reflects one's beliefs and fundamental imaginative structures (Bessiere, 1998); 5. Cooking and Dining Etiquette are crucial components in tourism as they reflect and express regional identities. They are important elements of tourism, particularly in the context of rural areas facing depopulation. Given its daily nature, food is an integral part of travel, even becoming a primary component of tourism practices. Access to the culture of others simultaneously allows for identification and distance, leading to the discovery of others and a better understanding of one's own culture (Poulain, 1997).

The sustainability of culinary tourism relies on the creativity of chefs in developing attractive culinary products. While many chefs may be able to cook, only a few can innovate with creative and novel food products. This skill is key to ensuring the long-term sustainability of culinary tourism. Culinary tourism that continually innovates food and drink products will be able to thrive in the competitive business environment.

In Indonesia, expenditures on food and beverages by tourists amounted to \$349.30, or 21.49% of total foreign tourist spending in 2023 (Direktorat Statistik Keuangan, 2024). This figure highlights the significant integration of local food industries into tourism destinations and underscores that local cooking expertise is a crucial component of the tourist experience (Sage, 2003).

3.2 Discussion

Many countries rely on gastronomy as a form of soft power whereby to promote their position in global market as shown by activities done for the economic growth in Asia. (Richards, 2021). In an effort to develop sustainable tourism, Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf has four pillars of focus that are developed. Among them are sustainable management (tourism business), long-term sustainable economy (socio-economic), sustainable culture that must always be developed and maintained, and environmental aspects (environment sustainability) (Kemenparekraf/ Baparekraf RI, 2021).

Karangasem Regency is located in the eastern part of Bali Island. The people of Karangasem continue to live a traditional lifestyle that has not been heavily impacted by modernization. The local community still engages in traditional activities such as farming and trading, which are characteristic of the Karangasem region. Traditional food frequently served and recognized as an icon of Karangasem Regency is *Blayag*.

Blayag is one type of traditional food known among the general public, especially in Karangasem Regency. In addition to being consumed, *blayag* was originally one of the accessories for *banten* or *yadnya* ceremony equipment. The uniqueness of *Blayag* in its manufacture, as well as its function as a complement to *banten* or offerings during ceremonies in the rice fields or during *piodalan* at the temple, made *Blayag* then developed into one of the culinary delights that is in demand by the community. *Blayag* is estimated to have existed since the existence of *subak* in Bali (Klungkung A Inscription, 1072 AD) (Pusdatin Kemendikbudristek 2022). It is characterized by its base ingredient of rice, shaped into a long form, and accompanied by side dishes. Due to its uniqueness, the author is interested in researching the creative gastronomic innovation of traditional *Blayag* as a support for sustainable tourism. Innovations are being made in aspects such as taste, color, presentation, and recipe.

In line with research discussing local culinary innovation of purple sweet potatoes as a breakfast menu (Elistyawati et al., 2022), which highlights that using locally grown ingredients such as purple sweet potatoes can enhance tourism sustainability by supporting local agriculture, increasing the market value of local products, and offering authentic culinary experiences to tourists. Through the innovation in processing and serving *Blayag* with purple sweet potatoes, these foods can attract tourists interested in traditional culinary experiences. Additionally, utilizing local ingredients reduces the environmental impact of food sources and supports the local economy, aligning with the principles of sustainable tourism.

The research results show that innovations in *Blayag* have been implemented in several areas, such as the recipe, color, and taste. These innovations have led to more varied flavors and colors. Changes to the recipe include making the broth smoother by adding ingredients such as milk and cream, as well as modifying the processing methods. The innovations are detailed in some figures below.

Sambel Plecting/Sambel Cabe

Ingredients		
75	Grams	Red Large Chili
50	Grams	Red Bird's Eye Chili
20	Grams	Curly Red Chili
50	Grams	Green Bird's Eye Chili
15	Grams	Lombok Fermented Shrimp Paste
8	Tablespoon	Balinese Oil
2	Piece	Key Lime
5	Grams	Salt
2	Grams	Sugar
2	Grams	Seasoning
1	Tablespoon	Water
Instructions		
1. Wash the ingredients		
2. Slice the large red chili, remove the seeds, and cut into thin slices		
3. Slice the red bird's eye chili, green bird's eye chili, and curly red chili		
4. Mix the fermented shrimp paste, salt, sugar, and water		
5. Heat the shrimp paste, then add oil and seasoning until hot		
6. Add the sliced chilies and cook until wilted		
7. Add the squeezed key lime juice		



Sambel Plecting



Sambel Cabe

Source: Research Documentation, 2024

Figure 3. *Sambel pemlecingan/chili sauce*

Bumbu Genap

Ingredients		
100	Grams	Shallot
70	Grams	Shallot
30	Grams	Large Red Chili
30	Grams	Curly Red Chili
20	Grams	Red Bird's Eye Chili
70	Grams	Garlic
15	Grams	Lombok Shrimp Paste
15	Grams	Candlenut
10	Grams	Lesser Galangal
1	Piece	Key Lime (use the peel)
8	Grams	Lesser Galangal
3	Grams	Sand Ginger
3	Grams	Ginger
3	Grams	Old Turmeric
5	Piece	Clove
5	Grams	Salt
2	Grams	Sugar
4	Grams	Coriander
2	Grams	Star Anise
4	Grams	Cinnamon
4	Piece	Tabiye Bun
2	Grams	Seasoning
10	Tablespoon	Oil
2	Grams	Nutmeg
3	Piece	Pod
Instructions		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wash, cut, and blend all the ingredients until smooth. 2. Heat the oil and add the blended spices. 3. Add salt, sugar, and seasoning. 4. The spices are ready when their aroma is released. 		

- Accompanying Spices
1. Fried Shallots
 2. Fried Garlic
 3. Bay Leaves
 4. Lemongrass
 5. Kaffir Lime Leaves



Source: Research Documentation, 2024

Figure 4. Bumbu genap (Balinese space)

Sambal Pelalah

Ingredients		
60	Grams	Red Large Chili
50	Grams	Curly Red Chili
10	Grams	Red Bird's Eye Chilies
70	Grams	Garlic
15	Grams	Lombok Shrimp Paste
15	Grams	Candlenut
10	Grams	Lesser galangal
1	Piece	Key Lime (use the peel)
5	Grams	Salt
2	Grams	Sugar
2	Grams	Seasoning
10	Tablespoon	Oil
2	Grams	Nutmeg
Instruction		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wash the ingredients. 2. Cut the ingredients. 3. Blend all the ingredients until smooth. 4. Heat the oil and add the blended spices. 5. Add salt, sugar, and seasoning. 6. The spices are ready when their aroma is released. 		



Source: Research Documentation, 2024

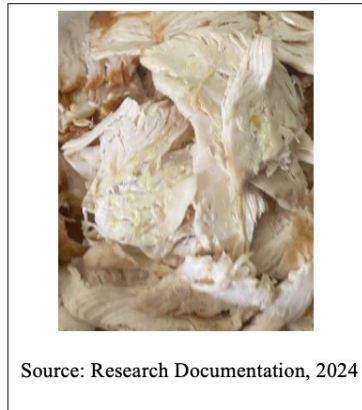
Figure 5. Pelalah sauce

Blayag Ingredients

1. Blayag: A type of long-shaped rice cake wrapped in young coconut leaves or young palm leaves.
2. If the length of the Blayag wrapping is 16-18 cm, fill it with rice up to 7-8 cm from the bottom, then tie it with string.
3. Boil the Blayag for 3-4 hours, adding water 2-3 times during the boiling process.

**Figure 6.** *Blayag***Ayam Totok**

Ingredients		
1000	Grams	Chicken Breast
1	Tablespoon	French Mustard
1	Tablespoon	Wine Vinegar
1	Teaspoon	Salt
1	Teaspoon	Pepper
500	Liters	Balinese oil
5	Grams	Salt
2	Grams	Sugar
Instructions		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Separate the chicken breast from its skin. 2. Mix all the ingredients except the chicken breast. 3. Rub the chicken breast with the marinade mixture. 4. Let it sit for 30 minutes. 5. Fry the chicken over medium heat. 6. When it turns brown, remove from the heat. 7. Let the chicken cool down. 8. Shred the chicken into large pieces. 9. Pound the chicken until flat. 10. Set aside. 		

**Figure 7.** *Ayam totok*/ chicken *totok*

FGD Material: *Blayag*

No	Criteria	Before innovation	After innovation
1	Ingredients <i>Sambel Plecing / Sambel Cabe</i>	Large Chili Red Bird's Eye Chili Shrimp Paste Balinese Oil Lime Salt Sugar Seasoning Water	Large Chili Red Bird's Eye Chili Red Curly Chili Green Bird's Eye Chili Lombok Shrimp Paste Balinese Oil Lime Salt Sugar Seasoning Water
	<i>Blayag</i>	Filled approximately	Filled the Blayag with a shell height of 17-19 cm filled up to 6-8 cm from the bottom
	Vegetables	Boiled	Boiled with added salt and a little oil
	<i>Ayam Totok and Sate</i>	Marinated with lime	Marinated with vinegar, salt, and French mustard
	Basic Ingredients of <i>Blayag</i>	Coconut leaf, Rice, Chicken, Gizzard, Vegetables, Cucumber, Red Beans, Long Beans, Winged Beans, Coconut, Seasonings, Large Chili, and Bird's Eye Chili	Coconut leaf, Rice, Chicken, Gizzard, Vegetables, Cucumber, Red Beans, Long Beans, Winged Beans, Coconut, Seasonings, Large Chili, Bird's Eye Chili and Green Bird's Eye Chili
2	Standardization of Ingredients	a. Coloring: Turmeric, Chili b. Taste: Coconut Milk c. Others: Lime	a. Coloring: Turmeric, Chili b. Taste: Coconut Milk plus Evaporated Milk c. Others: Vinegar, French mustard
No	Criteria	Before innovation	After innovation
3	Cooking Process	a. Roasted b. Fried c. Boiled	- Roasted - Fried - Boiled - Grilled - Sauteed
4	Result		
	a. Taste	a. Spicy and Sweet	a. Soft taste of spicy and sweet
	b. Color	b. Less bright	b. Brighter
	c. Packaging	c. Served using papers	c. Served on plates



Figure 8. Before innovation



Figure 9. After innovation

The creative innovation of *Blayag* was analyzed through (FGD) with chefs and tourism industry practitioners to gather feedback on how *Blayag* can be presented as a traditional culinary menu for tourists, both at tourist sites and in star-rated hotels. The results of the FGD are as follows: 1. Serving Temperature: Traditional Karangasem food is generally served at room temperature to give a fresh impression. However, since the sauce should not thicken, it is better to serve *Blayag* warm; 2. Flavor Adjustment: *Blayag*, which is usually served with a spicy flavor, should be adjusted to have a milder and slightly sweeter taste for tourists; 3. Color: The traditional *Blayag* should have a more vibrant color, which can be achieved through the ingredients and cooking process; 4. Presentation: Presentation is crucial. As the first sensory experience of the food is visual, the dish should be plated attractively to enhance the customer's appetite. *Blayag*, which consists of a main dish and side items, should be served on one plate with careful attention to the composition and color; 5. Serving Style: *Blayag* can be presented not

only traditionally but also in a modern style, such as an à la carte menu; 6. Portion Size: The portion size of *Blayag* should be adjusted so that the total volume of food per set menu is 300-500 grams, serving as a main course.

4 Conclusion

Traditional Balinese food, particularly *Blayag*, is very suitable for serving to tourists, according to the FGD results. However, several innovations are necessary to align with the tastes and dining habits of the target market. Attention must also be given to hygiene, sanitation, and the presentation of *Blayag* when served to tourists. Sustainable tourism is inherently linked to culinary experiences as a key component of tourist needs. Traditional food has significant potential in the tourism industry, not only revitalizing traditional dishes but also benefiting local communities. Traditional food is closely tied to local ingredients, which impacts local income. It is recommended that the government actively promote traditional food within the framework of sustainable tourism.

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